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口語英語の難しさ

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口語英語、つまり日常生活で使う英語は、論文調の英語やジャーナリズム英語と比較して日本人にとって易しいと考えがちであるが、必ずしもそうとはいえない。アメリカの大学院などで学ぶ場合、予習・復習をしっかりしていれば、教授の講義は比較的容易に理解できる。それに対し日常生活では時と場所次第で話題が広範囲に広がっていく。その上日本人にとっては難しいが、アメリカ人には basic word に過ぎない slang も頻出する。また英語の発想の相違もある。こういったことなどが重なって口語英語は英語の達人でもなかなか英語国民に比肩できるだけの実力が身につかない。

本稿の中で、模範的口語英語で書かれている米語版 Reader's Digest 誌(15冊分)の中から口語英語を取り上げ、その困難さの原因を考察した。(引用した英文はやや長いが、下線部の意味を読み取るためにこれは止むを得ないことであった)。

I

where

- ① "I have a huge poster in my office that says 'Don't Play Negro Records,'" remarks Clark. "This was typical of the posters we saw in the Southeast back then. Today when young African-Americans stop in, I show them the poster and say, 'Take a good look at that.' I do it because not enough young blacks appreciate what the generation before them endured. A lot of their mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles paid heavy, heavy dues to get them where they are today." (Reader's Digest, Apr. '96, p.18)

下線部の訳:「黒人青年が今日の地位を築く」という意味。

- ② Kelly knew he was lying. She knew he planned to kill her, and though it may be hard to imagine, for the first time since the incident began, she felt profound fear.

"He waved a gun and said, 'I'm going to the kitchen to get something to drink, and then I'll leave. I promise. You stay where you are.'" (Reader's Digest, Sept. '97, p.130)

下線部の訳:「そこを動くな」という意味。英語では通例「Don't move there」とは言わない。

- ③ Most of all, a woman needs to remember that breast cancer is not a death sentence, and that more than half of all women who develop it will live at least 15 years after their diagnosis. Much of today'd good news centers on refining old therapies. Here's where we stand in treating breast cancer. (Reader's Digest, Feb. '96, p.136)

下線部の訳:「これが我々の考え方である」という意味。日本人なら opinion などを使って表現してしまうところである。

- ④ On December 24, 1984, I married Dr. Talbott's son, Doug Jr., and today our lives are full. I know a freedom before unimaginable. I know peace, a feeling more powerful than cocaine. I

know love and can love. Today I never have to be alone. I belong, and I'm right where I want to be. (Reader's Digest, Nov. '90, p.104)

下線部の訳:「今は本当に幸せな家庭を築いている」ことをいっている。

- ⑤ It's okay to jump within sections to tasks you do best — say, sentence completion or analogies. You can even skip any question altogether ; you don't have to answer every question correctly to score well.

Just don't forget to mark each omission in your test booklet to keep track of where you are. And be sure to leave the corresponding answer space blank or all your answers will be off by one. (Reader's Digest, Sept. '94, p.123)

下線部の訳:「どこを解答しているか」という意味。

- ⑥ The family radio was often tuned to country music. There was only one thing I loved more, and that was baseball. I used to sneak out of the house on Sundays to play. When I left home, I played in the old Negro leagues and then for a minor-league team in Helena, Mont. After singing and playing guitar over the PA system before one game, I received offers to perform in local nightclubs.

Methodical work got me where I am today. More than 50 years ago, on the cotton farm, I learned about committing myself to a job and seeing it through.

(Reader's Digest, Jan. '98, p.162)

下線部の訳:「私が今日あるのは…」という意味。これは①の下線部と類似した表現である。

II

what

- ⑦ David and I were going to ask a very particular favor of her. My sister's children were young ; Diana's children were much older. We wanted to ask her to come to New York to help us out.

David and Diana talked for a while, brother and sister. Then my husband passed me the receiver. “Oh, Gayle,” Diana said, “I know you'll be strong. And David loves you so. You must hold on to that. I'll see what I can do about coming. I'll try. We're all be praying for you.”

(Reader's Digest, Mar. '96, p.101)

下線部の訳:「ニューヨークに行けるかどうか考えてみるわ」という意味。

- ⑧ At Sloan-Kettering the paper work was finished swiftly, and David and I were led to a holding area. A nurse took my blood pressure and briefly examined me as she prepared me for surgery. “You'd better take your glasses off, Mrs. Reid, and give them to your husband. Oh, give him your wedding ring too,” She said. I stared at her. “My wedding ring? Can't you tape it on? That's what they've done in other operations.” “They won't operate if you're wearing any jewelry.”

(Reader's Digest, Mar. '96, p.214)

下線部の訳:「ほかの所で手術をした時は、結婚指輪にテープをして固定しましたよ」と抗議

している。

- ⑨ Despite the passage of years, I could almost see his sharp features in the windshield before me : Father John Mulroy, one of my teachers at Archbishop Stepinac High School in White Plains, N.Y. He had nailed me to the wall when I submitted my first class paper. I had confidently handed it in, thiking it was complete. Father Mulroy did not. He gave me a C. I was shocked. He knew I wanted to go to the Air Force Academy, and I needed good grades. When I questioned the C, he fastened me with his dark, penetrating eyes. "That's what it was worth." he snapped. He then rattled off a list of information sources. "Did you check into them?"
(Reader's Digest, Apr. '96, p.148)

下線部の訳：「お前のレポートにはCしかやれないよ」という厳しい言葉が教師から返ってきた。

- ⑩ He performed one of his first major acts as returning governor ten days later on a bitterly cold New Year's Eve. Casey learned the state program to provide money for heating oil to low-income families was running out of funds. That meant many poor families would suffer in cold homes. "People can't live that way," he said, and ordered that money be transferred into the program immediately. "That is what I love about being governor." Casey said to one of his aides.
(Reader's Digest, Oct. '95, p.239)

下線部の訳：「資金援助をするのが知事として好むところなんだよ」という意味。

- ⑪ It was true that he was hard to understand when he spoke, and that sometimes I used to think a lot about what it would be like, what our whole family would be like, if Robin suddenly became the same as all the other brothers that other kids had. But mostly we just accepted Robin for what he was, a unique part of our family.

(Reader's Digest, Jul. '97, p.190)

下線部の訳：「私たち家族はロビンをあるがままにかろうじて受け入れた」という意味。

- ⑫ Vera, frightened, told him about the interrupted conversation. "I'm sure it's nothing," Thorman said. However, Thorman worried that something could be wrong. With the sheriff's office about 15 miles away, it was up to him to help. That's what neighbors were for.
(Reader's Digest, Aug. '90, p.34)

下線部の訳：「困った時に助け合うのが隣人というものだ」という意味。

- ⑬ Since you really are, to a great extent, what you eat, anti-aging experts recommend eating more of certain foods. Fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids — such as salmon, tuna and sardines — are essential to cardiovascular health.
(Reader's Digest, Apr. '98, p.26)

下線部の訳：「体は食べ物で作られる」という意味。これなど日本人にはとても使えない表現である。

- ⑭ His mother looked over. "You really think dinosaurs lived here?" "You know, you can call them reptiles if you want," the young boy explained to her authoritatively. "Because that's what they are. Gigantic reptiles." (Reader's Digest, Aug. '94, p.100)

下線部の訳:「あれは爬虫類にはまちがいないんだよ」と息子が母親に説明している。

- ⑮ In physics class on another day, Cedric gamely tries to cencentrate, but he's on edge. He should be hearing from M.I.T. about the summer program any day now, and he isn't optimistic. Sporting another student copying his work, he confronts her. The class erupts in catcalls, jeering at Cedric until the teacher removes him from the room. His mentor, Clarence Taylor, urges him to ignore the others. "I tell him he's in a long, harrowing race, a marathon, and he can't listen to what's being yelled at him from the sidelines," he says. "I tell him those people on the sidelines are already out of the race."

(Reader's Digest, Sept. '94, p.52)

下線部の訳: 応援席からの「彼に対する声援が彼には聞こえない」こと。

- ⑯ With the 1998 Winter Olympics just two months away, 17-year-old Michelle Kwan has a chance to become America's great figure-skating queen. After Kwan won her first national championship in 1996, she stunned her more seasoned rivals by winning the world title.

"I know I'm supposed to be surprised by what I've accomplished," says Kwan. "But why should I be? Everyone says it happened so fast, but it didn't seem fast to me. I was out there every day, all the time, working and skating well. Winning isn't about miracles on ice, it's about training."

(Reader's Digest, Dec. '97, p.167)

下線部の訳:「世界チャンピオンになったことで私が驚くと思われる」という意味。

Ⅲ

how

- ⑰ "People are like crabs in a basket. Let me tell you something," you have all these crabs in a basket, and they've jus' millin' around aimless until one crab decides he wants to try to get out of the basket. Then all of a sudden, the other crabs who was doin' nothin' rush over and start pullin' him down." He went on to say, "That's how people are. There are always those who want to pull you down. It's human nature. You have to plan so it don't happen to you"

(Reader's Digest, Sept. '95, p.207)

下線部の訳:「人間ってそんなものだよ」という意味。

- ⑱ It wasn't Ronald Reagan's substantive points that were so impressive at a recent Republican gala in Washington. Rather, it was the tone he struck. When he talked of spotting the White House from his airplane, he said it seemed nothing had changed : the South Lawn the Rose Garden David Gergen."

It was a gentle tweak of the long-time Republican operative now laboring for a Democratic President, not an angry charge of betrayal or treason. That's not how Reagan sees politics.

(Reader's Digest, Aug. '94, p.108)

下線部の訳：「レーガン大統領はそんな風には政治をとらえていないよ」という意味。

- ①⑨ One sunny afternoon, I heard a thumping on our back steps followed by a firm knock. My mother, who was preparing dinner, answered the door with a friendly "Well, hello there!" A slightly familiar voice said haltingly, "I've got a couple of fresh cod here. It's 50 cents a fillet. You interested?"

"You don't have to fillet them for us, but I'll buy them from you," my mother answered, obviously pleased at the bargain.

"No, I always fillet the cod," the voice said firmly. "My fish are fresh caught and filleted. It's how I beat the stores."

(Reader's Digest, Sept. '97, p.38)

下線部の訳：「そうやって他の店より売上げをあげるんだよ」という意味。

IV

that

- ②⑩ Many times when we were alone like that, I tried to muster the courage to talk about the past. At last, one Sunday afternoon, it seemed as good a time as any. "Mom," I said, turning to her, "I'm sorry we have had so many difficult times." She reached over, took my hand and gave it a squeeze. "We're having a good time now, dear. That's all that matters."

(Reader's Digest, Sept. '95, p.186)

下線部の訳：「今が幸せならそれで十分だよ」という意味。

V

関係代名詞の省略

- ②⑪ The game ends. I stretch my legs and try to stomp life back into my frozen feet. The coach meets with the team. They yell some rallying cry and then descend on their parents. I notice Eddie's dad has a big grin and is slapping his son on the back. Matthew wants to gets a hamburger. While I wait for him, the coach approaches me. I can't bring myself to look at him.

"Mrs. Bodmer, I want you to know that's a fine young man you have there."

(Reader's Digest, May '96, p.114)

下線部の訳：「あなたは立派な息子さんをお持ちですね」という意味。

- ②⑫ Many fans of the Grateful Dead assume that the group's leader, Jerry Garcia, is a born musician. They are wrong. Garcia explains : Music was something I was not good at. I took lessons on the piano forever, for maybe eight years — my mom made me. None of it sank in. I bluffed my way through.

(Reader's Digest, Aug. '94, p.107)

下線部の訳：「僕は音楽は得意ではなかったんだよ」という意味。日本人英語とは大分異なる発想を持った表現である。

VI the way S+V.....

- ㊸ To win public trust, Stanley Gault, chairman of the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, announced last year that Goodyear would no longer pay commissions to its auto technicians. A couple weeks later, however, the manager of a Goodyear shop in Winston — Salem, N.C., sent out a memo that a Goodyear spokesman said was contrary to company policy, but that vividly illustrates the pressure its technicians face. “It is very important to be productive,” reads the memo. “Goodyear’s Tech Productivity must be a minimum of \$500 per day or \$2500 per week. If you cannot meet your objective, you will be released from your duties.....” The memo’s author no longer works for Goodyear, says the shop’s current manager. “That’s not the way we do business.” he adds.

(Reader’s Digest, Oct. ’95, p.107)

下線部の訳：「我々はそんな商売のやり方はしませんよ」という意味。

- ㊹ His dream for all five daughters to be doctors was over. When he wasn’t voicing disappointment about Jeanette, Daddy said over and over, “Where did I go wrong? I should have done something else, but what?” Mommy would say, “Donald, that’s the way kids are — that’s the way life is.”

(Reader’s Digest, Sept. ’95, p.219)

下線部の訳：「子供ってそんなものよ。それが世の常よ」という意味。

- ㊺ Three days later Lam went to Plecki’s office and turned in her medal, the only team member to do so. Plecki tried to change her mind. “It’s no big thing,” he said. “Everybody cheats ; That’s the way the world works. You’re a fool to play by the rules.”

(Reader’s Digest, Oct. ’95, p.69)

下線部の訳：「それは誰だってやっていることだよ」という意味。

- ㊻ Eventually they reconciled, and the lessons from Richard’s infidelity ultimately made their marriage stronger. “Before the affair we had fallen into an unhealthy pattern,” Liz says. “Richard yelled, and I cried. He said, ‘This is the way it is.’ and I caved in. Now I speak up, and I care about myself.”

(Reader’s Digest, Apr. ’95, p.40)

下線部の訳：「どこの夫婦も同じだよ」という意味。

- ㊼ The students in my ninth-grade English class at Sandia High School in Albuquerque, N.M., had been studying Romeo and Juliet. To enhance their understanding of Shakespeare’s times, I obtained a copy of Franco Zeffirelli’s film version on the play and showed it in class. “When was this movie made?” a student asked.

“In 1968,” I replied.

“I should have known it was done in the ’60s,” he said, shaking his head.

“Just look at the way those people are dressed!” (Reader’s Digest, Sept. ’94, p.113)

下線部の訳：「登場人物の服装を見ればわかるでしょ」という意味。

考察と分析

以上(1)から(27)まで英文を紹介したが、その中の下線部はいずれも「英語らしい」表現である。「英語らしさ」の表現は、口語英語、文語英語の間に相違があるのは当然であるが、それは語彙、イディオム、センテンスなどそれぞれのレベルにおいて見られる。

日本人にとって、本当の難しさは口語英語、つまり話し言葉のなかに、頻出する。それは日常生活のレベルの英語のなかに、風俗・習慣・発想などの相違が深く潜んでいるからである。その視点からすると、口語英語の記事が満載している Reader's Digest 誌は、恰好の研究材料である。

日英語を比較すると、以下の7つの視点に区分するのが通例である。

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1 名詞的 vs. 動詞的 | 2 HAVE vs. BE / スル vs. ナル | |
| 3 人間中心 vs. 状況中心 | 4 無生物主語 vs. 副詞句 | 5 肯定 vs. 否定 |
| 6 具体動詞 vs. 様態副詞 | 7 視点固定 vs. 視点移動 | |

(各区分の左側が英語、右側が日本語の特性である)

以上の比較をしっかりと理解・習熟することが、より「英語らしい」英語に近づく第一歩である。

それでは筆者が Reader's Digest 誌から収集した下線部の英語は、どこに英語らしさがあるか。本稿で取り上げた下線部の英語は、第1の区分に挙げた「名詞的 vs. 動詞的」、つまり英語は「名詞的」構文を好むということの中に、説明の糸口を見つけることができる。以下この観点に立って考察・分析を試みる。

where

- ① A lot of their mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles paid heavy, heavy dues to get them where they are today.

下線部は正確には to the place [social status] where they are と言い換えることが文法的には可能である。where 以下の adjective clause は antecedent である名詞 place を修飾している。つまり noun clause である。口語英語では to the place [social status] を省略して、下線部 where they are の如く表現する。そして get の目的語になっている。これは英語が好む名詞表現である。

- ② You stay where you are. は You stay at the place where you are と言い換えることができる。これも place を antecedent とする noun clause であり、口語英語では at the place を省略する。

上記の英語が「英語らしい」といえるのは、名詞表現であること、それに日本語にはない関係副詞を使っているからである。

what

- ③ I'll see what I can do about coming.
④ That's what they've done in other operations.

上記③の英文は what 以下は see の noun clause であり、④の what 以下は is の補語であり、noun clause である。

how

- ⑤ That's how people are.
 ⑥ That's not how Reagan sees politics.

⑤は That's the way how people are. ⑥は That's not the way how～ のように分析できる。いずれも how 以下は way を修飾する adjective clause であり、下線部は noun clause の働きをしている。

関係代名詞の省略

- ⑦ That's a fine young man you have there.

これは You have a fine young man there とどこが異なるか。日本語は大切なことは最後にもってくる後方重心型なのに対し、英語は方向づけを初めにはっきりさせる前方重心型であることはよく知られているが、この視点から⑦の英文は説明できる。つまり That's a fine young man に意味上の重点があり、you have there は追加の意味しかない。それは you have there が man を修飾していることから明白である。

- ⑧ Music was something I was not good at.

これも⑦の英文と全く同じである。従って I was not good at music とは意味上の重点の置き方に大きな相違がある。いずれにせよ⑦⑧の下線部とも noun clause である。

the way S+V

- ⑨ That's not the way we do business.
 ⑩ That's the way kids are.

上記英文は That's the way how we do business. That's the way how kids are といっても文法的には間違いではない。口語英語では the way を省略してしまう。両下線部とも noun clause である。

まとめ

(イ) Prator (1967) は“A Hierarchy of Difficulty”という概念の中で、母語と目標言語の相違によって学習者が感じる難易度の違いを Level 0 から Level 5 までの 6 階段に分けて説明している。関係代名詞（副詞）のような日本語になくて、英語にあるものを、Level 4 (Overdifferentiation) に位置づけ、Level 5 (Split. 例えば日本語で「お客」が英語では guest, customer などに別れること) に次ぐ難易度の高いものにあげている。

本稿でみてきた where, what, how, the way S+V は日本語にはないだけに、日本人学習者にとって communication に習熟する困難性が、常につきまとう。日本語になくて、英語にある関係代名詞（副詞）の利用は、それだけ「英語らしさ」に迫ることになる。

(ロ) Curme, George Oliver (1860～1948) は Parts of Speech and Accidence (1935) の中で「英語国民にとっては同じ語でも動詞として使うよりは、名詞として使った方が具体性があり、かつ迫力が感じられる」と説明している。つまり英語国民は「名詞」に大きな価値を置く。このことは英語は名詞構文を好むことを裏書きしている。

この英語の名詞中心性を立証する用例を次に挙げる。

- (1) Kemp the supply-side tax-cutter and Dole the dogged budget balancer have been ideological enemies for almost two decades. (TIME, August 19, 1996, p.16.)
- (2) Older students say their graduate work is enhanced by their prior experiences. "I've done a lot of retrofitting, applying what I've learned now to what I did in the past," says Dolan, the environmental lawyer-to-be. (U.S.NEWS & WORLD REPORT, March 2, 1998, p.70.)
- (3) "It doesn't matter to me that these were boys," he says hesitantly. "Their age has nothing to do with the fact that they murdered my wife and four others. Kids do things on the spur of the moment." (TIME, April 6, 1998, p.37.)
- (4) The question, now, is whether other education schools will follow the leaders in improving their curricula and attracting better students, thereby raising the quality of teaching. (U.S.NEWS & WORLD REPORT, March 2, 1998, p.91.)
- (5) University of Southern California law professor Erwin Chemerinsky. (U.S.NEWS & WORLD REPORT, February 17, 1997, p.36.)
- (6) The balanced-budget-before-anything-else groupies and the tax-cuts-before-anything-else crowd. (U.S.NEWS & WORLD REPORT, April 7, 1997, p.36.)

解説：He swims well よりも He is a good swimmer の方が better English と言われる所以は、名詞表現であるからである。この名詞嗜好性は(1)の tax cutter, budget balancer によくあらわれている。(2)の下線部は関係代名詞 what を中心に置く名詞節である。(3)の下線部は接続詞 that を使って the fact を中心に据えた名詞節である。(4)の下線部は接続詞 whether 以下全体が be 動詞 is の補語であり、かつ名詞節を形成している。(5)では下線部全体が Erwin Chemerinsky を修飾している名詞中心構文である。(6)も(5)と同様に groupies, crowd が中心となった名詞中心構文である。

(ハ)日本語で1語で表現するところを、英語では複数の簡単な単語を連ねて、因数分解的に表現することがよくある²⁾。例えば、本稿の中で提示した関係代名詞(副詞)の where, what, how などを使った英文によく見られる。①の to get them where they are today は「今日の地位」、②の You stay where you are は「そこを動くな」、「そこにいなさい」と訳せるが、日本語は1語ですむが英語では複数の語で対応しなくてはならない。ここに日英語の発想の差異が存在するが故に、英語の口語表現習得は日本人にとってそれだけ困難になる。

以上の3点、つまり Level 4 (Overdifferentiation) の習熟と名詞(句、節)の多用、1語対複数語の対応が日本人学習者にとっては不慣れであり、逆の見方をすれば、これに習熟することによって「英語らしさ」に迫ることができる。

注

- 1) 本稿は、日本英語コミュニケーション学会本部研究フォーラム（1999年1月 於：早稲田大学）において「英語らしさに迫る口語表現についての一考察」と題して口頭発表したものに、加筆・修正を加えたものである。
- 2) 『文化と発想とレトリック』東京：研究社、巻下吉夫・瀬戸賢一著 p.5

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