

## Lesson 42

---

### A 'grammar' lesson

- ジョン 正君、動詞の使い方でもよく分からないことがあるんですけど....
- 正 僕に説明出来るかな。どんなことですか。
- ジョン 動詞には自動詞と他動詞がありますね。この二つの使い方がちがうということは分かるんです。例えば、「りんごを落とす」と「りんごが落ちる」は 'Drop an apple' と 'An apple drops' ですね。
- 正 そうですよ。大切なことは初めの例では「りんご」は目的語ですから、助詞の「を」がつきます。次の文では「りんご」は主語ですから助詞は「が」ですね。
- ジョン ええ、そこまでは問題はないんです。「授業を始める」と「授業が始まる」、「方向を変える」と「方向が変わる」など、よく分かります。
- 正 それでは、難しい点というのは何ですか。
- ジョン きょうの朝刊に、大阪で起きた事件の犯人が三日後に、ホノルルでつかまった、と書いてありました。なぜ、受け身を使って、つかまえられたと言わないんですか。
- 正 それは、「つかまえられた」と言うと、状況を犯人の立場から見ることになるからです。
- ジョン 次に分からないのは他動詞と使役動詞のちがいなんです。「授業を終らせた」と「授業を終えた」は同じ意味ですか。
- 正 いや、全く同じだとは言えませんね。結果的には同じですが、前者の方が話し手が「そのようにした」という意味合いがずっと強くなります。
- ジョン その上、自動詞と可能を表す動詞の形が同じなのもあるでしょう。
- 正 そうですね。でもそれは意味の上から明らかだからあまり問題はないんじゃないでしょうか。何だかうまく説明できなくて、申し訳ないな。質問はそれだけですか。
- ジョン まだあるんです。
-

### Comment

This conversation spans two lessons. It is a little unusual in that it represents a discussion about Japanese grammar. It concentrates on verbs and deals in particular with the existence in Japanese of a large number of transitive and intransitive sets of verbs. There are two problems here for the learner. One is that there are no easy rules to help you decide whether a verb is transitive or intransitive: you simply have to learn them in context. The other is that the pairing is not replicated in English, so that you will find yourself translating the intransitive verb with an English passive. So how does an intransitive differ from a passive? Such nuances might better be left until later, but they are unavoidable. We begin with a recap on stative verbs.

#### 42.1 Use of には with stative verbs

僕に説明出来るかな。

In 16.4 you were introduced to the idea that there are two major categories of verb in Japanese: stative and dynamic. To repeat: although the overwhelming majority of Japanese verbs is dynamic, there is a small set of stative verbs which are rather important. 出来る is one of these verbs. Remember that they do not need to be in the ~ている form to indicate present situation, and that they are often found in the は + が construction, with which you are now familiar. Sometimes, as in the example sentence, in order to make the stative nature of these patterns absolutely clear, you will find the person or object involved is followed not by the particles は or が but by に (は). Observe the following:

この仕事は子供には出来ません。

This work cannot be done by a child.

私にはそれは出来ない。

I couldn't possibly do that.

私には彼の気持ちがよく分かりません。

I find his feelings difficult to understand.

この電卓には電池が要らない。

For this pocket calculator batteries are not necessary.

The use of **には** in contexts such as these is definitely emphatic, putting stress on the person or object involved.

#### 42.2 Transitive and intransitive pairs

「りんごを落とす」と「りんごが落ちる」

As we have already explained, there are a large number of transitive and intransitive pairs, such as ...を落とす and ...が落ちる. You will find a representative list of them at the end of the next lesson. By and large, try to keep to the rule that transitive verbs, because they ‘act’ on other things, should be restricted to animate subjects:

あのお医者さんが父の難病を治しました。

That doctor cured my father’s intractable illness.

Although it is possible to say ‘the new medicine cured his illness’ in English, you should resist the temptation to say this in Japanese. It should be rephrased using the intransitive equivalent of 治す, namely 治る.

あの新しい薬で (or のおかげで) 父の難病が治りました。

Thanks to that new medicine, my father’s intractable illness was cured.

#### 42.3 Choosing between intransitives and the passive

きのうの朝刊に、大阪で起きた事件の犯人が三日後に、  
ホノルルでつかまった、と書いてありました。なぜ、  
受け身を使って、つかまえられたと言わないんですか。

It was explained in 35.2 that the passive form is not used quite as much in Japanese as in English, partly no doubt because of the existence of these intransitive equivalents. But in the example that John quotes here, an animate subject is involved and so both the intransitive verb *つかまる* and the passive of the transitive verb *つかまえる* can in fact be used. So how do they differ? This is particularly troublesome for speakers of English, because we often have to translate *both* verbs with a passive: 'was captured'. The answer to John's question is that the intransitive *つかまった* simply means that the police caught up with him in Honolulu; *つかまえられた*, the passive of the transitive equivalent, would only be used if you wish to see the event from the point of view of the criminal. Here you can see the adversative connotations of the passive coming into play. The rule is therefore that if an intransitive equivalent exists, it is normally preferred to the passive of the transitive verb, unless you wish to make a special point.

Study the following sentences in which there is a contrast between usage of the intransitive and usage of the kind of adversative passive construction that was introduced in 35.4:

あそこに新しい家が建ちました。(intrans.)

A new house had been built there.

うちの南側に家を建てられたので、日が入らなくなった。(trans. passive)

A new house was built on our south side and it blocked the sunlight.

妹にかぜをうつされた。(trans. passive)

My younger sister gave me a cold.

妹からかぜがうつった。(intrans.)

The cold passed on to me from my younger sister.

この病気はうつりませんよ。(intrans.)

This disease is not infectious.

#### 42.4 Differences between transitives and causatives

「授業を終らせた。」と「授業を終えた。」

This is the other side of the coin. On a number of occasions, you may be uncertain as to which form of the verb should be used: a transitive verb or the causative form of its intransitive equivalent. In general, the causative puts much greater stress on the coercive element:

この幼稚園では子供を三時半に帰します。(trans.)

At this kindergarten they let the children go home at three thirty.

この幼稚園では子供を三時半に帰させます。(intrans. causative)

At this kindergarten they make the children go home at three thirty.

六時までには仕事をすまします。(trans.)

I'll finish the work by six.

六時までには仕事をすませます。(intrans. causative)

I'll make sure the work is finished at six.

#### 42.5 Distinguishing the potential from the intransitive

自動詞と可能をあらわす動詞の形が同じなのもあるでしょう。

In a number of cases it will seem that the intransitive form of the verb is exactly the same as the potential of the transitive. It will usually be readily apparent from context which is meant:

姉は上手にフランスパンが焼けます。(potential of transitive)

My elder sister can bake French bread very well.

こちらの魚ですか。すぐ焼けますからちょっとお待ち下さい。(intrans.)  
This fish? It won't take long to grill. Please wait for a minute.

あの巨人は手で鉄の棒が割れる。(potential of transitive)  
That giant can break an iron bar in his hands.

きのうの地震でまどガラスが数枚割れた。(intrans.)  
A number of window panes were broken in yesterday's earthquake.

#### 42.6 'Somehow or other'

何だかうまく説明できなくて、

何だか, literally 'what is it?', is an idiomatic phrase meaning 'somehow' or 'for some unknown reason'. As a rule it will come at the beginning of the sentence. You may often find it delivered with a little sideways nod of the head: a sign of slight embarrassment in this particular case.

#### Key to conversation

---

##### Romanisation

- Jon Tadashi-kun, dōshi no tsukaikata de dōmo yoku wakaranai koto ga arun desu kedo...
- Tadashi Boku ni setsumei dekiru kana. Donna koto desu ka.
- Jon Dōshi ni wa jidōshi to tadōshi ga arimasu ne. Kono futatsu no tsukaikata ga chigau to iu koto wa wakarun desu. Tatoeba, 'ringo o otosu' to 'ringo ga ochiru' wa 'drop an apple' to 'an apple drops' desu ne.
- Tadashi So desu yo. Taisetsu na koto wa hajime no rei de wa 'ringo' wa mokutekigo desu kara, joshi no 'o' ga tsukimasu. Tsugi no bun de wa 'ringo' wa shugo desu kara joshi wa 'ga' desu ne.
- Jon Ē, soko made wa mondai wa nain desu. 'Jugyō o hajimeru' to 'jugyō ga

hajimaru', 'hōkō o kaeru' to 'hōkō ga kawaru' nado, yoku wakarimasu.

Tadashi Sore de wa, muzukashii ten to iu no wa nan desu ka.

Jon Kinō no chōkan ni, Ōsaka de okita jiken no hannin ga mikka go ni, Honoruru de tsukamatta, to kaite arimashita. Naze, ukemi o tsukatte, 'tsukamaereta' to iwanain desu ka.

Tadashi Sore wa, 'tsukamaereta' to iu to, jōkyō o hannin no tachiba kara miru koto ni naru kara desu.

Jon Tsugi ni wakaranai no wa tadōshi to shieki dōshi no chigai nan desu. 'Jugyō o owaraseta' to 'jugyō o oeta' wa onaji imi desu ka.

Tadashi Iya, mattaku onaji da to wa iemasen ne. Kekkateki ni wa onaji desu ga, zensha no hō ga hanashite ga 'sono yō ni shita' to iu imiai ga zutto tsuyoku narimasu.

Jon Sono ue, jidōshi to kanō o arawasu dōshi no katachi ga onaji na no mo aru deshō.

Tadashi Sō desu ne. Demo sore wa imi no ue kara akiraka da kara amari mondai wa nain ja arimasen ka. Nan da ka umaku setsume dekinakute, mōshiwake nai na. Shitsumon wa sore dake desu ka.

Jon Mada arun desu.

### *Translation*

John Tadashi, there's something I just don't understand about verb usage.

Tadashi I wonder if I can explain it. What sort of thing is it?

John There are intransitive and transitive verbs. That there are differences in the way the two are used I understand. For example, the difference between 'ringo o otosu' and 'ringo ga ochiru' is the difference between 'drop an apple' and 'an apple drops'.

Tadashi That's right. The important thing is that in the first example, 'apple' is the object, and so the particle 'o' is used. In the next sentence, 'apple' is the subject, and so the particle is 'ga'.

John Yes, up to that point I have no problems. I understand '[someone] begins the class' and 'the class begins', and '[someone] changes direction' and 'the direction changes'.

Tadashi In that case, what is it that you find difficult?

John In yesterday's morning paper, it said that the criminal responsible for the incident in Ōsaka was captured 'tsukamatta' three days later in Honolulu. Why didn't they use the passive form and say 'tsukamaereta'?

Tadashi        That's because if you say 'tsukamaerareta' it means you're looking at the situation from the point of view of the culprit.

John            The next thing I don't understand is the difference between transitive and causative verbs. Is the meaning of 'jugyo o owaraseta' and 'jugyo o oeta' the same?

Tadashi        No, you can't say that they are exactly the same. In the end they mean the same thing, but the former contains a much stronger sense that the speaker is saying 'and I made it happen that...'

John            And then aren't there some verbs the intransitive form of which is exactly the same as the potential form?

Tadashi        That's right. But it's clear from the meaning which is which, so that's not much of a problem is it? Somehow I haven't explained it very well; I'm sorry. Are those the only questions you have?

John            I do have more.

---