

日本語流 13

The Nihongo Way 13

< Today's dialogue >

You (U) are talking with a colleague at the company you have joined recently.



U: この辺に郵便局はありますか。①	<i>Kono hen ni yûbinkyoku wa arimasu ka?</i>
J: はい、ありますよ。この先にあります。②	<i>Hai, arimasu yo. Kono saki ni arimasu.</i>
U: 近いですか。	<i>Chikai desu ka?</i>
J: いや、ちょっと遠いです。	<i>Iya, chotto tōi desu.</i>
U: ここからそこまでどのくらいかかりますか。③	<i>Koko kara soko made dono-kurai kakarimasu ka?</i>
J: 歩いて10分くらいです。	<i>Aruite juppun-kurai desu.</i>
U: あ、じゃ、そんなに遠くないですねえ。	<i>A, ja, sonnani tōku nai desu né.</i>
J: まあね。	<i>Mā ne.</i>
U: 郵便局は何時に開きますか。④	<i>Yûbinkyoku wa nanji ni akimasu ka?</i>
J: 9時に開きます。⑤	<i>Kuji ni akimasu.</i>
U: 9時から何時までですか。⑥	<i>Kuji kara nanji made desu ka?</i>
J: 郵便業務は5時までですけど、保険業務と預金業務はたしか4時までです。⑦	<i>Yûbingyōmu wa goji made desu kedo, hokengyōmu to yokingyōmu wa tashika yoji made desu.</i>
U: あ、そうですか。どうもありがとう。	<i>A, sō desu ka. Dōmo arigatō.</i>
J: いいえ。	<i>Iie.</i>

We will continue to cover the commonly used phrase-particles. Today let's look at *ni*, *kara* and *made*.

To begin, let's look at English equivalents to today's dialogue:

DIALOGUE OVERVIEW

U: Is there a post office in this area?

J: Yes, there is. It's (located) ahead of us {this ahead}.

U: Is it close?

J: No, a bit far.

U: How long does it take from here to there?

J: It's about ten minutes by walking.

U: Oh, then it's not so far, is it!

J: Well...

U: {At} what time does the post office open?

J: It opens at nine o'clock.

U: Till what time from nine is it (open)?

J: Postal service is till five, but insurance and saving services are till four if I remember correctly.

U: Oh, is that right. Thank you.

J: You're welcome.

*{ } indicates literal translation.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

Nouns

<i>hen</i>	area [always used with a modifier, e.g., <i>kono-hen</i> (this area)]
<i>saki</i>	ahead [often used with a modifier, e.g., <i>kono-saki</i> (ahead of us)]
<i>nan-ji</i>	what time?
<i>yo-ji</i>	4 o'clock
<i>go-ji</i>	5 o'clock
<i>ku-ji</i>	9 o'clock
<i>dono-kurai</i>	{to what extent} how long (in time)? how much (quantity)?
<i>juppun</i>	10 minutes
<i>juppun-kurai</i>	{10-min. extent} about 10 minutes
<i>aruite</i>	on foot, by walking
<i>yûbinkyoku</i>	post office
<i>yûbingyômu</i>	postal service
<i>hokengyômu</i>	insurance service
<i>yokingyômu</i>	money saving service
<i>tashika</i>	if I remember correctly [Adverbial]

Adjectives

<i>tôi</i>	far, distant
<i>chikai</i>	near, close

Verbs

<i>arimasu</i>	something exists, is located
<i>kakarimasu</i>	it takes [time, energy, resources], it costs [money]
<i>akimasu</i>	something opens [intransitive]
<i>shimarimasu</i>	something closes [intransitive]

GRAMMAR FOCUS

1. Phrase-particles: *ni*, *kara* and *made*

(1) *X ni*: at/on/in X [locating a place or a time]

Although this particle has a number of derivative functions (to be discussed in later columns), its core function is to locate/indicate a place. To locate a place means to pinpoint a place in space, as seen in the dialog at ① and ②. This function can be extended to allow for pinpointing a point in time, too, as seen in ④ and ⑤. Like its related English prepositions (at/on/in), *ni* is used for locating both geographical and temporal spaces.

English differentiates a variety of prepositions for locating a point in time, i.e., at, on, in and during, and the choice of which preposition to use varies according to the length of time indicated. Compared to English, Japanese is straightforward in this area. As long as the speaker is discussing the time interval as a point in time, *ni* is invariably used, whether speaking of one second of time or some longer unit, such as “last century,” the Stone Age, etc.

(2) *X kara*: starting from X

The particle *kara* indicates the starting point, whether in space or in time, just like the preposition “from” does in English.

(3) *X made*: up to X, until X, as far as X

Similarly, the particle *made* indicates the finishing point, space-wise or time-wise. While there are regional differences in usage of English prepositions, some English speakers differentiate prepositions between space (up to) and time (till/until). Japanese does not do this.

2. Another *ko-so-a-do* series of words: *konnani*, *sonnani*, *annani* and *donnani*

Allow me to introduce another of the important *ko-so-a-do* sets:

Konnani ôkii desu. It's this big (as I'm showing you).

Sonnani ôkii desu ka! Is it that big (as you're showing me), huh!

Annani ôkii desu yo. It's that big (as they're showing), you see!

Donnani ôkii desu ka?* How big is it?

* In this case, *dono-kurai* is generally preferred.

As you can see, this *ko-so-a-do* series shares the same core notions with its siblings: *ko* refers to the 1st person; *so*, the 2nd person; *a*, the 3rd person; and *do*, for the interrogative. This set refers to the manner or way something is done or said.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

***kakarimasu* – a utility verb**

Every language has what we could call “utility verbs.” In English, I'd say these include: have, take, get, put, do, make, etc. If you think of how versatile these verbs are, with so many uses varying by context, I think you'd agree with me. In fact, there are a good number of acts or movements in life that are a bit hard to describe with a clear-cut verb, and that's where utility verbs play their role.

In Japanese, *kakarimasu* (or *kakaru* in direct-style) is one such verb. In the context of today's dialog, *kakaru* is equivalent to “take” in English, but in no way are these two identical, of course.