

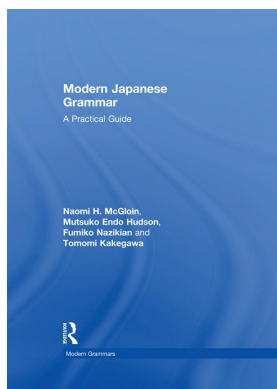
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Naomi H. McGloin, Mutsuko Endo Hudson, Fumiko Nazikian, Tomomi Kakegawa, Sarah Butler

Basic communication strategies

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Naomi H. McGloin, Mutsuko Endo Hudson, Fumiko Nazikian, Tomomi Kakegawa

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31

Basic communication strategies

Speakers use various set phrases and strategies to begin and keep communication going smoothly. This section introduces some of the most commonly used expressions and strategies in Japanese.

31.1 Attracting someone's attention and responding to a call for attention

The easiest way to get someone's attention is to call his/her name or title, such as **X-san** or **sensee** 'teacher.' When you don't know the name or the title of a person, you can use one of the following expressions.

あのう。

Anoo ...

Umm ...

あのう、すみませんが...

Anoo, sumimasen ga ...

Uh, excuse me (but) ...

あのう、失礼ですが...

Anoo, shitsuree desu ga ...

Uh, excuse me/(I am) sorry to be rude (but) ...

ちよっと。(I)

Chotto.

Say!

ねえ。(I)

Nee.

Tell you what / Listen,

Anoo (chotto) sumimasen (ga) is probably the most common expression to attract someone's attention. In a more formal situation **Shitsuree desu ga**, which literally means 'to be rude' can be used. To a close friend, **Nee**, which is an interactional particle, can be used. At a restaurant or a store, one can say **Onegai shimasu** 'I request' to catch the attention of a waiter/waitress/sales clerk. **Gomen kudasai** is an appropriate expression when one is at the door of someone's house and wants to get the attention of the resident of the house.

In responding to a call for attention, one can simply say **Hai** 'yes' in a formal situation or **Un?** 'yeah?' in an informal situation. The following expressions can also be used.

はい、何でしょうか。(F)

Hai, nan deshoo ka.

Yes, what is it?

え、何?(I)

E, nani?

What is it?

31.2 Initiating a conversation

There are many ways of initiating a conversation depending on the situation. You can, for example, initiate a conversation by talking about the weather or things around you. Asking a question is also a common way of initiating a conversation. There are, however, some set phrases that can be used.

ちょっとお話ししたいことがあるんですが、(F)

Chotto o-hanashi shitai koto ga aru n desu ga,
I have something I would like to talk to you about.

ちょっと話があるんだけど、(I)

Chotto hanashi ga aru n da kedo,
I have something I want to tell you.

今二、三分よろしいでしょうか。(F)

Ima ni-san-pun yoroshii deshou ka.
Do you have two or three minutes now?

今ちょっといい？(I)

Ima chotto ii?
Are you free right now?

今お忙しいでしょうか。(F)

Ima o-isogashii deshou ka.
Are you busy now?

今忙しい？(I)

Ima isogashii?
Are you busy now?

ちょっとお聞きしたいことがあるんですが、(VF)

Chotto o-kiki shitai koto ga aru n desu ga,
I have something I would like to ask you.

ちょっと聞きたいんだけど、(I)

Chotto kikitai n da kedo,
I want to ask you something.

お仕事すみませんが、(F)

O-shigoto-chuu sumimasen ga,
I am sorry to bother you in the middle of your work,

仕事悪いんだけど、(I)

Shigoto-chuu warui n da kedo,
I am sorry to bother you in the middle of your work,

▶ 29

31.3 Ending a conversation

To end a conversation, the following expressions can be used.

では/じゃ、そろそろこのへんで。

Dewa/ja, sorosoro kono hen de.
Well . . . , I should be going soon . . .

では/じゃ、そろそろ。

Dewa/ja, sorosoro.
Well . . . , (I should be going soon.)

Formal development of a topic

では/じゃ、今日はこんなところで。

Dewa/ja, kyoo wa konna tokoro de.

OK, then, this is it for today.

じゃあね。(I)

Jaa ne.

Ok, then.

31.4 Introducing and developing a topic

31.4.1 Introducing a topic

Topics can be introduced by a phrase such as **jitsu wa** ‘actually, to get to the point,’ or phrases such as **... no koto na n desu ga/kedo** ‘it’s about...’

実は今度の試験のことなんですけど

Jitsu wa kondo no shiken no koto na n desu kedo

Well (lit. actually), it’s about the upcoming exam

31.4.2 Changing the topic

Common expressions for changing the topic are:

ところで

tokorode

by the way,

話は変わりますが

hanashi wa kawarimasu ga

not to change the subject,

それはそうと

sore wa soo to

be that as it may,

話は違うけど (I)

hanashi wa chigau kedo

not to change the topic,

31.5 Formal development of a topic

31.5.1 Opening remarks

To present a new topic formally in a lecture or a talk, phrases such as the following can be used.

今日は～についてお話したいと思います。

Kyoo wa ... ni tsuite o-hanashi shitai to omoimasu.

Today I would like to talk about ...

～について述べたいと思います。

... ni tsuite nobetai to omoimasu.

I would like to talk about ...

～に関して考察をしたいと思います。

... ni kanshite koosatsu o shitai to omoimasu.

I would like to look at ...

本日は...につつましてお話をさせて戴きます。(VF)
Honjitsu wa... ni tsukimashite o-hanashi o sasete itadakimasu.
 I should like to talk about... today.

▶ 29; 64.1.2

31.5.2 Establishing a sequence

The most common phrases that express a sequence of points are as follows.

まず始めに
mazu hajime ni
 first (of all)

まず最初に
mazu saisho ni
 first (of all)

次に
tsugi ni
 next

第一に
dai ichi ni
 firstly

第二点として
dai ni ten toshite
 as my second point / secondly

最後に
saigo ni
 lastly

31.5.3 Giving examples

To give examples, use the following phrases.

例えば
tatoeba
 for example

いくつか例をあげたいと思います。
Ikutsuka ree o agetai to omoimasu.
 I would like to give a few examples.

31.5.4 Summarizing and concluding

To summarize and conclude, use expressions such as the following. Note that the Japanese often end the utterance with **to omoimasu** 'I think,' which softens the assertion.

結論を述べますと、
ketsuron o nobemasu to,
 to conclude,

結論として次のことが言えると思います。
Ketsuron toshite tsugi no koto ga ieru to omoimasu.
 As a conclusion, I can say the following.

以上のことから～ということが明らかになると思います。

Ijoo no koto kara . . . to yuu koto ga akiraka ni naru to omoimasu.

From what I've said so far, I believe it is clear that. . .

以上のことをまとめますと

ijoo no koto o matomemasu to

to summarize (what I have said so far)

つまり～ということだと思います。

Tsumari . . . to yuu koto da to omoimasu.

In other words, it means . . .

▶ 24.1; 26.2

To end the presentation, you might want to say:

以上です。ご清聴ありがとうございました。

Ijoo desu. Go-seechoo arigatoo gozaimashita.

This concludes my (presentation, speech). Thank you for listening.

これで終わらせていただきたいと思います。

Kore de owarasete itadakitai to omoimasu.

I would like to end (my presentation, speech).

▶ 19.2.8; 20.3.3

31.6

Being vague or indirect

Japanese has many ways of rendering utterances softer and more indirect.

31.6.1

nanka 'something'

Nanka (lit. 'something') attached to a noun indicates that the speaker is giving an example.

ラッシュアワーの時なんかもういっぱい

Rasshuawaa no toki nanka moo ippai de

It's so crowded during the rush hour, for example, and

スーパーでおすしなんかも売っています。

Suupaa de osushi nanka mo utte imasu.

At the supermarket they sell things like sushi.

By using **nanka** the speaker avoids a specific reference and thereby makes the statement more indirect.

Nanka is also used at the beginning and in the middle of a sentence. It softens the tone by adding uncertainty or modesty, though its overuse is frowned upon as is 'like' in English.

Y: なんか月曜日だから全然人がいなくてえ、飲み屋にー

Nanka getsuyoobi da kara zenzen hito ga inakutee nomiya nii

Like, because it was Monday, there was no one at the bar,

H: うん。

Un.

Y: だからなんか、最後まで (・) いてもいいですよとか、延長してもいいですよって。

Dakara nanka, saigo made (・) ite mo ii desu yo toka, enchoo shite mo ii desu yo tte.

So, 'you can stay until the closing time,' 'we can extend the closing time.'

H: は一ん。

Haan.

Y: お店の人が言ってくれたの。

O-mise no hito ga itte kureta no.

The bar staff told me.

▶ 4.4

31.6.2 toka, demo

The use of particles such as **toka** and **demo**, meaning ‘or something,’ contributes to making an utterance less specific and more vague.

お茶でもいかがですか。

O-cha demo ikaga desu ka.

How about tea or something?

今日は天気がいいから、散歩でもしようかなと思っています。

Kyoo wa tenki ga ii kara, sanpo demo shiyoo ka na to omotte imasu.

It’s good weather today, so I am thinking of taking a walk or something.

勉強とかしてるのかな? (I)

Benkyoo toka shite ru no ka na?

I wonder if (he) is studying or something.

好きな人とかいないの? (I)

Suki na hito toka inai no?

Don’t you have someone you like or something?

▶ 1.3; 22.2.3

This way of using **toka** is more typical of the speech of the younger generation. For the use of **toka** with quotations, see 32.2.

31.6.3 Stating one’s opinion indirectly

In Japanese, it is preferable not to state one’s opinion too directly, so expressions such as **... n ja nai deshoo ka**, ‘I wonder if it’s not the case that ...,’ **... ka na to omoimasu**, ‘I think that maybe ...’ and similar expressions are used in proffering one’s opinion indirectly.

▶ 85

日本に行くなら小さい町の方がいいんじゃないでしょうか。

Nihon ni iku nara chiisai machi no hoo ga ii n ja nai deshoo ka.

If you are going to Japan, I think a smaller town might be better.

大学は大きい大学の方がいいかなと思います。

Daigaku wa ookii daigaku no hoo ga ii ka na to omoimasu.

I think a bigger university might be better.

31.7 Expressing reservation (reluctance)

When someone says **Uun** ‘well’ or does not respond right away, it generally suggests some reservation or difficulty in responding on the respondent’s part. Some of the ways a person indicates reservation or reluctance include:

う～ん。

Uun.

Well.

ちよっと... (in response to an invitation)

Chotto...

Well...

そうですねえ。

Soo desu nee.

Well, let me think.

そうですかねえ。(in response to someone's opinion)

Soo desu ka nee.

I wonder...

そうかなあ。(in response to someone's opinion)

Soo ka naa.

Really?

ちよっと考えさせていただけますか。(in response to an invitation or a suggestion)

Chotto kangaesasete itadakemasuka?

Would you let me think a little?

▶ 20.3.3

31.8 Requesting repetition

To ask someone to repeat something because you have not heard it right or did not understand it, use one of the following expressions.

すみません、今ちよっとよく聞こえなかったんですが... (F)

Sumimasen, ima chotto yoku kikoenakatta n desu ga...

I'm sorry, I couldn't hear well, but...

すみません。もう一度言っていたいただけませんか。(VF)

Sumimasen. Moo ichido itte itadakemasen ka.

I am sorry, but could I ask you to say that one more time?

えっ? (I)

E?

Huh.

今何て言った? (I)

Ima nan te itta?

What did you say just now?

何? (I)

Nani?

What?

31.9 Making sure you are understood

To ask if you are being understood, you can use expressions such as the following.

お分かりになったでしょうか。(F)

O-wakari ni natta deshoo ka.

Is it clear (i.e. do you understand)?

言おうとしていること、お分かりいただけたでしょうか。(VF)

Ioo to shite iru koto, o-wakari itadaketa deshoo ka.

Do you understand what I am trying to say?

わかりますか。

Wakarimasu ka.

Do you understand?

わかった？ (I)

Wakatta?

Do you understand?

31.10 Asking how to pronounce or write a word

To ask how to pronounce a word, one may point to the word and say:

これはなんと読みますか。(F)

Kore wa nan to yomimasu ka.

How do you read this?

これ、なんて読むの？ (I)

Kore, nan te yomu no?

How do you read this?

▶ 9.1; 26.2

There are many other ways to ask how to pronounce certain words or **kanji**, as demonstrated below. Sentences containing honorific expressions; e.g. **itadaku**, are more formal and polite. Also sentences ending in **ga** or **kedo** 'but' sound less assertive and more polite.

▶ 19.2.8; 26.2; 26.3; 29.3; 31.6

この漢字の読み方を教えていただきたいのですが。(F)

Kono kanji no yomi kata o oshiete itadakitai no desu ga.

I'd like to ask you to tell me how to read this **kanji**, but . . .

この漢字はなんと読むか、教えていただけませんか/もらえませんか。(F)

Kono kanji wa nan to yomu ka, oshiete itadakemassen ka/moraemasen ka.

Would you please tell me how to read this **kanji**?

この漢字の読み方を教えてもらいたいんだけど。(I)

Kono kanji no yomi kata o oshiete moraitai n da kedo.

I want to ask you to tell me how to read this **kanji**, but . . .

これ、なんて読むか、教えてくれる？ (I)

Kore, nan te yomu ka, oshiete kureru?

Can you tell me how to read this?

これ、なんて読むの？ (I)

Kore, nan te yomu no?

How do you read this?

If you want to know the name of an item in Japanese, point to it and say:

▶ 26.2

これは日本語でなんと言いますか。(F)

Kore wa Nihongo de nan to iimasu ka.

What do you call this in Japanese?

これ、日本語でなんて言うの？ (I)

Kore, Nihongo de nan te yuu no?

What do you call this in Japanese?

▶ 26.2

To ask how to write a word in **hiragana**, **katakana**, or **kanji**, replace the word in the square brackets in the following sentences with the word you intend to write.

▶ 26.2

‘Keetai’ は 平仮名/カタカナ/漢字 でどう書くか、教えていただきたいのですが... (VF)

‘Keetai’ wa hiragana/katakana/kanji de doo kaku ka, oshiete itadakitai no desu ga...

I was wondering if you could show me how to write ‘keetai’ in **kanji**, but...

‘Keetai’ は漢字でどう書きますか。(F)

‘Keetai’ wa kanji de doo kakimasu ka.

How do you write ‘keetai’ in **kanji**?

漢字で ‘keetai’ と書いていただけませんか。(VF)

Kanji de ‘keetai’ to kaite itadakemasen ka.

Would you please write ‘keetai’ in **kanji**?

‘Keetai’ って漢字でどう書くの？(I)

‘Keetai’ tte kanji de doo kaku no?

How do you write ‘keetai’ in **kanji**?

ここに漢字で ‘keetai’ って書いてくれる？(I)

Koko ni kanji de ‘keetai’ tte kaite kureru?

Could you write ‘keetai’ in **kanji** here?

The following sentences exemplify how you may ask for a **kanji** that constitutes one part of a word.

「けいたい」の「けい」はどういう漢字ですか。(F)

Kaisha no ‘kee’ wa doo yuu kanji desu ka.

What is the **kanji** for ‘kee’ in **keetai**?

「けいたい」の「けい」はどう書くの？(I)

Kaisha no ‘kee’ wa doo kaku no?

How do you write ‘kee’ in ‘keetai’?

31.11 aizuchi (listener responses)

When conversing in Japanese, **aizuchi** ‘listener responses’ are used frequently by the listener to let the speaker know that he/she is listening, paying attention, interested in the conversation and/or that s/he would like the speaker to continue. **Aizuchi** take the form of various short expressions often accompanied by slight head nodding. The speaker may feel uncomfortable or ignored if the listener does not give enough **aizuchi**, even if the listener is listening attentively. It is therefore advisable to nod your head from time to time while the other person talks. Use some of the **aizuchi** phrases listed below that are appropriate in the specific context whenever there is a short pause in the other person’s utterance. **Aizuchi** occur in both formal and informal conversations.

Types of aizuchi

Showing one is paying attention

Formal

はい。

Hai.

Yes.

ええ。

Ee.

Yes. (Less formal than **hai**.)

そうですか。

Soo desu ka.

I see.

Informal

うん。	Un.	Uh-huh.
そう。	Soo.	Right.
そうか。	Soo ka.	I see.
ふーん。	Fuun.	Yeah.

Showing enthusiasm

Aizuchi phrases may be repeated to show enthusiasm.

▶ 31.13

Formal

はいはい。	Hai hai.	Yes, yes.
ええええ。	Ee ee.	Yes, yes. (Less formal than hai .)

Informal

うんうん。	Un un.	Yeah, yeah.
そうそう。	Soo soo.	Right, right.

Confirming the speaker's opinion

▶ 10.5

Formal

そのとおりですね。	Sono toori desu ne.	Exactly right.
そうですね。	Soo desu ne.	That's right.

Informal

たしかに。	Tashika ni.	Certainly.
なるほど。	Naruhodo.	I understand.
そうだね。	Soo da ne.	That's right.
そうですね。	Soo ne.	That's right. (Feminine)
やっぱりね。	Yappari ne.	As I thought.

Showing surprise

▶ 68

Formal

そうなんですか。	Soo na n desu ka.	Is that the case?
ほんとですか。	Honto desu ka.	Is it true?
すごいですねえ。	Sugoi desu nee.	That's something! / That's amazing!

Informal

ええ？	Ee?	What?
おお！	Oo!	Wow!
うわあ！	Uwaa!	Wow!
へえ！	Hee!	Wow!
すごい！	Sugoi!	Great!
ほんと？	Honto?	Really?
うそ！	Uso!	You're kidding!

Showing reservation (see 31.7)

Formal and Informal

うーん。	Uun.	Hmm . . .
------	-------------	-----------

Repetition

Formal

どうですかねえ。
そうですかねえ。

Doo desu ka nee.
Soo desu ka nee.

I wonder (how it is).
I wonder if that's true.

Informal

どうかなあ。
そうかなあ。
そう？

Doo ka naa.
Soo ka naa.
Soo?

I wonder (how it is).
I wonder if that's true.
You think?

Showing sympathy

▶ 10.5

Formal

たいへんですねえ。
こまりましたねえ。
がっかりですねえ。
お気の毒ですねえ。

Taihen desu nee.
Komarimashita nee.
Gakkari desu nee.
O-kinodoku desu nee.

That must be tough.
That's too bad/upsetting.
That's disappointing.
I'm sorry to hear that.

Informal

たいへんだねえ。
こまったねえ。
がっかりだねえ。
かわいそうだねえ。
気の毒だねえ。

Taihen da nee.
Komatta nee.
Gakkari da nee.
Kawaisoo da nee.
Kinodoku da nee.

That must be tough.
That's too bad/upsetting.
That's disappointing.
Poor thing! / That's a pity.
I'm sorry to hear that.

31.12 Fillers (hesitation noises)

Fillers are noises, small words or phrases, such as 'um,' 'er,' 'well,' and 'like,' which are used to fill silences between utterances or to fill pauses when speaking. Commonly used fillers in Japanese are:

えー	ee	uh
えーっと	eetto	well
あの一	anoo	um
その一	sonoo	um
ん一	nn	er
なんていうか	nan te yuu ka	what should I say

31.13 Repetition

Repeating a word or phrase in conversation has various functions, such as acknowledging the other speaker's utterances, agreeing with the speaker, emphasizing, confirming, and clarifying one's own utterances. Repetitions occur frequently in Japanese conversation to show the interlocutors' involvement in the conversation. For example, **aizuchi** phrases are often repeated to express enthusiasm or excitement.

▶ 31.11

はいはい	hai hai	Yes yes.
ええええ	ee ee	Yes yes.
そうそう	soo soo	Right right.
わかるわかる	wakaru wakaru	I totally understand.
まだまだ	mada mada	Not yet not yet.
わかったわかった	wakatta wakatta	Sure sure.
いくいく	iku iku	I'll definitely go.
きたきた	kita kita	It came! / It's coming!
はやくはやく	hayaku hayaku	Hurry hurry!

Question words in Japanese, such as **dare** ‘who,’ **doko** ‘where,’ **nani** ‘what,’ and **itsu** ‘when,’ are also repeated in succession by speakers to express excitement.

A: 今日、すごくいいことがあったんだ。

A: **Kyoo, sugoku ii koto ga atta n da.**

A: Today, something really good happened.

B: え、なにになに？

B: **E, nani nani?**

B: Huh, what is it, what is it? (Lit. what what?)

A speaker may repeat the same word or phrase uttered by a previous speaker to show agreement, excitement, or involvement in the conversation.

子： 今日の夕飯何？

Ko: Kyoo no yuuhan nani?

Child: What’s today’s dinner?

母： カレーよ。

Haha: Karee yo.

Mother: It’s curry.

子： やったあ、カレー！

Ko: Yattaa, karee!

Child: Great, it’s curry!

Repetition is also used to clarify or to confirm.

A: 次の予約は土曜日です。

Tsugi no yoyaku wa doyoobi desu.

Your next appointment is Saturday.

B: はい、土曜日ですね。

Hai, doyoobi desu ne.

Yes, Saturday, right.

川田： 初めまして、川田です。

Kawada: Hajimemashite, Kawada desu.

Kawada: How do you do, I’m Kawada.

森： ああ、どうも。川田さんですか。森です。

Mori: Aa, doomo. Kawada-san desu ka. Mori desu.

Mori: Oh, hello. You are Mr/Ms Kawada? I’m Mori.

31.14 Ellipsis

Many parts of a sentence may be omitted when their meaning can be understood from the context. The most frequently omitted part is the topic word of the sentence. Although ellipsis is not obligatory, never omitting the topic phrase makes one sound repetitious.

父は50才です。(父は)東京に住んでいます。

Chichi wa gojussai desu. (Chichi wa) Tookyoo ni sunde imasu.

My father is 50 years old. (My father) lives in Tokyo.

(私は)田中と申します。(私は)昨日、ここに越してきました。

(Watashi wa) Tanaka to mooshimasu. (Watashi wa) kinoo, koko ni koshite kimashita.

(I) am Tanaka. (I) moved here yesterday.

Nouns that may be expressed with a pronoun in English are usually omitted in Japanese. () indicates omitted phrases in the following examples.

(それは) いいセーターですね。

(Sore wa) ii seetaa desu ne.

(That) is a nice sweater, isn't it.

本を買って、(それを) 友達にあげました。

Hon o katte, (sore-o) tomodachi ni agemashita.

I bought a book and gave (it) to my friend.

甘い物が好きだけど、(それは) ふとるから、(それを) あまりたべない。

Amai mono ga suki da kedo, (sore wa) futoru kara, (sore-o) amari tabenai.

I like sweet things, but (they are) fattening, so I don't eat (them) very much.

▶ See 1.6 on the ellipsis of particles.

31.15 Afterthoughts

Japanese sentences usually end with a predicate followed by inflectional elements. In conversations, however, other parts of speech may be added after the predicate as an afterthought. The particle associated with the noun phrase is optional when added as an afterthought.

本当に疲れたよ、今回の出張 (は)。

Hontoo ni tsukareta yo, konkai no shutchoo (wa).

It was really tiring, my business trip this time.

来ましたよ、バス (が)。

Kimashita yo, basu (ga).

It's here, the bus.

あ、忘れちゃった、傘 (を)。

A, wasurechatta, kasa (o).

Oh, I forgot, the umbrella.

辞書も使いますよ、時々。

Jisho mo tsukaimasu yo, tokidoki.

I use the dictionary too, sometimes.

▶ 1.3; 10.4

31.16 Making corrections

Speakers sometimes make mistakes by using an inappropriate word or mispronouncing a word. Some of these errors, if left unattended, can lead to a breakdown in communication. There are various ways for the speaker or the listener to correct what was said.

31.16.1 Self-correction

Replacing a word

When the speaker needs to correct a word he/she used, **ja nakute** (informal) or **de wa naku (te)** (formal) can be used right after the word that needs to be corrected, followed by a replacement word.

たいそう、じゃなくて、体育の時間にサッカーをした。

Taisoo, ja nakute, taiiku no jikan ni sakkaa o shita.

We played soccer during exercise, no, I mean, P. E.

アメリカ、ではなく (て)、欧米諸国の傾向を考えてみましょう。

Amerika, de wa naku, (te) oobeeshokoku no keekoo o kangaete mimashoo.

Let's consider trends in America, no, in America and Europe.

However, in many cases, native speakers' utterances use no particular phrase between the initial word and the replacement other than possibly a short pause or an ('oh').

たいそう、あ、体育の時間にサッカーをした。

Taisoo, a, taiiku no jikan ni sakkaa o shita.

We played soccer during the exercise time, oh (I mean), P.E.

Adding more words

In amending a word or phrase, the speaker may add more words to the original word or phrase.

ケーキ、日本のケーキはおいしいね。

Keeki, Nihon no keeki wa oishii ne.

Cake, Japanese cake is delicious, isn't it.

テレビ見る、おかし食べながらテレビ見るのが好きです。

Terebi miru, okashi tabenagara terebi miru no ga suki desu.

I like watching TV, watching TV and eating snacks at the same time.

31.16.2 Correcting others

When the person you are talking to misunderstands what you have said, the communication may be adjusted by explaining what you meant to say. One of the following phrases may be used to initiate the correction.

うーん、そうじゃなくて... (I)

Uun, soo ja nakute...

Well, it's not that...

ごめん、そう言う意味じゃなくて... (I)

Gomen, soo yuu imi ja nakute...

Sorry, what I meant isn't that but...

すみません、私の説明が足りなかったようですが... (F)

Sumimasen, watashi no setsumee ga tarinakatta yoo desu ga...

Excuse me, my explanation appears to have been insufficient, but...

When someone who is your superior or someone you are not familiar with uses a word or phrase that is wrong, special care needs to be taken when making a correction. One of the following phrases can be used to preface your correction.

大変失礼ですが... (F)

Taihen shitsuree desu ga...

I'm terribly sorry but...

私が間違っていたら申し訳ないのですが... (F)

Watashi ga machigatte itara mooshiwake nai no desu ga...

I'm sorry if I'm wrong but...

私の覚え違いかもしれませんが... (F)

Watashi no oboechigai kamo shiremasen ga...

It may be that I don't remember it correctly, but...

ちょっと言いにくいのですが... (F)

Chotto iinikui no desu ga...

I'm a little hesitant to say this, but...

The following is an example of correcting others.

上司： 来週の会議の準備は進んでいるかね？

Jooshi: Raishuu no kaigi no junbi wa susunde iru ka ne?

Boss: Are you getting everything ready for the meeting next week?

部下 :	はい、あの、私の覚え違いかもしれませんが、会議は再来週では...
Buka:	Hai, ano, watashi no oboechigai kamo shiremasen ga, kaigi wa saraishuu de wa ...
Subordinate:	Yes, sir, well, I may have misremembered, but isn't the meeting the week after next?
上司 :	ああ、そうだったね。
Jooshi:	Aa, soo datta ne.
Boss:	Oh, that's right.

To someone you are familiar with or close to, you may use one of the following phrases.

それをいうなら (I)

Sore o yuu nara

You mean to say

ていうか (I)

Te yuu ka

Actually

～じゃなくて～でしょ (I)

... ja nakute ... desho

It's not ... but ...

Some examples are given below.

亜紀 : うわ、このうどん、細いね。

Aki: **Uwa, kono udon, hosoi ne.**

Aki: Wow, these udon noodles are thin.

健: ていうか、それはうどんじゃなくて、素麺でしょ。

Ken: **Te yuu ka, sore wa udon ja nakute, soomen desho.**

Ken: Actually, those aren't udon noodles, they're somen noodles.

祖父 : お前は、お菓子を作るのが上手だから、ソムリエになるといいな。

Sofu: **Omae wa, o-kashi o tsukuru no ga joozu da kara, somurie ni naru to ii na.**

Grandpa: You are good at making sweets, so you should become a sommelier.

孫 : おじいちゃん、それを言うなら、パティシエでしょ？

Mago: **Ojii-chan, sore o yuu nara, patishie desho?**

Grandchild: Grandpa, you mean, pâtissier, right?

31.17 Using and interpreting pauses and silence

Silence plays an important role in Japanese communication. While silence is perceived somewhat negatively in the Western tradition, it is traditionally considered a positive trait in Japanese culture. People of few words are seen as more trustworthy and thoughtful than those of many words.

Common use of silence in Japanese communication

In public situations such as meetings and social gatherings, opinions that disagree with the consensus are generally not openly expressed. A subordinate who disagrees with the opinion expressed by a superior will usually keep silent in order to maintain a harmonious relationship.

Interpreting pauses and silence

Interpreting the meaning of silence is a very difficult task. It could have various meanings, such as thoughtfulness, hesitation, obedience, respect, confusion, defiance, and indifference, to list but a few. The meaning of silence depends on the context of speech, such as who is participating in the communication, what the topic is, and how the communication affects other issues. For

instance, if one is giving a lecture/pep-talk to his/her subordinates, the silence from the subordinates may be interpreted as respect, obedience or thoughtfulness. On the other hand, if one asks someone to do a favor but does not get a response, such silence may be interpreted as hesitation, unwillingness, or even defiance. Japanese people often pause during a conversation for various purposes, such as to organize their thoughts, to look for the right word to use, or to analyze what has been said.

31.18 Gaze

Holding the gaze of another person for an extended time is not common in Japanese communication. Prolonged gaze at one's social superior may even be interpreted negatively; e.g. as a sign of contention, discontent, or rebelliousness. While Japanese people do make eye contact, they avert their gaze to look downwards in between eye contact. Studies have shown that North Americans of European descent, for example, perceive a person who looks down to be uninformed, not confident or even dishonest. However, Japanese people often perceive a person who looks down to be respectful. They also tend to look down when they are thinking or deciding what to say.

To indicate your undivided attention to the person to whom you are talking without maintaining prolonged eye contact, you may look towards the other person's neck and use appropriate **aizuchi**.

▶ 31.11