

日本語流 31

The Nihongo Way 31

< Today's dialogue >

You (U) are having lunch by yourself in your company cafeteria. Yuka (J), whom you haven't seen for a while, is walking toward you.



[Scene 1]	
J: こんにちは、リズさん。	<i>Konnichiwa, Liz-san.</i>
U: ああ、有加さん。お久しぶり。	<i>Á, Yuka san. Ohisashiburi.</i>
J: ここ、よろしいですか。	<i>Koko yoroshii desu ka?</i>
U: もちろん。どうぞ、どうぞ。	<i>Mochiron. Dôzo dôzo.</i>
[Scene 2]	
J: リズさんは日本語がお上手ですねえ。	<i>Liz-san wa Nihongo ga ojôzu desu né.</i>
U: いやいや、まだまだですよ。	<i>Iya iya, madamada desu yo.</i>
J: <u>日本に来る前、勉強したんですか。</u> (1)	<i>Nihon ni kuru mae benkyô-shita n desu ka?</i>
U: まあ、ちょっとだけ勉強しましたが、 <u>日本に来た後、本気で勉強しました。</u> (2) でも、 <u>なかなか上達しなくて…。</u> (3)	<i>Mâ, chotto dake benkyô-shimashita kedo, Nihon ni kita ato honki de benkyo-shimashita. Demo, nakanaka jôtatsu-shinakute…</i>
J: いやいや、 <u>なかなか上手ですよ。</u> 感心しちゃう。(4)	<i>Iyaiya, nakanaka jôzu desu yo. Kanshin-shichau.</i>
[Scene 3]	
U: あ、そうそう、今朝、 <u>このビルに入るときに案内を見たんですが、屋上にビアガーデンができましたね。</u> (5)	<i>A, sôsô, kesa kono biru ni hairu toki ni annai o mita n desu ga, okujô ni biagâden ga dekimashita ne?</i>
J: ええ、ええ。	<i>Ê, ê.</i>
U: 今日でも、一度、行ってみませんか。	<i>Kyô demo ichido ittemimasen ka?</i>
J: いいですね。私も行ってみたいと思っていたんですよ。	<i>Ii desu né. Watashi mo ichido ittemitai to omotteita n desu yo.</i>
U: ちょうどよかった。夕方、ちょっと打ち合わせがあるので、終わったときにメールしますね。(6)	<i>Chôdo yokatta. Yûgata chotto uchiawase ga aru no de, owatta toki ni mêru-shimasu ne.</i>
J: ええ、お願いします。	<i>Ê, onegai-shimasu.</i>

DIALOGUE OVERVIEW

[Scene 1]

J: Hello, Liz.

U: Oh, hello, Yuka. It's been a while.

J: May I sit here? {Is this place OK (politely)?}

U: Sure. Go ahead, please. {Please please}

[Scene 2]

J: You are good at Japanese, Liz.

U: Oh, no. I'm still a long way (from good). {Still still}

J: Did you study it before you came {come} to Japan?

U: Well, I studied only a little before I came {come}, but I really took it seriously after I came to Japan. But I don't improve easily, and...

J: No, no. You're pretty good. I'm impressed.

[Scene 3]

U: Oh, when I was to enter this building this morning, I saw a notice - a beer garden has popped up on the roof terrace, hasn't it?

J: Yes, yes.

U: Why don't we give it a try once, like {even} today?

J: That'll be good. {It was just good} I was thinking I wanted to go and see that, too.

U: That's perfect. As I have a small meeting early in the evening, I'll mail you when it ends {has ended}, OK?

J: Yes, please.

* { } indicates the literal translation; () indicates words needed in English, but missing in Japanese.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

Nouns

<i>annai</i>	guide sign, notice
<i>biagâden</i>	beer garden
<i>honki</i>	serious intent
<i>jôzu</i>	skillful, good at something
<i>kesa</i>	this morning
<i>madamada</i>	still a long way to go
<i>okujô</i>	roof terrace
<i>uchiawase</i>	short meeting
<i>yûgata</i>	early evening

Verbs

<i>kanshin-suru</i>	get impressed
<i>kureru</i>	someone gives something (to me)
<i>jôtatsu-suru</i>	improve, become good

GRAMMAR FOCUS

1. *kuru mae* vs. *kita ato*

For verb tenses, English is absolutist about time while Japanese is relativist. Let me explain: When one does or did something (A) before doing another thing (B), it means that B is yet to be done. So, whether the sentence is in “present” or “past” tense, doing B is always expressed “imperfectively” in Japanese.

On the contrary, when one does/did A after doing B, whether the sentence is in “present” or “past” tense, B is always “perfective” because by the time A is/was done, B has/had already been done. Another way to say this is that there is no “present” or “past” tense in Japanese, only perfective and imperfective.

If you study sentences (1) and (2), you can now understand why the verb preceding *mae* is imperfective (“*kuru mae*”), while the verb preceding *ato* is perfective (“*kita ato*”).

2. *hairu toki* vs. *owatta toki*

Keeping the above in mind, let’s consider tense when the verb follows *toki* (i.e., “the time”).

“...*kono biru ni hairu toki ni annai o mita...*” (5) would translate as “I saw a notice when I was to enter this building...” In other words, “enter the building” had not been finished when “see the notice” occurred. Apparently, the notice was hung outside the building.

On the other hand, “...*owatta toki ni mēru-shimasu...*” (6) would translate as “...I’ll mail you when it ends {has ended}...” This means that by the time J receives the email, U’s meeting will have already finished.

3. *nakanaka*

This adverbial is used to intensify good qualities, as in (4):

Nakanaka jozu desu. You are pretty good {skillful} at it (Japanese).

It is always used to give positive remarks, such as:

Nakanaka ii. Pretty good.

Nakanaka oishii. Tastes pretty good.

This means that this word implies the speaker is impressed with the good quality; this is contrastive to “pretty” which can be used with bad qualities, like “pretty bad.”

When used with the negative, it always goes with verbs and implies frustration for something that won’t go smoothly, as in (3):

Nakanaka jōtatsu-shinakute... I don’t improve easily, and...

Other examples include:

Tanonda bīru ga nakanaka kimasen. The ordered beer won’t come.

Densha ga nakanaka konai. The train won’t come.