

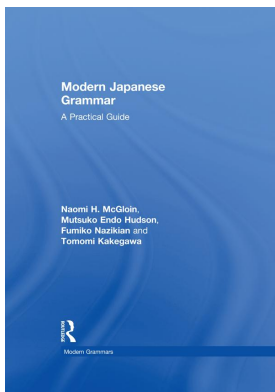
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 21 Sep 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Modern Japanese Grammar A Practical Guide

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

Pronouns

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203856628.ch8>

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

Published online on: 04 Oct 2013

How to cite :- Naomi H. McGloin, Mutsuko Endo Hudson, Fumiko Nazikian, Tomomi Kakegawa.

04 Oct 2013, *Pronouns from: Modern Japanese Grammar, A Practical Guide* Routledge

Accessed on: 21 Sep 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203856628.ch8>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

8

Pronouns

8.1 Personal pronouns

Japanese has a variety of personal pronouns for first, second, and third persons. The choice of personal pronouns depends on the degree of formality, the gender, age, rank and status of the speaker and the listener, and other pragmatic factors such as the social and psychological distance between the speakers.

	<i>Formal</i>	<i>Informal</i>
First person singular 'I'	watakushi (VF) watashi (formal for men, neutral for women)	boku (male) ore (male, rough) atashi (female)
Second person singular 'you'	anata	kimi (male), omae (male, rough) anta (inelegant)
Third person singular 'he/she'	kare/kanojo	aitsu (male, rough)

The most common first person pronoun is **watashi**. **Watakushi** is more formal than **watashi**. **Boku** 'I' is predominantly used by male speakers in informal situations, while **atashi** is usually used by female speakers. For the second person pronouns, **anata** is the most neutral form, used mainly by women (and sometimes by older men). Addressing someone older and/or higher in rank with **anata** is considered rude, however. **Kimi** and **omae** are informal second person pronouns, which are predominantly used by male speakers when talking among equals or to someone socially subordinate to the speaker.

The third person pronouns **kare** 'he' or **kanojo** 'she' are not very common. They are inappropriate referring to people higher in rank, babies and small children, historical figures, etc. **Kare** and **kanojo** often mean 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend', respectively.

Although there are a variety of personal pronouns, their usage is restricted.

1) Pronouns tend to be avoided when the speaker believes that the identity of the referent is obvious to both the speaker and the listener.

(私は) 山田です。

(Watashi wa) Yamada desu.

(I) am Yamada.

In this example, Yamada is introducing himself/herself. The subject **watashi** 'I' is omitted, because the context makes it obvious.

2) The use of **anata** ‘you’ should be avoided, especially when talking with your superior, someone you don’t know well or someone to whom you don’t feel close. When there is a need to address the listener, it is often done by name or title.

田中さんは学生ですか。

Tanaka-san wa gakusee desu ka.

Are (you, Mr/Ms Tanaka) a student?

3) For plural forms of pronouns, one of the suffixes **-tachi**, **-domo**, **-gata** or **-ra** may be added:

	<i>Formal</i>	<i>Informal</i>
First person plural ‘we’	wata(ku)shi-tachi wata(ku)shi-domo	boku-tachi, boku-ra, atashi-tachi, atashi-ra
Second person plural ‘you’	anata-tachi, anata-gata	kimi-tachi, omae-tachi, kimi-ra, omae-ra
Third person plural ‘they’	kare-tachi/kanojo-tachi kare-ra/kanojo-ra	

The suffix **-domo** is primarily used with the formal first person pronouns **watashi** and **watakushi** ‘I’ to form a humble ‘we.’ Hence **watashi-domo** is more polite than **watashi-tachi**. **-Gata**, used with second person pronouns, is an honorific plural suffix and is more polite than **-tachi**. Hence **anata-gata** ‘you (plural)’ is more polite than **anata-tachi**. The suffix **-ra** can be attached to first, second and third person pronouns (e.g. **watashi-ra** ‘we,’ **kimi-ra** ‘you (plural),’ **anta-ra** ‘you (plural),’ **kare-ra** ‘they’), and is used in informal contexts.

8.2

Reflexive and reciprocal pronouns

The reflexive pronoun in Japanese is **jibun** ‘self,’ and it refers to only a human referent. Unlike English, which has multiple forms of reflexive pronouns (e.g. ‘myself,’ ‘herself’), Japanese has just one form **jibun** for first, second, and third persons. The plural form is marked by the suffix **-tachi**. **Jibun** or **jibun-tachi** can serve various grammatical functions such as the possessor (with the particle **no**), subject (with **ga**), and instrument/means (with **de**).

- (a) 太郎は自分の車で出かけた。
Taroo wa jibun no kuruma de dekaketa.
Taro went out in his own car.
- (b) 道子は自分が一番きれいだと思っている。
Michiko wa jibun ga ichiban kiree da to omotte iru.
Michiko considers herself to be the prettiest. (Speaking of Michiko, she thinks she is the prettiest.)
- (c) これは学生が自分たちで考えた案です。
Kore wa gakusee ga jibun-tachi de kangaeta an desu.
This is an idea that the students came up with by themselves.

In (a) **jibun** refers to ‘Taro’ and modifies **kuruma** ‘car.’ In (b) **jibun** refers to Michiko and functions as the subject of the embedded sentence. In (c) **jibun-tachi** refers to the students.

Otagai ‘each other’ is a reciprocal pronoun and refers to human referents.

- (a) 道子と健はお互いに尊敬しあっている。
Michiko to Ken wa otagai ni sonkee shiatte iru.
Michiko and Ken respect each other.
- (b) お互いの気持ちを理解する事が大切だ。
Otagai no kimochi o rikai suru koto ga taisetsu da.
It is important to understand each other’s feelings.

In (a) **otagai** refers to Michiko and Ken, and is used to indicate the reciprocal nature of their feelings. Here **otagai ni** ‘mutually’ acts as an adverb and modifies the verb **sonkee shiau** ‘respect each other.’ In (b), the referent of **otagai** is people in general. **Otagai**, with the possessive particle **no** ‘of,’ forms a phrase to modify the following noun, **otagai no kimochi** ‘mutual feeling.’

8.3 Pronoun modification

In Japanese, pronouns can be modified by nouns, adjectives or clauses.

(a) Modified by nouns

学生の私には高すぎる。

Gakusee no watashi ni wa taka sugiru.

It is too expensive for me, a student.

(b) Modified by adjectives

かわいそうな私

kawaisoo na watashi

poor me

すばらしいあなた

subarashii anata

wonderful you

幸せな彼/彼女

shiwase na kare/kanojo

happy he (him)/she (her)

(c) Modified by clauses

一人では何もできない私

hitori dewa nani mo dekinai watashi

I, who cannot do anything alone

何でもできるあなた

nan demo dekiru anata

You, who can do anything

In (a) the pronoun **watashi** ‘I’ and the modifying noun **gakusee** are in appositive relationship. In (b), the adjectives provide characterizing information about each of the pronouns **watashi** ‘I’, **anata** ‘you’ and **kare/kanojo** ‘he/she.’ In (c) the pronouns **watashi** ‘I’ and **anata** ‘you’ are modified by the preceding clauses.

▶ 7.2