

日本語流 18

The Nihongo Way 18

< Today's dialogue >

You (U) are going to Tokyo Station and have just caught a taxi.



U: すみません。東京駅までお願いします。	<i>Sumimasen. Tōkyo-eki made onegaishimasu.</i>
J: 丸の内口ですか、八重洲口ですか。①	<i>Marunouchi-guchi desu ka, Yaesu-guchi desu ka?</i>
U: ええっと、新幹線に乗りますが、どちらが <u>いい</u> でしょうか。②	<i>Eetto, Shinkansen ni norimasu ga, dochira ga ii deshō ka?</i>
J: <u>八重洲口のほう</u> が近いですよ。③	<i>Yaesu-guchi no hō ga chikai desu yo.</i>
U: じゃあ、そちらに <u>行って</u> ください。④	<i>Jā, sochira ni itte kudasai.</i>
J: <u>かしこまりました</u> 。	<i>Kashikomarimashita.</i>
U: すみません。あまり時間がありません。 <u>急いで</u> くださいませんか。⑤	<i>Sumimasen. Amari jikan ga arimasen. Isoide kudasaimasen ka?</i>
J: 電車は何時ですか。	<i>Densha wa nanji desu ka?</i>
U: 5時発です。	<i>Goji-hatsu desu.</i>
J: じゃ、 <u>大丈夫</u> でしょう。⑥ じゅうぶん間に合いますよ。	<i>Ja, daijōbu deshō. Jūbun ma ni aimasu yo.</i>
U: よろしくお願いします。	<i>Yoroshiku onegaishimasu.</i>

Let's continue with the verb's *te*-form used with another verb as auxiliary.

Today's auxiliary verb is *kudasaru* (direct-style) or *kudasaimasu* (distal-style). Although its core meaning is "give," that translation is far from sufficient to explain its entirety. For one thing, it can never be used when you, as speaker, give something, because it is an honorific-polite verb. As a reminder, one does not honor the self when speaking Japanese.

DIALOGUE OVERVIEW

English equivalents to the dialog:

U: Excuse me. To Tokyo Station, please. [I humbly request up to Tokyo Station]

J: (Is it) Marunouchi Exit or Yaesu Exit (that you want)?

U: Well, I'll take the Shinkansen; which would be better?

J: Yaesu Exit is nearer.

U: Then, please go there.

J: Yes, certainly, sir.

U: Excuse me. I don't have much time. Would you please hurry?

J: What time is your train?

U: It's a 5 o'clock departure.

J: Then, you should be fine. You'll be well in time.

U: Thanks. [I humbly request your favorable treatment]

VOCABULARY FOCUS

Verbs and **verbal** phrases

<i>isogu (isoide)</i>	hurry
<i>ma ni au (atte)</i>	be in time
<i>X-ni noru (notte)</i>	ride on X, get on board X
<i>kashikomarimashita</i>	(I) have duly acknowledged, sir/ma'am. [This is an archaic verb used today only in the perfective form.]

Adjectives

<i>chikai</i>	close, near
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Nouns

<i>densha</i>	(electric) train
<i>goji-hatsu</i>	5 o'clock departure
<i>jûbun</i>	enough, sufficient
<i>nanji</i>	what time

GRAMMAR FOCUS

1. *V-te kudasai*

A verb's *te*-form followed by *kudasai* is used to ask someone to do something for you, as in ④:

Itte kudasai. Please go.

Kudasai looks like it means "please," but it does not.

Kudasai is an abbreviation of *kudasaimase*, itself an imperative form of the honorific-polite verb *kudasaimasu* (someone honorably gives me something). Therefore, the above sentence literally translates to:

Having gone, (honorably) give me (your favor).

Or: Go for my sake.

Even though it is indeed imperative (a command), because of its honorific-polite nature it does not sound rude. It works as a polite request.

2. *V-te kudasaimasen ka?*

Polite as it is, *kudasai* is still imperative, however. To be softer and politer you can replace *kudasai* with *kudasaimasen ka?*

This is a negative question, a typical invitation form in Japanese, as you might recall. Therefore, to be more polite, sentence ④ can be restated as:

Itte kudasaimasen ka? (Won't you please go?)

Sentence ⑤ is in this politer form, too:

Isoide kudasaimasen ka? (Won't you please hurry?)

3. *X no hô ga chikai*

While *X ga chikai* translates as "X is close," *X no hô ga chikai* (③) adds a nuance of comparison, i.e., "X is closer."

The noun *hô* here means "alternative," so a literal translation is: "X's alternative is close." This is how to express comparison between two things in Japanese.

Examples:

Dochira ga ii desu ka?

Which is good? Which do you like?

Dochira no hô ga ii desu ka?

Which is better? Which do you like better?

4. *X deshô* vs. *X desu*

As you know, *X desu* means "It is X," with X a noun or adjective. In other words, it is definitive identification of something or a definitive statement about a condition. Examples:

Daijôbu desu. It is no problem. It's OK.

Dochira ga ii desu ka? Which one is good?

Let's look at *deshô* used in place of *desu*. With *deshô*, the statement becomes tentative; hence:

Daijôbu deshô. (⑥) It is probably no problem. It should be no problem.

Dochira no hô ga ii deshô ka? (②) Which one would be better?

5. Alternate Question

As seen in ①, two alternatives are uttered one after another without any word equivalent to the English "or." This is a typical Japanese way to ask about alternatives that works with all verb, adjective, or noun sentences:

Osake nomimasu ka, shôchû nomimasu ka? Do you drink sake or shôchû?

Ashita wa atsui desu ka, suzushii desu ka? Will it be hot or cool tomorrow?

Amerikajin desu ka, Igrisujin desu ka? Are you American or British?

CULTURE FOCUS

Not merely tentative, *X-deshô* also sounds politer than *X-desu*. Why is this?

In Japanese culture, to make clear-cut straightforward statements is often taken as rude. This is because such statements allow no room for the counterpart's possible contrary opinion.

This psychology is not peculiarly Japanese. Savor the difference you feel when you hear someone say "This is bad," as opposed to "This may be bad."