

日本語流 20

The Nihongo Way 20

< Today's dialogue >

You (U) are talking with your Japanese girlfriend (J) at home.



U: やっと暑い夏も終わったねえ。

Yatto atsui natsu mo owatta né.

J: 涼しくなって、いい季節になったねえ。①

Suzushiku natte, ii kisetsu ni natta né.

U: そうだねえ。どこか田舎に行きたいなあ。②

Sô da né. Dokoka inaka ni ikitai nâ.

J: そう、ひなびた旅館でゆっくりしたいねえ。③

このところふたりともすごく忙しかったから。④

Sô, hinabita ryokan de yukkuri-shitai né.

Konotokoro hutaritomo sugoku isogashikatta kara.

U: じゃあ、東北の温泉はどう？

一度、東北地方の温泉に行ってみたかったから。⑤

それに、活性化にも役立つし。

Jâ, Tohoku no onsen wa do?

Ichido Tôhokuchihô no onsen ni ittemitakatta kara.

Soreni, kasseika nimo yakudatsu shi.

J: そうねえ。それから、珍しい地酒も飲んでみたいなあ。⑥

Sô né. Sorekara, mezurashii jizake mo nondemitai nâ.

DIALOGUE OVERVIEW

U: The hot summer is over at last, isn't it?

J: It has cooled off [has become nice and cool]; it has become a good season.

U: That's right. I want to go somewhere in the country.

J: Yeah, I want to relax at a rustic inn.

Because we both have been terribly busy lately.

U: Then, how about a hot spring in Tohoku?

I have wanted to go and try a hot spring [one time] in the Tohoku region, so...

And it will be good [useful] for revitalization, too.

J: Right. And I want to try [drink and see] unusual local sake as well.

* Note: As this conversation takes place between a young couple, it is all in direct-style, eliminating psychological distance between the two.

Today we introduce how to express desire to do something, i.e., “want to do (something).” While English introduces a separate verb “want” in combination with the action verb, Japanese adds a suffix, transforming the action verb into an *adjective* of desire. This is a typical method by which Japanese copes with the addition of implication to a core meaning. This is why it is sometimes called an adhesive language.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

Verbs

<i>naru</i>	become
<i>owaru</i>	end, finish
<i>X-ni yakudatsu</i>	is useful for X
<i>yukkuri-suru*</i>	relax

* *yukkuri* is an adverb meaning “slowly”; when used together with versatile *suru*, it creates a verb.

Adjectives

<i>mezurashii</i>	unusual
<i>suzushii</i>	nice and cool

Nouns

<i>dokoka*</i>	somewhere
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* By adding *ka* to interrogative words, we create: *itsuka* (unspecified when, i.e. “sometime”), *dareka* (unspecified who, i.e. “someone”), *nanika* (unspecified what, i.e. “something”), *doreka* (unspecified which of the given items numbering more than two), and *dochiraka* (unspecified which of the two, i.e. “either one”).

<i>hutaritomo</i>	both of the two persons
<i>inaka</i>	countryside
<i>jizake</i>	local <i>sake</i>
<i>kasseika</i>	revitalization, invigoration, activation
<i>konotokoro</i>	recently
<i>onsen</i>	hot spring, hot spa
<i>ryokan</i>	Japanese inn

Adverbial

<i>sugoku</i>	greatly, terribly
<i>yatto</i>	at last

Others

<i>hinabita*</i>	rustic
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* This is a conjugation from the archaic verb *hinabiru*, which is hardly used now. The current form survives as a noun modifier.

<i>sorekara</i>	and then
<i>soreni</i>	in addition to that

GRAMMAR FOCUS

1. Expression of desire

To say “want to do something” in Japanese, one employs the adjectival suffix, *-tai*, and attaches it to the stem of the verb:

<i>ikitai</i> (②)	I want to go
<i>yukkuri-shitai</i> (③)	I want to relax
<i>nondemitai</i> (⑤)	I want to drink and see

Note that these newly created words are no longer verbs! They have been transformed into adjectives. We know this because *-tai* is an adjectival suffix. Regard them as adjectives and follow the adjective conjugation pattern you already know:

<i>ikitakatta.</i>	I wanted to go.
<i>ikitaku nai.</i>	I don't want to go.
<i>ikitaku nakatta.</i>	I didn't want to go.

For distal-style, add *desu*, of course:

<i>ikitai desu.</i>	I want to go.
<i>ikitakatta desu.</i>	I wanted to go.

Like all adjectives, you have two choices for the negative in distal style, as below:

<i>ikitaku nai desu.</i> Or, <i>ikitaku arimasen.</i>	I don't want to go.
<i>ikitaku nakatta desu.</i> Or, <i>ikitaku arimasen deshita.</i>	I didn't want to go.

2. Usage of *naru*

Look at sentence ① in the dialog. It is a combination of two sentences:

<i>Suzushiku natta.</i>	It has become cool.
<i>Ii kisetsu ni natta.</i>	It has become a nice season.

In spite of having the same verb, why the difference? In the first sentence, *suzushii* hooks up with the verb *natta*; the adjective changes to an adverb. Adjectives take the *-ku* form when used adverbially. The *sugoku* (terribly) in ④ is the adverbial form of the adjective *sugoi* (great, terrible). This is comparable to the many English adjectives that take the *-ly* form when used adverbially, such as clearly, nicely, etc. Although English has many exceptions to its rule, Japanese has none.

In the second sentence, *ii kisetsu* (a nice season) is a noun phrase and it is the state that comes to be (“the state that becomes”). Notice that the phrase-particle *ni* is used to indicate the target state. Some examples:

<i>Noda-san ga shusho ni natta.</i>	Mr. Noda has become the prime minister.
<i>Ashita wa ame ni naru.</i>	It'll become rainy tomorrow.
<i>Sora ga kirei ni naru.</i>	The sky becomes beautiful.

CULTURE FOCUS

1. It is interesting to note that desires are expressed as an adjective in Japanese while English employs a verb (want). This reflects the Japanese perspective on states of mind, which are regarded as natural occurrences rather than willful acts. There is a consistent tendency toward this perception.
2. Whether in direct-style or distal-style, it is often taken to be too direct, or childish even, to use this form of expressing desire as it is. One way to mitigate a potentially too-direct impact is to add sentence-particles such as *nê* or *nâ*, the former for seeking agreement with the counterpart, the latter for indicating that one is talking to oneself.
3. Readers may have noticed that translations of verbs ending in *-tai* have been given with 1st person pronouns. In Japanese there is a different form for indicating when others display wanting, and perhaps a general hesitation to attempt to explicitly label another's desires. In a group-oriented culture, expressing individual desires can be tricky.