

## Lesson 40

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Kuniko comes home from school.

国子 おかあさん、ただいま。  
信子 あら、お帰りなさい。今日はいつもより早いよね。  
国子 そうでもないわよ。五分ぐらい早いかもしれないけど。  
信子 お茶を入れましょう。ケーキが買ってありますよ。  
国子 わあ、嬉しい。手を洗って、着がえてくるわ。

Kuniko and her mother are having tea together.

信子 国ちゃんはチョコレート・ケーキとこちらのシュークリームとどちらが好き。  
国子 どっちも好きだけど、今日はシュークリームにしようかな。いただきます。  
信子 日本茶よりもお紅茶の方がケーキに合うでしょう。  
国子 そうね。ミルク・ティーがいいわ。今日は体育の時間に二キロも走ったのよ。  
信子 そう。だれが一番だったの。  
国子 それがね、クラスで一番背の低い宮坂さんが一番だったの。彼女より背が高くて、足の長い人がたくさんいるのに、宮坂さんが一番走るのが速いから不思議ね。  
信子 それで、国ちゃんは。  
国子 私は三番。木村さんが二番。百メートル競争では私の方が木村さんより速く走れるんだけど。  
信子 今週は忙しかったわね。  
国子 本当に。月曜と水曜にテストがあったし、ピアノのおけいこもあったし。来週は今週ほどは忙しくないと思うわ。  
信子 あしたの土曜日は新宿のデパートまで買物に行こうと思っていてるんだけど、あなたもいっしょに来られない。  
国子 そうね。学校が終わるのが十二時半だから、一時ごろには新宿に着けると思うわ。

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#### 40.1 ただいま

ただいま。  
あら、お帰りなさい。

Two more important idioms to learn here. When you come home it is usual to announce your arrival with the word **ただいま** 'just now (returned)'. The automatic response will be **お帰りなさい**. Learn this as a phrase; explanation of the grammar will emerge later.

#### 40.2 Comparing two things

今日はいつもより早いね。  
日本茶よりもお紅茶の方がケーキに合うでしょう。

There is no formal equivalent in Japanese of the comparative adjective or adverb in English, but the same meaning is achieved by the following patterns:

(a) X は Y より (も)...(です). より performs a similar function to the English 'than' or 'compared to', so that this construction is literally 'X compared to Y is Z.'

今日はきのうより寒い。

It is colder today than yesterday.

祖父は祖母より丈夫だ。

My grandfather is healthier than my grandmother.

木下君は山田君より速く走れる。

Kinoshita can run faster than Yamada.

和子さんは道子さんより上手に説明出来る。  
Kazuko can explain better than Michiko.

(b) X の方 (ほう) が Y より (も)... The following sentences have the same meaning as the sentences above, but with the noun 方 (ほう), 'direction' or 'alternative', X is slightly emphasised.

エベレストの方がモンブランより高い。  
Everest is higher than Mt Blanc.

小包は船便(で出す)よりも航空便で出す方が早く届く。  
Parcels get delivered quicker by air than by sea.

茶の間の方が客間より落ち着く。  
I feel more relaxed in the living room than in the guest room.

今はお金よりも時間の方が貴重だ。  
For the moment, time is more precious than money (for me).

When this kind of comparison is used in a negative sentence, 'not as...as', より is replaced by the nouns ほど 'extent' or 'degree' and contrastive は tends to appear.

山田君は木下君ほど速く走れない。  
Yamada cannot run as fast as Kinoshita.

山田君は木下君ほど速くは走れないが泳ぐのは (木下君より) 上手だ。  
Yamada cannot run as fast as Kinoshita, but he is a better swimmer.

高橋さんは松本さんほど熱心ではない。  
Miss Takahashi is not as keen as Miss Matsumoto.

#### 40.3 ~てある

ケーキが買ってありますよ。

Note that ～である is usually only found with transitive verbs. It signifies a state that has resulted from someone's action, although the performer of the action is left unspecified. This construction with ～である rather than ～ている is one with which you may have a little trouble. Note that although the English translation here will probably be transitive 'I bought you a cake' the Japanese is stative and so in essence *intransitive*. So we have a statement the literal rendition of which might be 'a cake, having been bought, exists'. You will find that this construction does not come naturally to you, but it is used quite often in Japanese, precisely because it de-personalises the expression just enough to reduce any sense that you have done someone a favour: to do so would entail imposing a sense of obligation on them. In this context, the mother prefers such an expression to one with a donatory verb such as 上げる. \*ケーキを買ってあげましたよ would be out of place here. So perhaps a more appropriate English translation for ケーキが買ってありますよ would be 'And there's some cake.' Note the difference between ～である and ～ておく (see 30.6).

かぎは山下さんに預けてあります。

The key has been left with Mr Yamashita.

かぎは山下さんに預けておきました。

I have left the key (for you) with Mr Yamashita.

With ～ておく, the sense of intention and the presence of a performer of an act is far stronger and you would only use it if you wished to make a point. Look at the following sentence:

食事の用意はしてありますからおなかのすいた時にあたためて  
食べて下さい。

The meal is ready, so please heat it up when you feel hungry.

You might expect ～ておく ('I've prepared you a meal in advance') but in fact ～である will be preferred because it de-emphasises the favour.

#### 40.4 Familiar ちゃん for さん

国ちゃん

Within the family, and among very close young friends, you will hear this diminutive form of the polite suffix さん. Do not try and use it yourself unless you are absolutely certain that the social situation allows it.

#### 40.5 Question and answer, 'which is ...er?'

チョコレート・ケーキとこちらのシュークリームとどちらが好き。

This is expressed by using the pattern: X と Y と...どちら (の方) が...

スコットランドとウェールズとどちらの方が大きいですか。

Which is bigger, Scotland or Wales?

スコットランドの方が大きいです。

Scotland is bigger.

春と秋とどちらが好きですか。

Which do you prefer, spring or autumn?

春の方が (秋より) 好きです。

I prefer spring (to autumn).

きのうの晩はお兄さんとあなたとどちらが先に帰ってきたの。

Last night who came back earlier, you or your elder brother?

私の方がずっと早く帰ってきたわよ。

I came back much earlier (than my brother).

#### 40.6 Comparing three or more things (superlative)

クラスで一番背の低い宮坂さんが一番だったの。

This pattern makes use of the word 一番 (いちばん) 'number one'. For 'which/who is the best out of...' one can either say: X と Y と Z の中で (は) どれが (だれが) 一番/か or X と Y と Z の 中で 一番/のはどれ(だれ) ですか.

'Who is the tallest among Peter, Nick and James?' is either

ピーターとニックとジェームズの中でだれが一番背が高いですか or  
ピーターとニックとジェームズの中で一番背が高いのはだれですか.

and the reply would be either

ピーターが一番背が高い (です) or  
一番背が高いのはピーターです.

Occasionally you will come across 一番です or 一番だ on its own with よい or some other obvious words omitted. Study the following examples:

健康が一番 (大切) だ。

Health is the most important (thing).

かぜには薬よりもよく休むのが一番だ。

For a cold, having a good rest is far better than taking medicine.

このクラスではジョージが一番だ。

George is the outstanding one in this class.

Here one cannot tell in what George excels without a further context. It could be, for example:

ジョージが一番背が高い。

ジョージが一番勉強が出来る。

ジョージが一番フットボールが上手だ。 etc.

## 40.7 Use of で with comparison

百メートル競争では私の方が木村さんより速く走れる

When one compares things, で is used to indicate the scope or limits within which the comparison is made.

日本では牛肉はぶた肉よりも高い。

In Japan beef is more expensive than pork.

日本で一番人気のあるスポーツは野球です。

The most popular sport in Japan is baseball.

一年のうちで一番美しい季節は春です。

The most beautiful season in the year is spring.

日本で一番高い山は富士山です。

The highest mountain in Japan is Mt Fuji.

世界で一番長い川はどれですか。

Which is the longest river in the world?

### Key to conversation

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#### *Romanisation*

Kuniko Okāsan, tadaima.

Nobuko Ara, o-kaeri nasai. Kyō wa itsumo yori hayai no ne.

Kuniko Sō de mo nai wa yo. Gofun gurai hayai ka mo shirenai kedo.

Nobuko O-cha o iremashō. Kēki ga katte arimasu yo.

Kuniko Wa, ureshii. Te o aratte, kigaete kuru wa.

Nobuko Kuni-chan wa chokorēto kēki to kochira no shūkurīmu to dochira ga suki.

Kuniko Dotchi mo suki dakedo, kyō wa shūkurīmu ni shiyō ka na. Itadakimasu.

Nobuko Nihoncha yori mo o-kocha no hō ga kēki ni au deshō.

Kuniko Sō ne. Miruku tī ga ii wa. Kyō wa taiiku no jikan ni nikiro mo hashitta no yo.  
Nobuko Sō. Dare ga ichiban datta no.  
Kuniko Sore ga ne, kurasu de ichiban se no hikui Miyasaka-san ga ichiban datta no.  
Kanojo yori se ga takakute, ashi no nagai hito ga takusan iru no ni, Miyasaka-san  
ga ichiban hashiru no ga hayai kara fushigi ne.  
Nobuko Sore de, Kuni-chan wa.  
Kuniko Watakushi wa sanban. Kimura-san ga niban. Hyaku mētoru kyōsō de wa  
watakushi no hō ga Kimura-san yori hayaku hashirerun dakedo...  
Nobuko Konshū wa isogashikatta wa ne.  
Kuniko Hontō ni. Getsuyō to suiyō ni tesuto ga atta shi, piano no o-keiko mo atta shi.  
Raishū wa konshū hodo wa isogashikunai to omou wa.  
Nobuko Ashita no doiyōbi wa Shinjuku no depāto made kaimono ni ikō to omotte irun  
dakedo, anata mo issho ni korarenai.  
Kuniko Sō ne. Gakkō ga owaru no ga jūnijihan dakara, ichiji goro ni wa Shinjuku ni  
tsukeru to omou wa.

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*Translation*

Kuniko Mother, I'm back!  
Nobuko Oh! Welcome home. You're earlier than usual today.  
Kuniko Not really. Well, maybe I'm five minutes early.  
Nobuko Let's have a cup of tea. There's some cake.  
Kuniko Great! I'll wash my hands and get changed.  
Nobuko Which do you prefer, the chocolate cake or this choux creme?  
Kuniko Either would be nice, but today I think I'll have the choux creme. Thanks.  
Nobuko English tea would go better with cake than Japanese tea wouldn't it?  
Kuniko Yes. I'd like tea with milk. In games today we ran two kilometres you know.  
Nobuko Really. Who came first?  
Kuniko You'd never guess, but Miyasaka won, the smallest one in the class. There are  
lots of people who are taller than her and who've got longer legs, but she can run  
the fastest. It's odd, isn't it?  
Nobuko And what about you?  
Kuniko I was third. Kimura was second. But I can run faster than Kimura in the hundred  
metre dash/  
Nobuko You've been busy this week haven't you?



Kuniko           Very. Tests on Monday and Wednesday, and there was my piano lesson too. But I don't think next week will be as busy as this one.

Nobuko           Tomorrow's Saturday and I'm thinking of going shopping in the Shinjuku department stores. Can you come too?

Kuniko           Let's see. School finishes at twelve thirty, so I think I can be in Shinjuku by one o'clock.

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