

Lesson 17

A telephone conversation between John and Tadashi's mother

ジョン もしもし。
山川 はい、山川ですが。
ジョン 今日は。ジョン・スミスです。
山川 あら、ジョンさん、お久しぶり。お元気ですか。
ジョン はい、おかげさまで。正さんはいますか。
山川 正は朝から病院へ行っていますが。
ジョン 日曜も仕事ですか。
山川 ええ、先週は休んでいましたけれど。病院の新しい
電話番号は知っていますか。
ジョン 古いのは知っていますが新しいのはまだ知りません。
山川 ええと、新しいのは…。ここにありました。3772-9514 です。
ジョン 3772-9514 ですね。内線番号は。
山川 さあ、それは分かりません。
ジョン それじゃ、けっこうです。ありがとうございました。
山川 どういたしまして。
ジョン それでは失礼します。
山川 さようなら。

Comment

The first word in this passage tells you that John is talking on the 'phone. もしもし is the normal way to open a telephone conversation. In fact it is only encountered in one other situation: when you are trying to get the attention of a waiter or have just entered a shop and no one is at the counter. The fact that it is Mrs Yamakawa who answers the 'phone is made clear in her second response: あら is an exclusively female exclamation.

The conversation above is intentionally simple and is restricted to normal polite forms. In fact, you will find that in Japan people are extremely formal on the telephone and use a plethora of polite formulae, which you will have to learn in due course. The main reason for this is that you cannot see the person on the

other end of the line and so you ‘overdo’ it on purpose. You will notice a high frequency of truncated phrases, typical of natural speech. This is what is happening in Mrs Yamakawa’s first response はい、山川ですが, where が (usually pronounced quite lightly with a falling intonation) creates a prefatory statement indicating that the speaker is waiting for the next words of the listener.

17.1 The ～ている form continued: punctual verbs

正は朝から病院へ行っています。
新しい電話番号は知っていますか。

When punctual verbs are in the ～ている form they express resultative action. In the ～ていた form they express resultative action in the past, although the results of the action need not be still operative at the time of utterance. This set includes verbs like:

知 (し) る	know
着 (つ) く	arrive
始 (はじ) まる	begin
帰 (かえ) る	return
覚 (おぼ) える	remember, memorise

The point about these verbs is that the action is seen as taking place as an indivisible whole, hence it cannot be analysed any further. Interestingly, and quite at variance with English, some verbs of motion in Japanese such as 行く, 出る and 来る are included in this category; this suggests that motion tends to be seen as a change of state in Japanese rather than something continuous.

- (a) 兄は今アメリカに行っています。
My elder brother is now in America.
- (b) 兄は去年アメリカに行っていました。
My elder brother was in America last year.

- (c) 兄はアメリカにいます。
My elder brother is in America.

(a) does not mean that my elder brother is at this moment on the plane, but that he has arrived there and is still there: he 'has gone'. On the other hand (b), which is set in the past, implies that my elder brother went to America but is no longer there. (c) is simply stating the fact that he is in America. More will be said about this stative/dynamic analysis in due course.

17.2 The verb 知る 'to know'

古いのは知っていますが、新しいのは知りません。

Note that the verb 知る 'to know' is not stative as it is in English (we do not need to say 'I am knowing') but is a punctual verb. 'I know' is therefore expressed in Japanese as 知っています, 'I am now in a state of having got to know.' 知る is also unusual in that the negative is *never* *知っていません but always either 知らない or 知りません, presumably because 'not-knowing' is itself a state.

川田さんの住所は知っていますが電話番号は知りません。
I know Kawada's address but not his telephone number.

17.3 The verbs 聞く and 着る

Some verbs can appear in more than one category, which tells us that these verbs have multiple meanings dependent upon context. Observe that the verbs 聞く and 着る, for instance, can be either durative or punctual.

ラジオで音楽を聞いている。
I am listening to the music on the radio.
[durative, hence progressive action]

そのことは聞いています。

I have heard about that.

[*punctual*, hence resultative action]

あの子はとなりの部屋で洋服を着ています。

The child is dressing in the next room.

[*durative*, hence progressive action]

母はめずらしく着物を着ている。

My mother is wearing a kimono, unusually for her.

[*punctual*, hence resultative action]

17.4 The verbs ちがう, 出来る, and 分かる

It is here that we can treat the three verbs ちがう, 出来る and 分かる, which were listed under the stative heading in 16.4.

ちがう. When it means 'to differ' it is stative and is *not* used with ～ている. When it means 'to be wrong' it is punctual and *can* be used with ～ている.

私の考えとあなたの考えはちがう。

My ideas and yours differ.

きみの考えはちがっている。

Your ideas are wrong.

出来る. When it means 'capable of' it is stative and is *not* used with ～ている. When it means 'to be complete, finished' it is punctual and *can* take ～ている.

君はら、り、る、れ、ろ、の発音がち'んと出来ますか。

Can you pronounce *ra, ri, ru, re, ro* properly?

この作文はとてもよく出来ている。

This composition is very well written.

分かる. When it means 'to understand, to be clear' it is stative and is *not* used with ～ている. When it means 'to be aware of something' it is punctual and

takes ～ている.

あの学生は日本語がよく分かります。

That student understands Japanese well.

危険はよく分かっています。

I am well aware of the danger.

17.5 'Thanks to you'

おかげさまで。

This phrase, which literally means something like 'in your shade', is often used as a simple polite answer to a question about the health of you and your family. Try to learn it as an automatic response to such solicitous enquiries.

17.6 けれど

休んでいましたけれど。

In the classical form of the language けれど was a particular verb ending, but now it is best to regard it as a kind of conjunctive marker which is simply added to the verb. It signifies 'although'. You will also find it often contracted to けど.

17.7 Perfective of discovery

ここにありました。

If you are searching for something and have just found it, or if you are standing on the platform and a train arrives, you will use the perfective form of the verb to express the discovery or the surprise. This is either because an action has now been completed or because, as here, the object was there all along; compare the English 'it was here all the time!'

17.8 'Goodbye'

さようなら。

This word must have the distinction of being the best known, and most mispronounced, Japanese word in the West. You must therefore take particular care to pronounce it properly, with a long *yō* and a long rising tone. It is in fact a survival from the classical language and literally means 'so if it be thus'. Note that さようなら is not actually that polite and so will not be used by a junior talking to his superior. In the telephone conversation Mrs Yamakawa can say さようなら but John really has to use something a little more humble, such as 失礼します. Refer back to the business conversation in 6.7. さようなら is not used in such a context.

Key to conversation

Romanisation

Jon	Moshi moshi.
Yamakawa	Hai, Yamakawa desu ga/
Jon	Konnichi wa. Jon Sumisu desu.
Yamakawa	Ara, Jon-san, o-hisashiburi. O-genki desu ka.
Jon	Hai, o-kagesama de. Tadashi-san wa imasu ka.
Yamakawa	Tadashi wa asa kara byōin e itte imasu ga.
Jon	Nichiyō mo shigoto desu ka.

Yamakawa	Ē, senshū wa yasunde imashita keredo. Byōin no atarashii denwa bangō wa shitte imasu ka.
Jon	Furui no wa shitte imasu ga atarashii no wa mada shirimasen.
Yamakawa	Ēto, atarashii no wa....Koko ni arimashita. San-nana-nana-ni no kyū-go-ichi-yon desu.
Jon	San-nana-nana-ni no kyū-go-ichi-yon desu ne. Naisen bangō wa.
Yamakawa	Sā, sore wa wakarimasen.
Jon	Sore ja, kekkō desu. Arigatō gozaimashita.
Yamakawa	Dō itashimashite.
Jon	Sore de wa shitsurei shimasu.
Yamakawa	Sayōnara.

Translation

John	Hello?
Yamakawa	Hello! Yamakawa speaking.
John	Hello. This is John Smith.
Yamakawa	John! It's been ages. How are you?
John	Very well thank you. Is Tadashi there?
Yamakawa	Tadashi's been at the hospital since this morning.
John	He's working even on Sunday?
Yamakawa	Yes, though he did take a day off last week. Do you know the new telephone number of the hospital?
John	I know the old one but I don't know the new one yet.
Yamakawa	Let me see now, the new one is/Here it is. It's 3772-9514.
John	That's 3772-9514, right? What's the extension number?
Yamakawa	Now that I don't know.
John	Never mind then. Thank you very much.
Yamakawa	Not at all.
John	Well then, goodbye.
Yamakawa	Goodbye.
