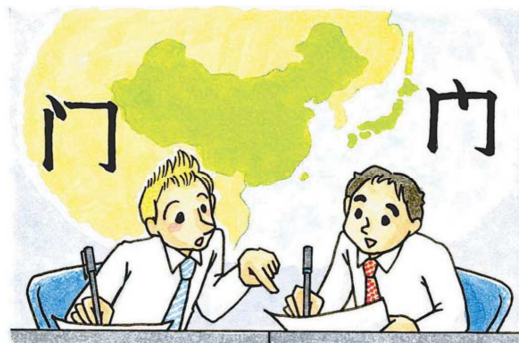


日本語流 24

The Nihongo Way 24

< Today's dialogue >

You (U) are talking with your colleague (J) who is sitting next to you in the office.



U: この漢字、ちょっと書きにくいですね。	<i>Kono kanji chotto kakinikui desu ne?</i>
J: あ、「門」ですね。実際の門の形を表すので、ちょっと面倒くさいですね。それで、僕はたいていこう書くんですよ。ほら。	<i>A, "mon" desu ne. Jissai no mon no katachi o arawasu no de, chotto mendokusai desu ne. Sorede, boku wa taitei kô kaku n desu yo. Hora.</i>
U: それ、中国語の簡体字と同じじゃないですか。	<i>Sore Chûgokugo no kantaiji to onaji ja nai desu ka?</i>
J: え? ジェフさん、中国語できるんですか。	<i>E? Jefu-san Chûgokugo dekiru n desu ka?</i>
U: はい、大学ですこし勉強しましたから。	<i>Hai, daigaku de sukoshi benkyô-shimashita kara.</i>
J: 中国語では「門」はこう書くんですか。	<i>Chûgokugo dewa "mon" wa kô kaku n desu ka?</i>
U: ほんのすこし違うけど、だいたい同じです。	<i>Honno sukoshi chigau kedo, daitai onaji desu.</i>
J: このほうがずっと書きやすいですよ。	<i>Kono hô ga zutto kakiyasui desu yo ne.</i>
U: こう書いてもいいんですか。	<i>Kô kaite mo ii n desu ka?</i>
J: 正式な書類には使いませんが、手書きの手紙なんかでは大丈夫です。	<i>Seishiki na shorui niwa tsukaimasen ga, tegaki no tagami nanka dewa daijôbu desu.</i>

DIALOGUE OVERVIEW

The English equivalent to today's dialog:

U: This kanji is a bit hard to write, isn't it?

J: Oh, "mon," right? As it represents the shape of an actual gate, it's a bit troublesome, isn't it? So, I usually write it this way. See!

U: Isn't that the same as the simplified Chinese character?

J: What? (Is it that) you can handle Chinese, Jeff?

U: Yes; because I studied it a little at university.

J: Do you write "mon" this way in Chinese?

U: A tiny bit different, but almost the same.

J: This is much easier to write, isn't it!

U: Is it OK to write it this way, too?

J: We don't use it for official documents, but it's alright for, say, handwritten letters and so forth.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

Adjectives

<i>kakinikui</i>	difficult to write
<i>kakiyasui</i>	easy to write
<i>mendokusai</i>	troublesome

Verbs

<i>arawasu</i>	represent, express
<i>benkyô-suru</i>	study
<i>chigau</i>	differ, is different/wrong
<i>tsukau</i>	use

Nouns

<i>daitai</i>	largely, almost
<i>jissai</i>	actual
<i>kantaiji</i>	simplified character
<i>katachi</i>	shape
<i>mon</i>	gate
<i>seishiki</i>	official, formal
<i>shorui</i>	document
<i>taitei</i>	most of the time, usually
<i>tegaki</i>	handwriting

Interjections

e?	eh? what? pardon?
hora!	see! look!

GRAMMAR FOCUS

(1) *V-yasui, V-nikui*

Japanese is a so-called “adhesive language.” Words (suffixes) are added on to each other, creating modified notions.

In modern Japanese, the suffixes *-yasui* and *-nikui* can be attached to any verb, so long as the combination makes sense, as shown in today’s dialog. The new word created by the combination means “easy/difficult to {do something}.” The new words behave like adjectives, and so they must, in fact, be adjectives (though this may surprise you). Study the following examples while keeping in mind our previous lessons:

<i>tsukaiyasui</i>	is easy to use
<i>tsukaiyasukatta</i>	was easy to use
<i>tsukaiyasukunai</i>	is not easy to use
<i>tsukaiyasukunakatta</i>	was not easy to use

(2) Comparison

In English, when comparing two things, adjectives change form, or alternatively “more” or “less” is added, as illustrated by “good vs. better,” “big vs. bigger” and “expensive vs. more expensive.” In Japanese, however, it is the subject-matter that is modified, as shown below:

<i>Kono kanji wa kakinikui.</i>	his kanji is difficult to write.
<i>Kono kanji no hō* ga kakinikui.</i>	{The alternative of this kanji is difficult}** This kanji is more difficult to write.

*The noun “*hō*” here means something like “alternative.”

**{ } indicates a literal translation.

This is how to form a comparative sentence in Japanese. To add stress, *zutto* is used most of the time:

Kono kanji no hō ga zutto kakinikui. This kanji is far more difficult to write.

When mentioning the item to be compared with, the particle “*yor*” is employed:

Ima wa doru yori en no hō ga tsuyoi.
{Right now, compared with dollars, the alternative of the yen is strong}
The yen is strong compared to the dollar now.

Kochira no shorui no hō ga achira no yori wakariyasui.

This document (of the two) is easier to understand than that one (over there).

Suzuki-san no tegaki no hō ga Yamada-san no yori yomiyasukatta.

Suzuki’s handwriting was easier to read than Yamada’s (one).

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

Kanji is what the Japanese call Chinese characters. The original characters are more strictly preserved today in Taiwan (though of course, as they are very old, there are often other variants). Many of these characters have been simplified in Japanese, with special efforts to do this happening after the War. Communist China made even more extensive simplifications creating what are called simplified Chinese characters. Because of differences between styles of simplification, certain characters in common use in Asia today have three variants. Unfortunately, the Japanese and Chinese simplifications are not consistent with each other, excepting a few coincidental exceptions. The character referred to in today's dialog is one such exception.