

日本語流 21

The Nihongo Way 21

< Today's dialogue >

You (U) have just arrived at the office the morning after drinking until two a.m. J is one of your colleagues.



J: あら、陳さん、ちょっと顔色が悪いんじゃないですか。①	<i>Ara, Chin-san, chotto kaoiro ga warui n ja nai desu ka?</i>
U: わかりますか。	<i>Wakarimasu ka?</i>
J: ええ、もちろん。いつもの明るい顔じゃないですから。	<i>Ê, mochiron. Itsumo no akarui kao ja nai desu kara.</i>
U: 実は、ちょっと頭が痛いのですよ。②	<i>Jitsu wa, chotto atama ga itai no desu yo.</i>
J: どうしたんですか。③	<i>Dô shita n desu ka?</i>
U: ゆうべちょっと飲み過ぎたんです。④	<i>Yûbe chotto nomisugita n desu.</i>
J: 何時まで飲んでいましたか。⑤	<i>Nanji made nondeita n desu ka?</i>
U: 友だちと朝の2時まで飲んでいました。	<i>Tomodachi to asa no niiji made nondeimashita.</i>
J: まあ！ 二日酔いですね。じゃあ、しかたがないですねえ。	<i>Ma! Futsukayoi desu ne. Jâ, shikata ga nai desu nê.</i>
U: はい、自業自得です。	<i>Hai, jigôjitoku desu.</i>

Today, I introduce a grammatical construction which appears to be in increasing use today. As it adds a subtle nuance to utterances, learners of Japanese need to make special efforts to internalize it. I encourage you to read today's grammatical focus carefully.

DIALOGUE OVERVIEW

Words in the dialog translation below that are in { } are literal translations purposefully included for your close attention.

J: Oh, Mr. Chen*, you look a bit pale, don't you!

{Isn't it that your facial color is a bit bad?}

U: Can you tell?

J: Yes, of course. (It's) because it's not your usual cheerful face.

U: To tell the truth, {it's that} I have a slight headache.

J: What happened?

{What is it that happened?}

U: {It's that} I drank a bit too much last night.

J: Till what time were you drinking?

{Till what time is it that you were drinking?}

U: I was drinking with my friends till two in the morning.

J: Oh! You have a hangover, don't you!

Well, that can't be helped.

U: Yes, I get the natural result of what I did.

* 陳 is read *chin* in Japanese, and Chen in English.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

Nouns & Nominal Phrase:

<i>atama</i>	head
<i>futsukayoi</i>	hangover {two-day drunkenness}
<i>jigôjitoku</i> *	As man sows, so shall he reap.
<i>jitsu wa</i>	telling the truth, in fact, actually
<i>kaoiro</i>	facial color
<i>mochiron</i>	of course

* This word is written in kanji as 自業自得, literally translating something like "Own deed, own result." This type of word or aphorism consisting of four kanji characters, borrowed from Chinese, are abundant in Japanese. 一石二鳥 (One stone, two birds) is another example, whose meaning should be clear.

Adjectives & Adjectival Phrase:

<i>akarui</i>	bright, cheerful
<i>itai</i>	painful
<i>shikata ga nai</i>	there is no way, can't be helped

Verbs:

<i>nomisugiru</i>	{drink-exceed} drink too much
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Exclamations:

ara!	oh, my! [said when noticing something unexpected; exclusively used by women]
ma!	oh, wow! [uttered in surprise; exclusively used by females]

GRAMMAR FOCUS

1. Nominalized Sentences: ~ *no/n desu*

Let us compare the following two sentences from the dialog:

(1) *Atama ga itai no desu.* ②

(2) *Yube nomisugita n desu.* ④

Each of them can be restated as below, without changing meaning much.

(1') *Atama ga itai desu.*

(2') *Yube nomisugimashita.*

(1) and (1') would most likely translate "I have a headache" in natural English, but literal translations would be:

(1) It's that the head is painful. Or, It's that I have a headache.

(1') The head is painful. Or, I have a headache.

Similarly,

(2) It's that I drank too much last night.

(2') I drank too much last night.

While both (1') and (2') are statements of fact, (1) is a subtle explanation for what is seen, i.e., what Mr. Chen looks like, and (2) provides an explanation for J's question, which sought a reason for the headache.

No, often shortened to *n*, functions as a nominalizer. It changes the preceding clause into a big noun. In other words, *atama ga itai desu* (the head is painful) is an adjective sentence, but *atama ga itai no desu* (it is that the head is painful), is a noun (or nominalized) sentence. *Atama ga itai no* translates to "(the thing/fact) that the head is painful."

By the same token, *yube nomisugita n desu* literally means "it's (the fact) that I drank too much last night (which explains why I have a headache today)." The part in the parentheses is what we must infer Chen to mean when he speaks here.

Now that you have identified that these are in fact noun sentences, we can see why the negative of (1), for instance, is:

Atama ga itai no ja nai desu. {It's not that the head is painful}

Sentence ① is such an example, though it is interrogative. Let's examine it:

Kaouiro ga warui n ja nai desu ka?

- *<kaouiro ga warui>* is an adjective clause.
- *<kaouiro ga warui n>* is its nominalized form (a big noun) by virtue of *<n>* or *<no>*.
- *<kaouiro ga warui n desu>* is a nominalized (noun) sentence.
- *<kaouiro ga warui n ja nai desu>* {it's not that the facial color is bad} is its negative.
- *<kaouiro ga warui n ja nai desu ka?>* {Isn't it that the facial color is bad?} is its interrogative.

When you use this form in an interrogative sentence like this, you sound more inquisitive, displaying your concern. That's why sentence ③ is in this form as well, to show concern. Grammatically it is possible to say the same thing with *Dô shimashita ka?*, but this sounds a bit apathetic, so contextually it is not too appropriate.

Similarly, sentence ⑤ indicates J's concern or inquisitiveness by not flatly asking *Nanji made nondeimashita ka?* which sounds too calm in this context.

2. Auxiliary usage of the verb *sugiru*

While *sugiru* is an independent verb meaning “exceed,” it can be used as an auxiliary by connecting it with any word class, as shown below:

With other verbs:

Take out <masu> from the distal-style (*V-masu*), and add *sugiru* to it.

- *hatarakisugiru* = *hataraki(masu)* + *sugiru* work too much, overwork
- *tabesugiru* = *tabe(masu)* + *sugiru* overeat

With adjectives:

Remove the ending <*i*> and add *sugiru* to the remaining core of the adjective.

- *ôsugiru* = *ô(i)* + *sugiru* too many, too much
- *takasugiru* = *taka(i)* + *sugiru* too expensive

With nouns:

Just add *sugiru* to the noun.

- *hubensugiru* too inconvenient

It is important to note that the new words created are all verbs because *sugiru* is a verb and the constructions all behave as verbs, no matter the class of the original word. Hence:

- *Kore chotto ôsugimasen ka?* Isn't this a bit too much?
- *Asoko wa shizukasugimashita.* That place was too quiet.

CULTURE FOCUS

This nominalized sentence form allows Japanese speakers to communicate “one-level deeper” because:

- (1) The context in which the conversation takes place is taken for granted, and its aspects are incorporated into, or alluded to by, the utterance.
- (2) When using this form in the interrogative, the speaker seeks an explanation or a reason. The question is built off of an observation, which may not be stated. This demonstrates awareness of and concern for the counterpart.

Although English rarely employs this form (i.e., it is that...), when asking a why-question, “Why is it that...?” is fairly common. This, however, is quite open and straightforward in seeking reasons;

<...*n(o) desu*> is subtler.