北大オリジナル

アカデミック・リーディングの基礎

ビデオ教材

Modular Approach to Reading
Foundations for Academic Reading Skills

北海道大学外国語教育センター

Reading　ビデオ教材作成タスクフォース

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Unit 9 Inference and the Knowledge of the World

Jay (J): Hello, everyone. I am Jay Tanaka. Welcome to our special lecture "Modular Approach to Reading."

In this unit, we will learn that "inference" is very important when you try to understand English texts.

Satoshi (S): みなさんこんにちは、奥聡です。このユニットでは、文章を理解しようとするとき、合理的な「推論」を行うことが非常に重要であるということを学びます。語彙力や文法力だけでは足りないのです。

J: We will see that your vocabulary and grammar alone are not good enough.

Let us first look at the following Japanese quizzes.

[Quiz 1]

次の例文で、誰が誰をクラス代表に推薦しましたか?

Who recommended whom as the class representative?

悠子は智子を尊敬している。だからクラス代表に推薦した。

Remember: we learned in Unit 7 that we can elide the subject and the object when they are easily recoverable from the context in Japanese.

後半部分で主語と目的語が省略されていても全く自然な文ですね。

And the most natural interpretation here is ...

推薦したのが悠子で推薦されたのが智子でしょう。

The subject and the object are parallel between the two sentences. Is it too obvious?

簡単すぎますか?

Then, how about the next one?

[Quiz 2]

誰が誰に対して優しいのですか?

Who is nice to whom?

悠子は智子を尊敬している。いつも優しいからだ。

This time, the subject of the second clause is most naturally understood as Tomoko.

智子は悠子にいつも優しいからだ、というのがもっとも自然な解釈ですね。

Notice that the subject in the first clause and the subject in the second clause are not
parallel in this case.

自分の母語日本語であれば、前後のつながりや述語の意味などから総合して、省略されている要素を合理的に正確に推論をして理解しています。

You can reasonably infer the identity of the missing subject and the identity of the missing object.

Now, the same applies in English.

さて、英語でも同じことが当てはまります。

Here is another quiz in English.

[Quiz 3]

Who is *he* and who is *him*?

Bob admires Jeff so he is trying to be like him.

If you only appeal to the fact that *he* and *him* are both singular males, you might think that *he* can be either Bob or Jeff, and *him* can also be either Bob or Jeff.

もし、he も him も男性単数であるという情報だけに頼って解釈しようとすると、he は Bob でも Jeff でもよくて、him も Bob でも Jeff でもよいということになってしまいます。しかし、実際はどうでしょうか。

The most natural interpretation here is that *he* refers to Bob and *him* refers to Jeff. It seems to be very easy because the subject and the object are parallel between the first clause and the second clause in this case.

ここでは Bob と Jeff が最初に出てきた順番の通りに、he と him が解釈されるので、とても易しく感じるかもしれません。

How about the next one then?

[Quiz 4]

Who is *he* and who is *him*?

Bob admires Jeff because he is always nice to him.

Again, just in terms of the gender/number matching, *he* can be either Bob or Jeff, and *him* also can be either Bob or Jeff.

ここでもまた、he や him が男性単数であるという情報だけを見ていては、いけません。

The most natural interpretation here is that *he* is Jeff and *him* is Bob.

今度は出てくる順番がひっくり返って、he は Jeff を指し、him は Bob を指す、と解釈するのが最も自然です。

[A stuffed gorilla is on display, the sign saying "Don't touch. A National Treasure"]

[Satoshi comes in, looks around carefully and touches the toy gorilla happily]

Jay [coming in]: Hey, Satoshi! Don't touch! Can't you see the sign?

Satoshi [surprised]: Oh! I'm sorry.

Jay blamed Satoshi because **he** had broken the rule.

What does this *he* refer to? You can easily infer that *he* refers to Satoshi in this instance.

日本語でも「ジェイは聡を非難した。規則を破ったからだ」といえば、「規則を破った」という述語の主語は明記されていないにもかかわらず、規則を破った人は「聡」であると、自然に推論できますね。

Now, let us consider more closely what is going on in our mind here.

私たちの頭の中で一体何が起こっているのか、もう少し丁寧に考えてみましょう。

Our Mind Infers 推論する心

    (1)   X admires Y

    (2)   so **A** is trying to be like **B**.

We can make a reasonable inference that the situation in (1) is the cause of the situation in (2).

(1)の状況が(2)の状況の原因であると合理的に推論できます。

Here we make this inference based on our common sense or our general knowledge of the world.

ある人物 X がある人物 Y を尊敬しているという状態から、どちらの人物がどちらの人物のように振る舞いたいと思うかを、一般常識に基づいて合理的に推論をしているわけです。

    (1)と(2)の情報と私たちの一般常識から
    「A＝X」「B＝Y」と合理的に推論している

This inference is reasonable because it is based on our general knowledge of the world, and the opposite interpretation is very inconceivable.

A と B を逆に解釈するのは、常識的に考えて大変不自然になるでしょう。

Consider the next example.

    (3)   X admires Y

    (4)   because **A** is always nice to **B**.

We can make a reasonable inference that the situation in (4) is the "reason" of the situation in (3).

(4)の状況が(3)の状況の「理由」であると合理的に推論できます。

Here again, this inference is based on our common sense or our general knowledge of the world.

ある人物 X がある人物 Y を尊敬しているという状態の「理由」として、どちらの人物がどちらの人物に対していつも優しくしているかを、一般常識に基づいて合理的に推論をしているわけです。

    (3)と(4)の情報と私たちの一般常識から
    「A＝Y」「B＝X」と合理的に推論している

This inference is reasonable again because it is based on our general knowledge of the world, and the opposite interpretation is very inconceivable.

A と B を逆に解釈するのは、ここでも大変不自然になるでしょう。

Let us summarize the points so far.

Interim Summary 中間まとめ

In order to have good communication with the author, you need vocabulary and grammar.

[書き手とよいコミュニケーションをするために必要なこと]

> ・vocabulary
> ・grammar
>   sentence grammar
>   text grammar
> ・**inference**
> ・**knowledge of the world**
>   (common knowledge)

However, you shouldn't forget you need the following two things as well: inference and your knowledge of the world.

単語と文法は重要です。しかし、それと同じくらいに重要なのが、合理的な推論をする力と世界に対する豊かな知識です。

When you read passages in your native language, say Japanese, you use your knowledge of the world and your ability to make a reasonable inference very naturally and almost unconsciously.

母語で文章を読んでいるとき、私たちはほぼ無意識に、世界に対する知識や推論力をとても有効に使っています。

It is a very good idea to try to use them more consciously when you read passages in a foreign language.

Bearing this in mind, let us consider a few more examples.

Smartphones and Selfies: An Example スマホや自撮りについて詳しければ

If you are familiar with smartphones and selfies, the following passage is relatively easy to understand.

スマホによる自撮りに詳しければ、次の英文の理解はそれほど難しくないでしょう。

> Self-portrait photos taken on a smartphone can be easily modified using PC technology: filtered selfies. Experts, however, warn that when some of them are posted on the Internet, they provide people with a wrong impression of what the person actually looks like.

smartphone
スマホや
filtered selfies
自撮り写真の加工
posted on the Internet
インターネットに載せる、といった話題に慣れていれば、このパッセージの理解はそれほど難しくないでしょう。

In other words, your knowledge of the world certainly helps you comprehend what the author wants to convey. Now, here is a quick quiz again.

[Quiz 5]

What does this "them" refer to?

この them は何を指していますか?

Self-portrait photos taken on a smartphone can be easily modified using PC technology:
filtered selfies. Experts, however, warn that when some of <u>them</u> are posted on the Internet,
they provide people with a wrong impression of what the person actually looks like.

If you simply look for the closest plural noun phrase, you may mistakenly take this "them" as referring to "experts."

機械的に複数形の名詞句を探そうとすると、一番近くにある experts 「専門家」を指すと読み誤ってしまうかもしれません。

If you use your commonsense knowledge, by contrast, you may easily notice that "posting experts on the Internet" is strange in this context.

しかし、常識を使えば、「専門家をネットに貼り付ける」ではおかしいことにすぐ気が付きます。

Your knowledge of the world and reasonable inference tells you that "them" refers to "filtered selfies" in this context.

常識と推論を使えば、them がここでは filtered selfies (加工した自撮り写真)を指していることが自然にわかります。

Your knowledge of the world and ability to infer are both crucial for comprehending English texts.

OK? Let's wrap up.

Wrap Up まとめ

Your rich vocabulary and accurate knowledge of grammar are essential for comprehending English texts. Moreover, your ability to make a reasonable inference and knowledge of the world or general common sense are no less important. Reading is not just knowing words and grammar.

リーディングは単語の知識や文法だけではありません。

In order to read English texts correctly, that is, in order to have good communication with the author, your knowledge of the world and reasonable inference are crucially indispensable.

リーディングは総合力なのです。

[Satoshi is taking pictures of himself, using a selfie stick]
[Jay is coming in]
Jay: Hi, Satoshi.
Satoshi: Oh, hi Jay.

Jay: What are you doing?

Satoshi: I'm going to modify these pictures and make a perfect image of myself!

[looks satisfied, and is about to leave]

Jay [concerned]: Are you sure?

Satoshi [leaving]: Bye!

[Jay is seeing off Satoshi, looking concerned, but suddenly notices that the camera is running]

Well. That's all for today. Good luck, keep working hard, and see you next time.