

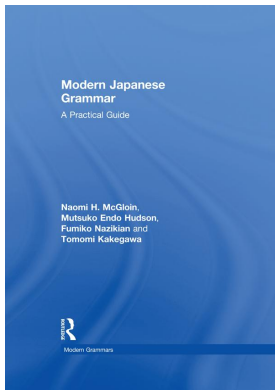
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Modern Japanese Grammar A Practical Guide

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

Register and style

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

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6

Register and style

6.1 Spoken and written languages

Typically, spoken discourse is spontaneous, fragmented and relatively unplanned, while written discourse is planned. Spoken discourse is characterized by frequent occurrences of ① fillers (**nanka**, **anoo**, **eeto**, ‘like’, ‘um’, ‘er’ etc.), ② sentence-/clause- final particles (**ne**, **yo**, **sa**, etc.), ③ repetitions, ④ repairs, ⑤ omission of particles like **wa** (for topic) and **o** (for direct object), ⑥ sentence fragments, ⑦ postposing, etc.

N: なんか最初はさ～ Eメールの使い方 \emptyset 知らなくてさ～お母さん
Nanka saisho wa saa ii-meeru no tsukaikata \emptyset shiranakute saa okaasan
 ① ② ⑤ ② ⑦

At first (she) didn't know how to use email so, my mother

O: あ～
Aa

N: んで～なんかここに来る前に教えて (.) 来たみたいな
N dee nanka koko ni kuru mae ni oshiete (.) kita mitaina
 ①

and so it's like I taught (her how to do it) before (I) came here.

The same content will appear very different, as shown below:

母は最初はEメールの使い方を知らなくて、ここに来る前に教えてきました。

Haha wa saisho wa ii-meeru no tsukaikata o shiranakute, koko ni kuru mae ni oshiete kimashita.

My mother did not know how to use email at first, and so I taught (her how to do it) before I came here.

6.2 Informal and formal styles

Informal (casual) and formal (polite) styles are distinguished first and foremost by the predicate forms. In informal style, the predicate is in plain form, and in formal style it is in polite form.

► 5.1

病院はあの建物ですよ。(F)

Byooin wa ano tatemono desu yo.

The hospital is that building.

病院はあの建物だよ。(I)

Byooin wa ano tatemono da yo.

The hospital is that building.

あした行きますか。(F)

Ashita ikimasu ka.

Will you go tomorrow?

あした行く？ (I)

Ashita iku?

Will you go tomorrow?

In the formal style, the verbs are often in honorific forms (exalting or humbling), as below. **Irasshaimasu** is an honorific (exalting) form of **iku** 'to go' in polite style, and **ukagaimasu** a humbling form of **iku** 'to go' in polite style.

あしたいらっしゃいますか。

Ashita irasshaimasu ka.

Are you coming tomorrow?

あした伺います。

Ashita ukagaimasu.

I will come tomorrow.

▶ 29

The formal (**desu/masu**) style is generally used in situations where one feels formality is appropriate or required (meeting a person for the first time, addressing strangers, in business/public meetings, making public presentations, etc.) or when talking to someone to whom one feels respect is due, such as one's social superiors. Informal (**da/-ru**) style, on the other hand, is used in informal situations, such as when talking with one's close friends or family members. A social superior may also use plain style when talking to his/her subordinates in less formal settings, but this is generally not reciprocated. Adults often use informal style in talking to children.

In face-to-face conversation, the speakers often mix formal and informal styles. A student may shift between the two styles when talking with a professor, and vice versa. Colleagues talking with each other may do the same. How and when the speaker mixes styles is governed by complex factors, but the speaker can project various social identities and relationships through the style mixing. The speaker can also adjust the social distance between him/her and the interlocutor.

Informal (**da/-ru**) style is normally used in formal writing such as newspapers, novels, scholarly articles and essays. Personal letters are usually written in formal style.

Informal speech style has the following characteristics.

- (1) The plain (**da/-ru**) forms of predicates are used.
- (2) Particles, especially **wa** and **o**, are often dropped in informal style.
- (3) In informal questions, the copula **da** and the question particle **ka** are dropped.
- (4) In informal style, certain vowels are dropped. Also certain types of contraction occur.

Some frequent sound changes include the following.

no 'that' → **n** (**no** → **n** preceding **desu** 'is,' **da** 'is,' **nara** 'if' **mono** 'thing' → **mon**; **node** 'because' → **nde**)

V-te/de iru 'be V-ing' → **V-teru/deru** (**tabete iru** 'is eating' → **tabete ru**; **yonde iru** 'is reading' → **yonde ru**)

V-te/de shimau 'finish V-ing' → **V-chau/jau** (**tabete shimau** 'finish eating' → **tabechau**; **yonde shimau** 'finish reading' → **yonjau**)

V-te wa 'if you do V' → **V-cha** (**tabenakute wa ikenai** 'have to eat' → **tabenakucha ikenai**; **tabete wa ikenai** 'should not eat' → **tabecha ikenai**)

V-nakereba 'have to V' → **nakya** (**tabenakereba ikenai** 'have to eat' → **tabenakya ikenai**)

V-te/de oku 'do V in advance' → **toku/doku** (**tabete oku** 'eat in advance' → **tabetoku**; **yonde oku** 'read in advance' → **yondoku**)

to (yuu) → **tte (yuu)** 'say that ...'

-ra, -ru → **n** (**suru no** 'do' → **sun no**; **shiteru no** 'be doing' → **shiten no**; **wakaranai** 'don't understand' → **wakannai**; **tsumaranai** 'not interesting' → **tsumannai**)

ジョンはさっき食堂でご飯を食べていましたよ。(F)

Jon wa sakki shokudoo de gohan o tabete imashita yo.

John was eating in the dining hall a while ago.

Feminine (gentle) and masculine (rough) styles

ジョンはさっき食堂でご飯食べてたよ。(I)

Jon wa sakki shokudoo de gohan tabeteta yo.

John was eating in the dining hall a while ago.

それは何ですか。(F)

Sore wa nan desu ka.

What is that?

それ何？(I)

Sore nani?

What is that?

何か持って行かなければいけないんですか。(F)

Nani ka motte ikanakereba ikenai n desu ka.

Do we have to bring something?

何か持ってかなきゃいけないの？(I)

Nani ka mottekanakya ikenai no?

Do we have to bring something?

NOTE

Every utterance has both formal and informal versions. In the rest of the book, both versions are not always given. In cases where several degrees of politeness/formality are indicated, sentences are marked by VF (very formal/polite), F (formal/polite) and I (informal/casual).

▶ 30.1

6.3

Feminine (gentle) and masculine (rough) styles

The distinction between male and female speech styles is an important aspect of the Japanese language. Note, however, that the use of strongly feminine (gentle) style and strongly masculine (rough) style has declined in recent decades. The distinction can be most readily seen in (1) specific lexical items, (2) personal pronouns, (3) sentence-final particles, and (4) the use of the copula **da**.

Some specific lexical items include masculine **meshi** 'rice/meal' vs. feminine/neutral **gohan**, masculine **hara** 'stomach' vs. feminine/neutral **onaka**, masculine **kuu** 'to eat' vs. feminine/neutral **taberu**. With respect to personal pronouns, **boku** 'I,' **ore** 'I (rough),' **kimi** 'you,' **omae** 'you (rough),' and **kisama** 'you (rough)' are generally restricted to men, while women might use **atakushi** 'I,' **atashi** 'I,' and **anata** 'you.' (Note, however, that the use of second person pronouns is quite limited.)

▶ 8.1

The use of sentence-final forms can be grouped into four types. The following are some examples.

Strongly masculine:

ぞ 行くぞ
zo Iku zo.
I am going!

ぜ 行くぜ
ze Iku ze.
I am going.

～ないか 行かないか。
nai ka Ikanai ka.
Won't you go?

V(imperative)よ 行けよ、食べろよ
yo Ike yo. Tabero yo.
Go! Eat!

Moderately masculine:

Plain form よ yo	行くよ Iku yo. I am going, I tell you.
だ+よ/ね/よね da+yo, ne, yo ne	きれいだよ。 きれいだね。 Kiree da yo. Kiree da ne. It's pretty. It's pretty, don't you think?
	きれいだよね。 Kiree da yo ne. It's pretty, right?

Moderately feminine:

Plain form の no	行くのよ。 Iku no. I am going, you know.
--------------------	--

Strongly feminine:

わ wa	行くわ。 Iku wa. I am going.
わよ/わね/わよね wa yo/wa ne/wa yo ne	行くわよ、行くわね。 Iku wa yo. Iku wa ne. I am going, you know. I am going OK?
	行くわよね。 Iku wa yo ne. (You) are going, right?
N/na-adj.+なの na no	本なの。 いやなの。 Hon na no. Iya na no. It's a book. I don't like it.
かしら kashira	行くかしら。 Iku kashira. I wonder if (X) is going.

Men and women these days do not use strongly gendered language in their daily conversation. Both men and women tend to speak in a moderately masculine style, and thus there is not much gender difference with respect to sentence-final forms. However, strongly gendered styles are employed in comic books, *anime*, movie subtitles and translations of foreign novels, and also by individuals who want to create certain gendered identities.