

# 英語らしさに迫る口語表現

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## はじめに

日本人は比較的難しい単語を使って表現する傾向が強いが、英語を母語とする者は、易しい単語を使って表現することが、特に口語英語では頻繁である。例えば、シドニー五輪でアメリカのマリオン・ジョーンズ選手は、陸上女子100メートルで優勝して金メダルを手にしたとき、インタビューの中で、感激して声を弾ませながら、次のように喜びを語った。“It’s been my dream for 19 years and finally it’s here.”このような表現は、英語がかなり熟達した日本人でも容易に使えない。

本稿では、模範的口語英語で書かれている米国版 Reader’s Digest誌から、「英語らしさに迫る口語表現」を紹介する。その表現を分類してみると、where/what/how/thatなどの関係代名詞(or 関係副詞)、それにthe way S+V構文を使った英文の中に、日本人にはとっさに使えない表現が多数出現することが判明した。

以下、筆者の手元にある口語表現を順次紹介するが、下線部を中心に和訳し、解説を加えることとする。

## 1. 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)

解説：黒人社会が今日の社会的地位を築くには、母や父たちが多大なる犠牲を払ったことを言っている。

(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)

解説：「そこを動くな」という意味。日本語では普通否定的に表現するので、上記下線部のような表現は、平均的日本人学習者にとっては、なかなか口を突いて出てこない表現である。

(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’s good news centers on refining old therapies. Here’s where we stand in treating breast cancer.

(Reader’s Digest, Feb. ’96, p.136)

解説：「これが乳ガン治療の現状だよ」という意味。

この表現は討論のときなどによく使われる。

(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)

解説：「家庭こそが私が一番落ち着けるところよ」

という意味。結婚してはじめて人間の愛を知った主人公のことばである。

- (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.

(Reader's Digest, Sept. '94, p.123)

解説：テストを受験している最中の話である。下線部は「今どこに手をつけているか」という意味である。

- (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)

解説：主人公は音楽より野球が好きであったが、あるとき試合の前に、拡声器を使って歌を歌ったりギターを弾いたりしたところ、地元のナイトクラブから声がかかった。下線部は「一步一步努力したお陰で、今日のように名が売れたんだ」という意味である。

## 2. 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)

解説：夫 David は、姉の Diana に New York に来て病弱な Gayle の世話をしてほしいと思っている。Diana は Gayle との電話の中で、「あなたの所にいけるかどうか、考えてみるわ」と言っている場面である。

- (8) At Sloan-kettering the paper work was finished, 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 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)

解説：入院して手術直前の Reid 婦人に、看護師がいろいろ指示を出している。それに対し、Reid 婦人が「結婚指輪はテープで留めておけばいいでしょ。他の手術のときはそうしたのよ」と抗議しているところである。

- (9) 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)

解説：Vera は心配事があり、隣人 Thorman も不安になる。しかし Vera を助けることは Thorman の責任である。下線部は「遠い親戚よりも近くの隣人」という意味に近い。

- (10) 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)

解説：下線部は「食物で身体はできる」ことを言っている。とても日本人にはとっさに使えない表現である。

- (11) 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)

解説：下線部は「あれは爬虫類なんだよ」と息子が母親に向かって言っている。

- (12) 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)

解説：下線部は「世界タイトルを取ったことで私

が驚くと思われている」という意味である。

### 3. how

- (13) "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 get out of the basket. Then all of a sudden, the other crabs who was doin' 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)

解説：下線部は「人間ってそんなものよ」と言っている。目立とうとすると、人は足を引っ張る。つまり「出る杭は打たれる」ことを言っている。

- (14) 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)

解説：下線部は「レーガン大統領は政治をそんなふうには見ていないよ」という意味である。

- (15) 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)

解説：下線部は「今がよければ、それだけでいいんだよ」と言っている。

### 4. 関係代名詞の省略

- (16) 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 get 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)

解説：下線部は「いい青年ですよ。あなたの息子さんは」といった感じである。You have a fine young man there. よりずっと心のこもった表現である。

- (17) 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)

解説：下線部はI was not good at musicとも言えるが、婉曲的表現になっている。

## 5. the way S + V

- (18) 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 manger. "That's not the way we do business," he adds.

(Reader's Digest, Oct, '95, p.107)

解説：下線部は「我々はそんな取り引きはしませんよ」という意味である。

- (19) 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)

解説：下線部は、「子どもってそんなものよ。それが人生よ」と妻が夫をなだめている。

- (20) 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)

解説：下線部は「世の中ってそんなもんだよ」「それが世の常だよ」と言っている。

- (21) 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)

解説：下線部は「夫婦ってこんなもんだよ」という意味である。

## まとめ

日本人にとって本当の難しさは、口語英語、つまり話しことばの中に、ままある。その視点からすると、口語英語の記事が満載されている Reader's Digest 誌は、かっこうの研究材料である。

筆者は平成12年度から平成17年度2月までの5年間、財団法人・日本英語検定協会より英検1級の面接委員を委嘱され、この間約240名の受験者を面接したが、ほとんどの受験者は難しい単語を使う傾向が強いことに気づいた。しかしながら、拙論で取り上げたような口語英語を使いこなして初めて、本当の「英語使い」と言えるのではないだろうか。

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