

An Introduction to Japanese Grammar and Communication Strategies by Senko K. Maynard. Tokyo: The Japan Times, 1990. pp. xxiii + 502.

Reviewed by Motoko Ezaki
University of California, Los Angeles

An Introduction to Japanese Grammar and Communication Strategies is written for an audience approaching the Japanese language from the perspective of a native speaker of English. It provides a comprehensive explanation of Japanese grammar and its functions in dynamic communicative situations based on actual data, both spoken and written. Therefore, the book is mainly intended for learners at the intermediate and advanced levels. It is also a useful resource for teachers of Japanese as a foreign language as well as for students of linguistics to reinforce or improve their understanding of the more subtle features of the language in communicative contexts.

The text consists of three parts. In Part One, Maynard categorizes and summarizes the ten basic characteristics of Japanese grammar (i.e., verb final typology; *-i* type adjectives; topic-comment prominence; the preference for not verbalizing the obvious; speech levels and styles, including the formal/informal distinctions and honorifics; modifiers; postpositional particles; verb/adjective conjugation; numbers and counters; and the non-agent orientation.¹) This section also provides information on certain technical aspects of the book, such as the system that the author uses to romanize Japanese (e.g., how long and short vowels are represented in roman letters), an explanation as to the arrangement of the main text (Part Two), and a list of abbreviations used for the grammatical explanations.

Part Two, the main text, presents grammatical explanations and communication strategies under 130 subtitles, called "Entries." These entries represent mixed categories—some are traditional grammatical headings such as particles, word order, and conjunctions, and others are characterized according to particular functional criteria such as "Appealing to the Listener--Interactional Particles," "Action-accompanying Expressions—When Giving and Receiving Gifts," and "Managing Conversation—Repair for Trouble Spots." The main focus of each entry, "target expressions," provides either a grammatical perspective or a "strategic" (i.e., communicative) perspective, depending upon the type of construction under investigation. Maynard gives equal importance to both the grammatical as well as the communicative functions of these Japanese constructions. For example, Maynard presents such "target expressions" as *hai*, *un*, *naruhodo* (i.e., 'yeah,' 'uh-huh,' and 'I see,' respectively) and *maa* and *ano*..

(both serving as a type of hesitation marker similar to 'well') under an independent entry, in which she provides not only "strategic explanations" but additional examples and further practice. In traditional textbooks and reference grammars, the above expressions are usually introduced only in vocabulary lists and/or commented on very briefly with the stronger focus of attention tending to be aimed at the more grammatically relevant elements. In contrast, Maynard believes that both grammatical structures and communication strategies "are necessary to realize various communicative functions" of Japanese (p. 2).

Part Three consists of three sample texts of two different types: casual conversation among college students and a short story (i.e., two excerpts from the conversational data and one short story). The sample texts from the actual spoken discourse are explicated in relation to the relevant entries in Part Two. In addition to vocabulary lists and English translations of these interactions, Maynard has appended a substantial quantity of information to each sample text that is useful for its interpretation, such as the grammatical and/or interactional function(s) of almost every part of speech. Each item of information in this appendix corresponds to an underlined part of the sample text and includes the relevant entry number(s) from Part Two. In this way the reader is able to learn how the expressions s/he has just studied in Part Two are used in actual interactive contexts.

The most distinguishing feature of this book is the tightly knit structure of the entire text. The author first presents a summary of the grammatical features of the language according to the ten characteristics described in Part One. The presentation order of the entries of Part Two generally follows the established one for the ten characteristics in Part One, with each item systematically building upon the preceding item(s). This can play a crucial role in helping the reader develop an overall understanding of the structure of the language. The author seems to attach the greatest importance to three out of the ten basic characteristics, that is, "topic-comment prominence," the preference for "not verbalizing the obvious," and the grammatical quality of "non-agent orientation." These three concepts are discussed from different angles under the different entries of Part Two. For example, the topic marker *wa* first appears in the target expression of Entry 4, *Kyoo wa atatakai-desu nee* 'It's warm today, isn't it?' Its literal translation with the original word order would be 'Today *wa* (topic marker) warm, isn't it? The reader learns at this stage that the topic is generally located at the beginning of the clause in Japanese. At this stage, Maynard does not attempt a full fledged explanation of the topic-comment structure, and simply mentions that *kyoo* (the topic) is "something that is talked about." Instead, she carefully introduces relevant grammatical structures in the following sentences through Entry 14 to build up the reader's capacity to better understand the structure. In entries 15 and 16, she describes in detail the topic-comment structure and the topic marker *wa* making a clear distinction with the subject marker *ga*. Thus the entire text conveys the author's message in a logical and easy to understand framework how various phenomena are conceptualized in the

Japanese language. The reader will gradually gain insight into the thinking of Japanese speakers by studying the text from the first page to the last. In this sense, the book is a rich resource not only for learners and teachers of the language but also for those who are interested in Japanese linguistics and sociolinguistics

The book also has many useful properties as a reference text. It is accessible to a wide range of readers. The author provides the Japanese characters (*kanji*, *hiragana*, and *katakana*) in addition to the romanization in each target sentence and example. This method can help both native speakers of English and Japanese. For the native speakers of Japanese, having these target sentences appear in the standard Japanese writing system is an advantage since this helps to quickly recognize certain expressions and thereby to avoid the frustration and difficulty in leafing through the sample texts in search of the particular expression being discussed. In her explanation of grammatical points, Maynard often instructs the reader to refer to other relevant entries (providing the related entry numbers), so that a grammatical item can be studied from more than one point of view. She also provides useful advice for both learners and teachers in the sections labeled "additional information" and "warning," which appear under each entry. For example, the "warning" under the entry entitled "Expressing Desire" instructs the reader that the Japanese question formed with the desiderative ending [-*tai*] does not connote an invitational meaning in the same sense that its English counterpart *do you want to* or *don't you want to* might imply an informal invitation. This kind of information is very helpful for native speakers of English to improve their communication skills in Japanese and to avoid misunderstandings.

Entries under 'functional and conceptual notions' in Part Two seem to reinforce the comprehensiveness of the book. Among these notions, however, there are some that this reviewer felt would be better supported by further explanation or a "warning" by the author. For example, the author explains in the entry for "Compliments and Compliment Responses" (pp. 313-315) that it is best not to accept a compliment unconditionally in the company of those to whom the speaker must show modesty and reserve. Maynard writes that a simple 'thank you' response to a compliment is incorrect and actually 'spoils' the sentiment of the person giving the praise. According to Maynard, instead of 'thank you,' something in the order of *iie, soo de mo nai n desu* 'no, not really' or *maa maa desu* 'it's only so so' would be the recommended response to a compliment. While I think this is indeed accurate, there are other factors by which a learner or novice language speaker could also 'spoil' the situation in spite of correctly using the recommended verbal responses—these factors would include such supra-segmental and non-linguistic behaviors as inappropriate intonation, poorly timed pauses, and body language. The same might be said of other entries such as "Responding to Questions" (p. 326) and "The meaning of Silence" (p. 398). The information provided under these headings includes very important aspects that learners of Japanese must come to know, but at the same

time they must also be aware of the fact that an unskillful demonstration of some of these otherwise 'correct' verbal responses could lead the novice speaker into awkward situations. It might be helpful if the author reiterated under these particular entries her general qualification as stated initially in Part One that "learning through this book is only one part of a large project" (p. 3).

I believe that this book has a great deal to offer and should be a valuable resource for teachers and students of Japanese, as well as for students of linguistics. As the author acknowledges in the preface, she "stand[s] on the shoulders of many others who [have come] before [her]" in having contributed to Japanese linguistics and language studies (p. vi). Maynard credits her predecessors for having established the foundations for this book, however, she goes well beyond this foundation. Maynard's book proves its originality with its comprehensiveness and its in-depth description of grammatical structures.

NOTES

¹ By non-agent orientation, Maynard is referring to the fact that in Japanese, the subject or agent is not specified as prominently as it is in English because of the Japanese tendency "to view and describe the world as a natural state or a change brought about by some force" (p. 6).

Motoko Ezaki is a Ph.D student in Japanese linguistics in the department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at UCLA. She also teaches Japanese at Occidental College. Her research interests include pragmatics, functional grammar, and discourse analysis.