

## GREETINGS

Today we are going to have a look at our first dialogue while learning our first grammatical aspects at the same time because Japanese works differently from English and Western languages in general.

### ✚ The sentence pattern

The first major difference is the structure of a sentence as it follows a different order:

<b>English:</b>	<b>subject + verb + object</b>
<b>Japanese:</b>	<b>subject + object + verb</b>

And, for someone who has never learnt languages such as Korean, Hindi or Turkish, this change might turn out to be quite a mental exercise. We advise to watch Japanese series or anime to get familiar with this as they tend to repeat the same sentences all the time.

ex: I eat chocolate → わたしはチョコレートを食べます。  
 Maya chan is a lawyer → まやちゃんはべんごしです。

## KANJI

食べます = たべます
弁護士 = べんごし

### ✚ Particles (Markers)

The sentence order is not the only thing that differs from English. As you can see in the previous examples (*the non-highlighted parts*), Japanese also uses particles: small grammatical words that indicate the grammatical role of the word it precedes.

Let's go back to our previous example:

わたしはチョコレートを食べます。[watashi wa chokorēto o tabemasu].

In this sentence, we can see 2 particles: は (*pronounced [wa]*) and を. Each belongs to its previous word:

は ← わたし

を ← チョコレート

which means- if you look at the previous colors- that わたし is the subject and チョコレート the object, so logically, は is the *subject* particle and を the object one, but it is not that simple (*hence the italics*).

In Japanese and Korean, the languages make the difference between **a theme (topic) particle** and **a subject particle**: -a theme particle is used to show the main topic of a conversation; it emphasizes and elevates its noun, so the focus of a conversation. In English, it could be translated by “*as for...*”, “*speaking of...*”. In our example “わたしは”, the focus is on “I”, which means that “I” here is the center of the conversation: “*as for me*”, “*speaking of myself*”.



-a subject particle is used to identify the subject of a sentence, answering the questions “who is doing the action?” or “what is being described?”. For example: たろくんがチョコレートを食べます。The subject particle が explains that the person who is eating the chocolate is Taro, but it does not mean that Taro is the center of the conversation (without context, one cannot tell).

Learning grammatical particles (markers) can take a while to get a grip of but it will come little by little. Many particles exist and we will study them in time. For now, all you need to remember is は, and that it is a theme particle/topic marker.

### だ (to be)

Verbs in Japanese also have a conjugation but it is much simpler than Western languages. There is one present ending and one past ending and that’s all. Therefore, as long as you know the conjugation of each verb, you will be able to use them.

Let’s start with the present of だ, which is more or less the equivalent of “to be”. I am, you/we/they are, he/she/it is is → です [desu]. With this, you may talk about your name, your age, your nationality, your job... Let’s have a look at the following dialogue:

Mr Takeshi KIMURA (木村武) and Ms Jisoo KIM are meeting for the first time.

-すみません、キムさんですか。

(sumimasen, Kimu san desuka?)

か is a particle used to ask questions. “?” is never written in Japanese

-はい、キムジスーです。はじめまして、どうぞよろしくおねがいします。

(hai, Kimu Jisoo desu. Hajimemashite, douzo yoroshikuonegaishimasu.)

I am Kim Jisoo.

-よろしくおねがいします。わたしはきむらです。

キムさんはちゅうごくじんですか。

(yoroshikuonegaishimasu. Watashiwa Kimura desu.)

Kimu san wa Chūgokujin desuka?)

Japanese people always introduce themselves using their family name to strangers. “I am Kimura”.

Ms Kim, are you Chinese?

-いいえ、かんこくじんです。ソウルしゅっしんです。

(iie, Kankokujin desu. Souru shussin desu.)

I am Korean.

I am an inhabitant of Seoul.

きむらは、にほんじんですか。

(*Kimura san wa, Nihonjin desuka?*)

Are you Japanese?

-はい、そうです。おおさかしゅっしんです。

(*hai, sou desu. Ōsaka shussin desu.*)

Exactly, I am an inhabitant of Osaka.

-おしごとなんですか。わたしはきしゃです。

きむらは？

(*Oshigoto nan desuka? Watashi wa kisha desu.*)

Kimura san wa?)

What is your job? I am a journalist.

-わたしはけいざいがくぶのがくせいです。

(*watashi wa keizaigakubu no gakusei desu.*)

I am a student in Economics.

-ありがとうございます。

(*arigatōgozaimasu.*)

-どういたしまして。

(*dōitashimashite.*)

➤ **Affirmative sentences**

わたしは.....です。

Sometimes, because it is very clear with the context, there is no need to repeat the subject. *ex:* いいえ、かんこくじんです。ソウルしゅっしんです。

Here, the speakers understand that Jisoo is talking about herself so there is no need to repeat “わたしは”.

➤ **Interrogative sentences**

あなたは.....ですか。

(you)

か is a particle used to ask questions. It is always placed at the end of a sentence. It is the only word that can tell someone whether the sentence is an assertion or a question. Very often, because of the context, a question does not even need to be complete to be understood. *ex:* きむらは？

Here with the context, we understand that Jisoo is asking the same question to Takeshi; hence the name + particle は is enough.

## KANJI

- よろしくおねがいします = よろしく願います
- 私 = わたし
- 中国人 = ちゅうごくじん
- 韓国人 = かんこくじん
- 日本人 = にほんじん
- 大阪出身 = おおさかしゅっしん
- 仕事 = しごと
- 何 = なん
- 経済学部 = けいざいがくぶ
- 学生 = がくせい