

Lesson 25

Mr and Mrs Yamakawa are having tea in the afternoon.

- 信子 おとうさん、お茶が入りました。
一 ああ、ありがとう。庭の柿の木もずいぶん色づいてきたね。
信子 そうですね。あの木を植えたのはいつごろでしたっけ。
一 国子が生まれたすぐ後じゃなかったかい。
信子 そうそう、そうでした。
一 あのころはずいぶん大変だったな。
信子 そうでしたね。子供が三人いましたし、お金もあまりありませんでしたし、それにあなたはお仕事がとてもお忙しかったから...。
一 正はきょうも仕事か。
信子 ええ、朝早くから病院へ行っていますが、そろそろもどるころです。
一 国子は。
信子 お友達と連休を利用して、京都、奈良へ行っています。
一 ああ、そうだったね。そういえば、きょうは六時ごろ会社の大山君が来る。
信子 夏にも一度いらっしゃった方ですね。
一 そうだ。お酒はあるか。
信子 はい。それでは何か簡単なおつまみでも用意します。
-

Comment:

Note the difference between this conversation and the one in lesson 24. There, mother and daughter were talking in a relaxed manner. Here we have wife and husband; a totally different situation that will demand different language. When mother becomes wife, the persona changes. As the wife, Nobuko regularly uses polite です/ます endings, whereas the husband uses brusque masculine forms in return. In a Japanese context the husband is not being rude; he is merely talking as a husband is expected to talk, and the wife is being 'wifely'. You may wish to argue on this basis that Japanese society is extremely sexist, and that the

sexism is rooted in the language. To a certain extent this is true: both status and gender are overtly present in the grammatical forms to a degree that we find unsettling. This means that whenever the Japanese communicate they can hardly avoid the fact that they are playing a particular role. But whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter, it is important for you as a student of the language and the culture to realise that the wife would normally interpret this language as something intimate. If the husband were polite, then something would be wrong!

You will find in the passage a number of specifically 'male' markers, such as *かい*, *だったな*, and the abrupt use of *か* directly after a noun. Study them carefully.

25.1 More about ~てくる

色づいてきたね。

In addition to the meaning explained in 23.5, the form *~てくる* is used to indicate two types of verbal aspect.

(a) Inception. It marks a process (often a natural process) that is beginning to happen.

東の方から夜が明けてきました。

Dawn is starting to break from the east.

雨が降ってきました。

It's come on to rain (started raining).

(b) It can also mark the continuation of a process up to a particular point, usually, but not necessarily, the present.

日本語を上手に話す外国人が増えてきましたね。

There are now more and more foreigners who speak Japanese well, aren't there?

森林保護の重要性を理解する人が少しずつ多くなってきている。
There has been a gradual increase in the number of people who understand the importance of protecting forests.

25.2 ころ

あの木を植えたのはいつごろでしたっけ。
あのころはずいぶん大変だったな。
そろそろもどるころです。

ころ is a noun meaning 'approximate time' and it is sometimes used in similar ways to 時. There are, however, cases where 時 cannot be simply replaced by ころ, so you should be careful.

(a) A less specific moment in a perfective context

初めてイギリスへ来たのは水仙の花のころでした。
It was daffodil time when I first came to England.

(b) Speculation about a moment both in perfective and imperfective contexts

父は一時の電車で行ったのでもうそちらへ着くころです。
Father went on the one o'clock train, so he should be there about now.
日本への小包は一ヶ月前に出しましたからもう着いたころです。
I sent the parcel to Japan a month ago, so it's about time it arrived.

(c) A period of time which is not clearly identifiable or specific, used in a perfective context only. In these sentences 時 can be used instead of ころ with only slight change in meaning. ころ is more commonly used when the speaker is talking about his past with a certain nostalgia.

戦争のころはお米の代わりにさつまいもを食べた。

During the war, we had sweet potatoes instead of rice.

若いころはよく友達と議論をした。

When I was young, I often used to have debates with my friends.

大学で日本語を勉強していたころはとても楽しかった。

I enjoyed myself very much while I was studying Japanese at university.

25.3 でしたっけ

いつごろでしたっけ。

っけ marks a rhetorical question. It normally occurs with the perfective form and in such a context brings with it a sense of retrospection: ‘now, when was that?’ It also gestures towards the other person and invites them to participate in your thoughts.

25.4 後

国子が生まれたすぐ後じゃなかったかい。

後, pronounced あと, is a noun meaning ‘after’. It is used to produce time clauses in much the same way as 前.

(a) Noun + の + 後, or prenoun + 後. When it is combined with a prenoun, 後 can be pronounced either あと or ご.

その後どうなりましたか。

And then what happened?

試合の後でみんなと飲みに行きました。

After the match, I went drinking with everyone.

(b) Verb + 後:

友達が帰った後、私は洗いものをした。

After my friends had returned home I did the washing up.

大きな事故が起こった後で人々はその道路が危険なのに気がついた。

They noticed how dangerous the road was after a serious accident had occurred.

Note here that the verb that precedes 後 or 後で is *always* in the ~た form for reasons of relative tense. This is the case even when the tense of the main clause is present or future.

25.5 The question marker かい

じゃなかったかい。

かい is best treated as a simple variant for the ending かね. It marks a slightly softer question than the direct か, so much so that it will be used when you are asking yourself a question: 'Let me see, wasn't it...'. Since it is colloquial, you will find that the copula is often omitted: そうかい 'Oh, was it really?' It is by and large, but not exclusively, male.

25.6 Noun + か

正はきょうも仕事か。

If the father had been using the polite *です* form here, he would have said *正はきょうも仕事ですか*, but the copula is omitted entirely when asking this type of question in the plain form. The interrogative equivalent of *正はきょうも仕事だ* is therefore *not* **正はきょうも仕事だか*. Study the following examples:

一男が来たのはきのうか。

Was it yesterday that Kazuo came?

弟さんは元気か。

Is your younger brother well?

あの音は風か。

Is that noise the wind?

25.7 早くから

朝早くから

You will perhaps recognize the word *早く* as the adverbial form of the descriptive verb *早い*. Here it means 'early', so the phrase above means 'from early this morning'. When using the particle *から* with descriptive verbs take great care to distinguish between those occasions when it follows the plain form meaning 'because': *まだ朝早いからお店はどこも開いていない*, 'None of the shops are open because it's still too early' (see also 16.7), and those occasions when it follows the adverbial form *く*, as above, and means 'from'.

25.8 Honorific language; versus politeness

一度いらっしった方ですね。

This is the first example we have given of a verb that expresses respect. From now on you will have to keep clear in your mind the somewhat different concepts of honorific language on the one hand and politeness on the other. *Honorific* language relates to the question of the status of people or objects in the real world that are mentioned in conversation; decisions here on what is known as the 'level of reference' are governed by the speaker's attitude towards the subject or topic of discourse. *Politeness*, however, relates to whether your language in any particular situation is polite, neutral or actively rude. This is known as the 'level of address' because decisions here are governed by the speaker's attitude towards the addressee. In this case, the wife's normal speech level when conversing with her husband is polite. When the husband introduces a friend from work into the conversation, she refers to him with a verb of *respect*, いらっしゃった, the perfective form of the verb いらっしゃる, the respectful equivalent of 行く, 来る, or いる 'be'. More will be said about these verbs and their humble equivalents in due course. Just note that a verb like いらっしゃる here *raises the status of its subject*. This is not always the same thing as being polite to the person with whom you are conversing.

You were introduced to the polite prefix お in 4.1. You will see that it is used on a number of occasions, and each time the nuance is slightly different; when the wife says お茶, for instance, the sense of politeness is very weak because the prefix has become habitually attached to the word for tea. Later on the husband will say お酒 in an entirely neutral manner. When the wife says あなたはお仕事がとてもお忙しかったから, however, she actually repeats the prefix; this gives one the feeling that here she is being particularly solicitous. When she says お友達 about Kuniko's friends, the prefix takes on the attributes of honorific language.

25.9 More on names

会社の大山君が来る。

Note how the husband refers to one his fellow employees. If he had used さん, it

would mean that they were not particularly close and that Oyama was either older or senior to him in the company. Because he uses the intimate suffix 君 (くん), we know immediately that Oyama is either younger or the same age, and that he is either below him in the company hierarchy or at roughly the same level.

25.10 何か...でも

何か簡単なおつまみでも用意します。

The use of an interrogative followed by か expresses the idea of *indeterminacy*; so here 何か means 'something'. The whole sentence is given a further self-deprecating flavour by the substitution of でも for the object marker を. 'Well then, I'll prepare something: (even something as insignificant as) some simple snacks to go with the drinks.' You will find this でも used quite often when people are offering you something to eat or drink; it reminds one of the English usage 'would you like a little... お茶でもどうぞ 'Would you like a little tea?'

Key to conversation

Romanisation

Nobuko	Otōsan, o-cha ga hairimashita.
Hajime	Ā, arigatō. Niwa no kaki no ki mo zuibun irozuite kita ne.
Nobuko	Sō desu ne. Ano ki o ueta no wa itsu goro deshitakke.
Hajime	Kuniko ga umareta sugu ato ja nakatta kai.
Nobuko	Sō sō, sō deshita.
Hajime	Ano koro wa zuibun taihen datta na.
Nobuko	Sō deshita ne. Kodomo ga sannin imashita shi, o-kane mo amari arimasen deshita shi, sore ni anata wa o-shigoto ga totemo o-isogashikatta kara/
Hajime	Tadashi wa kyō mo shigoto ka.

Nobuko Ē, asa hayaku kara byōin e itte imasu ga, sorosoro modoru koro desu.
Hajime Kuniko wa.
Nobuko O-tomodachi to renkyū o riyō shite, Kyōto, Nara e itte imasu.
Hajime Ā, sō datta ne. So ieba, kyō wa rokuji goro kaisha no Ōyama kun ga kuru.
Nobuko Natsu ni mo ichido irasshatta kata desu ne.
Hajime Sō da. O-sake wa aru ka.
Nobuko Hai. Sore de wa nani ka kantan na o-tsumami de mo yōi shimasu.

Translation

Nobuko Hajime. There's some tea, if you'd like.
Hajime Oh, thank you. The persimmon tree in the garden has really turned hasn't it!
Nobuko So it has. When was it that we planted it?
Hajime Wasn't it just after Kuniko was born?
Nobuko Yes, yes, so it was.
Hajime Those were tough times!
Nobuko So they were. Three children, not much money, and then you were so busy at work...
Hajime Tadashi working today too?
Nobuko Yes, he's been at the hospital since early this morning but he'll be back any moment now.
Hajime Where's Kuniko?
Nobuko She's taking advantage of the long weekend and is spending it in Kyoto and Nara with a friend.
Hajime Oh yes, I remember. That reminds me, about six o'clock today young Oyama from the company is coming over.
Nobuko The one who came over once during the summer?
Hajime That's right. Is there any sake in?
Nobuko Yes. Well then I'll prepare something simple to go with it.
