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TOM TOM ENGLISH



Be like an Osaka Auntie

VOCABULARY

Odious =

Extremely unpleasant;
repulsive

Spurious =

False, fake, pretending
to be something else

Bate-and-switch =

Advertising something
that seems to be a
bargain, with the
attention of switching
to an inferior product
later

Scam =

A dishonest scheme or
plan to defraud
someone

Read the article overleaf and discuss these questions:

1. Why do you think cases of fraud are increasing?
2. What can the government do to reduce these kind of scams?
3. Why do you think these scams are less successful in Osaka? Do you agree with the article? Why? Why not?
4. Have you ever been the victim of a scam? What happened? Could you have done anything to avoid it?
5. Do you know anyone who has been the victim of a scam? What happened?
6. Do you have elderly relatives? If so, do you or they take any precautions to prevent them from being victims of fraud? What do you or they do?

VOCABULARY

Nefarious =

Something wicked or
evil

Vernacular =

The language or dialect
spoken by ordinary
people in a particular
area

Right off the bat =

Immediately, straight
away, at the beginning

Circumspect =

Wary, careful, unwilling
to take risks

Emulate =

Copy, imitate

The number of **odious** “It’s me, send money” and other forms of fraud is increasing. The number of reported incidents last year rose by 13% over 2014, to 12,762 cases. Losses were calculated at 39 billion yen.

Known incidents went up by 5% for “it’s me, send money” schemes; 30% for **spurious** invoice demands; and 23% for **bait-and-switch scams** involving tax rebates.

There is extensive reporting in the media of this kind of scam. So, Nikkan Gendai (April 23), is surprised that the number of cases keeps growing. This is in part due to wily crooks’ ability to keep making new original types of confidence schemes. In the past the scams were simple: a hushed voice over the telephone, pretending to be a son or grandson, and urgently asking for money to avoid trouble with the police or court. These are still common; but now those considerate, cooperative criminals will come to their elderly victims’ homes to receive the cash. Sometimes they get an ATM card and can steal their entire savings.

One of the fastest-growing types of fraud is the tricking of people into using parcel delivery services to send payment for billed items that they never ordered.

Nikkan Gendai says that one way to avoid these **nefarious** schemes is to **emulate** the conversational style of an “Osaka auntie.” Why Osaka? The top three prefectures for this kind of fraud are Tokyo, Saitama and Okayama. Osaka, at 43rd, ranks close to the bottom. One reason for this might be the way Osaka people typically engage others, including over the telephone.

For details, the tabloid turned to a book titled “The Osaka Obasan Strikes Back,” written by Sachiko Minamoto, who says she was born “right in the middle of Osaka.”

“If the caller begins by saying ‘Ore dakedo’ (it’s me), such women tend to be immediately wary. They ask for confirmation: ‘What do you mean by ME? None of my kids are an ‘ore.’”

If the caller speaks using standard Japanese instead of Osaka dialect, they will become more suspicious. “Homma ni Takeshi?” (Takeshi, is it really you?) she’ll ask in the local **vernacular**. She will insist on some sort of proof before continuing the conversation.

“In the old days, discussion of money wasn’t treated as a taboo among Osakans,” author Minamoto notes. “For instance, if you saw a person wearing nice clothes, it was OK to ask ‘Nanbo shitan?’ (how much did you pay for it?). Or if a person changed residence, you could ask him, ‘Yachin nanbo?’ (how much rent are you paying?). In Osaka culture it’s OK to negotiate with a realtor and even ask for a discount on the rent for an apartment. So the subject of money tends to come up **right off the bat**, and they don’t automatically agree with someone else’s terms.”

Minamoto also points out such ladies’ contrary nature. Ask for the money to be sent via bank transfer and she’ll say, “That’s too troublesome. Why don’t you come and get it yourself?” In other words, while she may be happy to have others make additional efforts, she’s twice as **circumspect** about handing over her own money.

“That’s an attitude everyone should **emulate**,” Minamoto says.