

Lesson 24

A conversation between Kuniko and her mother.

国子 ねえ、おかあさん、この前京都へ行った時、どこに泊まったの。

母 あの時は学会がたくさんあってホテルはどこも空いていなかったの、実おにいさんの下宿のそばのお寺に泊まったけれど。

国子 今ごろも宿はどこもいっぱいかしら。

母 そうね。秋は観光客も多いし、学会に来る外国人も多いからいっぱいかもしれないわね。

国子 きょう、学校の帰りに指定席のきっぷを買いに駅に行ってみたけど、来週の木曜のはもう一枚も残っていなかったわ。

母 それじゃあ、宿もきつといっぱいね。京都のホテルがいっぱいの時も奈良のホテルは時々空いていますよ。

国子 おかあさん達の泊まったお寺はよかった。

母 そうね。静かで清潔なところでしたよ。

国子 行く前に予約をした。

母 いいえ、あの時はおにいさんの下宿へ行ってから搜したのよ。

国子 おにいさんに電話をかけて聞いてみるわ。

Comment

Japanese may not have any 'masculine' or 'feminine' genders for its nouns, but this does not mean that the language lacks a sense of gender. Far from it, gender is very strongly marked in everyday speech; men and women speak in different tones and use different words. It is immediately obvious from the words alone here that this conversation is between two women. Note in particular the use of *ねえ* as a way of catching someone's attention, and a whole series of female specific sentence ending markers: *かしら* for 'I wonder', and *わね*, *わ*, *のよ* etc. Since the conversation is an intimate one between mother and daughter, the plain form is used. You will however notice that the mother does use *～ます* and *でした* on two occasions. In this particular context, such a change marks a

very slight shift: from talking on an equal footing to a more 'kindly' tone. Study this conversation very carefully. Ask yourself, for example, why both the mother and Kuniko use the word おにいさん to refer to Minoru. It is because he is Kuniko's *elder* brother.

24.1 The noun 時

この前京都へ行った時、どこに泊まったの。
あの時は学会がたくさんあってホテルはどこも空いていなかった。

時, here pronounced *とき*, is a noun meaning 'time' and when modified by a verb it can function as a subordinating conjunction meaning 'when'. Being a noun, it can also appear directly after pre-nouns (この, その, あの), descriptive verbs, adjectival nouns + な, and true verbs; but to be linked to another noun, of course, it needs the particle の. 時 can also be found with or without the particle に. When に is used, a certain amount of stress is being put on 時. We shall classify the use of this word into three categories.

(a) A specific identifiable *moment* in perfective and imperfective contexts

その時電話がなった。

At that moment the telephone rang.

三時に電話をかけた時には彼は留守でした。

When I telephoned him at three o'clock he was out.

十年前、広島に住んでいた時ひどい台風にあいました。

Ten years ago, when we were living in Hiroshima, we experienced a terrible typhoon.

帰る時には戸にかぎをかけて下さい。

When you go home, please lock the door.

(b) A specific identifiable *period of time*, usually in a perfective context but occasionally in an imperfective context

子供の時にピアノを習いました。

I learned the piano when I was a child.

今が大切な時です。

Now is the important time.

仕事を捜していた時には毎月二十通以上いろいろな会社の手紙を書いた。

While I was looking for a job, I wrote more than twenty letters a month to various companies.

(c) A moment or a period of time or an occasion which is *generic*, hence unspecified. Consequently the ~た form is not used here.

火事時にはエレベーターを使わないで下さい。

In the event of fire, please don't use the lift.

暑い時には冷たいビールがおいしい。

When it's hot, cold beer tastes good.

24.2 The use of の in sentence-final position

どこに泊まったの。

The sentence particle の is here being used to signify an informal question. Remember that it is by and large a 'female' ending.

24.3 前

この前京都へ行った時、
行く前に予約をした。

前 is another noun used in time clauses; it means 'before'.

(a) Noun + の + 前, or prenoun + 前:

その前はどこにいたのですか。

Where were you before that?

この前三ヶ月ぶりに山田さんが遊びに来ました。

The other day Mr Yamada came to visit for the first time in three months.

試験の前は少なくとも一日 (に) 八時間勉強しました。

Before the examination I studied at least eight hours a day.

(b) Verb + 前

The verb preceding 前 can *never* occur in the perfective *～た* form. This is an instance of relative tense in Japanese: the meaning of 前 makes it inevitable that the action of the verb in the 前 clause occurs after the verb in the main clause, so it must be imperfective with reference to the final verb.

お金を払う前に金額をよく確かめて下さい。

Please make sure of the sum before you pay.

ベトナムは独立する前はフランスの植民地だった。

Vietnam was a French colony before its independence.

24.4 Tense agreement

The use of time expressions raises the matter of tense agreement between clauses in Japanese. Students are often confused to find mixtures of perfective and imperfective where they expect a measure of 'tense agreement', and this gives rise to the common but erroneous impression that Japanese is generally lax in such matters. It is probably wiser to say that 'tense agreement' as it is usually applied to European languages does not exist in Japanese. But this should not lead you to assume that you can just mix imperfective and perfective at random; it is just that the decisions are made on somewhat different criteria. The problem for the student is that these criteria are still not sufficiently understood. The following example should at least give you some idea of what can be involved:

去年中国へ行く時空港で橋本さんに会いました。
去年中国へ行った時空港で橋本さんに会いました。

Both of these sentences are correct and both can be translated as 'When I went to China last year I met Hashimoto at the airport.' But the first sentence with the imperfective 行く indicates that the meeting with Hashimoto occurred prior to the act of going, hence the speaker probably met Mr Hashimoto at London Airport. The second sentence with the perfective 行った implies that the speaker probably met Mr Hashimoto having gone to China, so the meeting could well have taken place in Beijing Airport.

24.5 かしら

宿はどこもいっぱいかしら。

かしら or のかしら is used, usually by women, at the end of a statement to express a rhetorical question, as though one were half-way addressing oneself. かしら can be added directly to nouns or verbs; のかしら, however, needs the copula な to link to nouns.

あしたは雨かしら。

Will it rain tomorrow, I wonder?

来ないのかしら。

Perhaps he's not coming?

便利なのかしら。

I wonder if it might be convenient.

24.6 かもしれない

いっぱいかもしれないわね。

This is a colloquial expression meaning 'perhaps' or 'maybe'. It can be used directly after the plain form of a verb, or directly after a noun.

さっき来たのは山田さんかもしれない。

Maybe it was Mr Yamada who came a few minutes ago.

工事のため電車は遅れるかもしれません。

Due to construction work, trains may be delayed.

山の上は寒いかもしれないのでセーターを持っていきます。

I will take my jumper with me because it may be cold on top of the mountain.

24.7 The ～て form + みる

指定席のきっぷを買いに駅に行ってみただけれど、
電話をかけて聞いてみるわ。

As we saw in lesson 16, the ～て form of the verb can be used in combination with a number of other verbs. These combinations often need special attention because they are used idiomatically; in other words, their meaning is not immediately obvious from the constituent elements. This ～てみる pattern means 'do something and see how it goes' or 'try to...'

彼に手紙を書いてみましたが、今のところ返事がありません。

I have written to him, but so far there is no reply.

三時ごろに電話をかけてみましたが、彼女は留守でした。

I tried to call her around three o'clock but she was not in.

Look at the phrase 電話をかけて聞いてみる again. There is a series of two ～て forms in a row. Such series may seem a bit complicated at first but they are quite commonly used. Here she is saying 'I'll try calling and asking him'.

家にもどってもう一度捜してみます。

I'll go home and try looking for it again.

24.8 一 + numerical classifier + も/ない

来週の木曜のはもう一枚も残っていなかったわ。

This pattern expresses 'not a single...'

今週は授業に一度も出なかった。

This week I did not attend lectures even once.

先週は一回も授業を休まなかった。

Last week I did not miss a single lecture.

彼からは一通も手紙が来ない。

Not even a single letter has arrived from him.

24.9 Unmarked questions

おかあさん達の泊まったお寺はよかった。
行く前に予約をした。

Although neither of these phrases have either a か or a の to show that they are questions, the context will tell you that they must be. In live speech the question would be clear from the rising intonation. The same kind of thing happens in English, but we have the help of a question mark to help us out when writing such a sentence down. In Japanese it is not the habit to use such a symbol. You will undoubtedly be thrown by this a few times before you learn to anticipate it.

Key to conversation

Romanisation

Kuniko Nē, o-kāsan, kono mae Kyōto e itta toki, doko ni tomatta no.

Haha Ano toki wa gakkai ga takusan atte hoteru wa doko mo aite inakatta no de,

Minoru o-niisan no geshuku no soba no o-tera ni tomatta keredo.
Kuniko Imagoro mo yado wa doko mo ippai kashira.
Haha Sō ne. Aki wa kankōkyaku mo oi shi, gakkai ni kuru gaikokujin mo ōi kara ippai ka mo shirenai wa ne.
Kuniko Kyō, gakkō no kaeri ni shiteiseki no kippu o kai ni eki ni itte mita kedo, raishū no mokuyō no wa mo ichimai mo nokotte inakatta wa.
Haha Sore jā, yado mo kitto ippai ne. Kyōto no hoteru ga ippai no toki mo Nara no hoteru wa tokidoki aite imasu yo.
Kuniko Okāsantachi no tomatta o-tera wa yokatta.
Haha Sō ne. Shizuka de seiketsu na tokoro deshita yo.
Kuniko Iku mae ni yoyaku o shita.
Haha Iie, ano toki wa o-niisan no geshuku e itte kara sagashita no yo.
Kuniko O-niisan ni denwa o kakete kiite miru wa.

Translation

Kuniko Mother, when you last went to Kyoto, where did you stay?
Mother There were a lot of conferences on then and all the hotels were full, so we stayed at a temple next door to Minoru's lodgings.
Kuniko I wonder if all the inns are full now too.
Mother Yes, I wonder. There are lots of tourists in the autumn and lots of foreigners coming for conferences, so they might all be full.
Kuniko Today on the way home from school I went to the station to see if I could buy a reserved seat, but there wasn't a single ticket left for next Thursday.
Mother In that case all the inns will be full too. Sometimes when Kyoto hotels are full, hotels in Nara have vacancies though, you know.
Kuniko Was the temple where you stayed good?
Mother Yes. It was quiet and clean.
Kuniko Did you book before you left?
Mother No, we found it after we had got to Minoru's lodgings.
Kuniko I'll try ringing him to ask.
