

IV. Grammar Explanation

1. Potential verbs

How to make potential verbs (See Main Textbook, Lesson 27, p.12, 練習 A1.)

		Potential verbs	
		polite form	plain form
I	かきます かいます	かけます かえます	かける かえる
II	たべます	たべられます	たべられる
III	きます します	こられます できます	こられる できる

All potential verbs are Group II verbs; they conjugate into the dictionary form, ない-form, て-form, etc.

e.g. かける, かけ(ない), かけて

わかる, which includes the meaning of possibility itself, does not change into わかれる.

2. Potential verb sentences

1) Potential verbs express not actions but states. The objects of transitive verbs are indicated by the particle を. When they become potential verbs, however, their objects are usually indicated by the particle が.

- ① わたしは 日本語を 話します。 I speak Japanese.
② わたしは 日本語が 話せます。 I can speak Japanese.

No particles change except for を.

- ③ 一人で 病院へ 行けますか。 Can you go to the hospital alone?
④ 田中さんに 会えませんでした。 I could not see Mr. Tanaka.

2) Potential verbs have two uses: to express a person's ability to do something (⑤) and to express the possibility of an action in a certain situation (⑥).

- ⑤ ミラーさんは 漢字が 読めます。 Mr. Miller can read kanji.
⑥ この 銀行で ドルが 換えられます。 You can change dollars at this bank.

3. 見えます and 聞こえます

The potential verb for みます is みられます and that for ききます is ぎけます. They indicate that one's intention of seeing or listening can be realized. 見えます indicates that a certain object comes into one's sight and きこえます that a sound reaches one's ears independent of one's will. In sentences using 見えます and きこえます, objects to be seen or heard become the subjects of the sentence and are indicated by が.

- ⑦ 新宿で 今 黒沢の 映画が 見られます。
You can now see Kurosawa's movies in Shinjuku.
⑧ 新幹線から 富士山が 見えます。
Mt. Fuji can be seen from the Shinkansen.
⑨ 電話で 天気予報が 聞けます。
You can hear the weather forecast by phone.
⑩ ラジオの 音が 聞こえます。
The sound of a radio can be heard.

4. できます

The verb できます that you learn here means "come into being," "come up," "be completed," "be finished," "be made," etc.

- ⑪ 駅の 前に 大きい スーパーが できました。
A big supermarket has been completed in front of the station.
⑫ 時計の 修理は いつ できますか。
When can you fix this watch?

5. は

1) では／には／へは／からは／までは, etc.

は is used to highlight a noun as a topic, and as you learned in Lessons 10, 17 and 26, when が or を follows the noun, it is replaced by は. When other particles (e.g. で, に, へ, etc.) follow the noun, は is placed after them.

- ⑬ わたしの 学校には アメリカ人の 先生が います。
In my school there is an American teacher.
⑭ わたしの 学校では 中国語が 習えます。
In my school we can learn the Chinese language.

2) は used to make contrasts

- ⑮ きのうは 山が 見えましたが、きょうは 見えません。
Yesterday we could see mountains, but not today.
⑯ ワインは 飲みますが、ビールは 飲みません。
I drink wine, but not beer.
⑰ 京都へは 行きますが、大阪へは 行きません。
I will go to Kyoto, but not to Osaka.

6. も

Like the usage of は explained above, も replaces を or が, but follows other particles. In the case of the particle へ, however, it can be omitted.

- ⑱ クララさんは 英語が 話せます。フランス語も 話せます。
Klara can speak English. She can speak French, too.
⑲ 去年 アメリカへ 行きました。メキシコ [へ] も 行きました。
I went to America last year. I went to Mexico, too.
⑳ わたしの 部屋から 海が 見えます。弟の 部屋からも 見えます。
The sea can be seen from my room, and also from my brother's room.

7. しか

しか is attached to nouns, quantifiers, etc., and is always used with negative predicates. It highlights the word, makes limitations and negates everything except the thing expressed by the word. It replaces が or を, but follows other particles. しか has a negative nuance, while だけ has a positive one.

- ㉑ ローマ字しか 書けません。
I cannot write anything but Roman letters.
㉒ ローマ字だけ 書けます。
I can only write Roman letters.