

Doozo and 'Please'

Mr. Lerner was hurriedly gathering together some papers needed for a meeting, when Miss Yoshida came by, and offered to help, saying

Otetsudai-shimashoo-ka. (Would you like me to help you? — *lit.* Shall I help you?)

Mr. Lerner said.

Ee, doozo.

meaning "Yes, please." Mr. Takada, who was working nearby, heard this and laughed. He explained that *doozo* should not be used when making a request. Mr. Lerner felt confused; don't the Japanese say *Doozo yoroshiku* (How do you do? — *lit.* Please be good to me) so often?

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Doozo is used in making requests as in

Doozo onegai-shimasu. (Please do so.)

Kochira-e doozo. (Please come this way.)

But when it is used alone, the speaker is usually urging someone to go ahead and do what he wants to do. For instance, to someone asking

Tabako-o sutte-mo ii-desu-ka. (May I smoke?)

Doozo is often used in reply, meaning "Please go ahead." Or, when offering something to drink or eat, one often says just

Doozo. どうぞ。

meaning "Please help yourself."

When accepting an offer of help, however, saying *Doozo* sounds strange; it sounds as if one is saying "Please go ahead and help me, if you want to so badly." Thus it can sound very rude. One should say instead

Onegai-shimasu. (*lit.* I request it.)

Some people distinguish between *doozo* and *dooka* どうぞ vs. どうか; *dooka* is used solely for requests. But this distinction is not very common, and *dooka* is not used in daily conversation as often as *doozo*.

Thus it is advisable to use *Doozo* only in making requests, and use *Onegai-shimasu* or

Sumimasen. Onegai-shimasu.

すみません。お願いします。

(Thank you. Please help me.)

when accepting an offer of help.

Expressing gratitude for help

Mr. Lerner expresses his gratitude by saying *Arigatoo-gozaïmasu* when he is offered or has received help, but he wonders if there are more appropriate expressions he should be using instead.

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To accept someone's offer of help, one should say

Sumimasen. Ja, onegai-shimasu.

or

Arigatoo-gozaïmasu. Ja, onegai-shimasu.

To be more polite, *Mooshiwake arimasen* or *Osoreirimasu* is used in place of *Sumimasen* or *Arigatoo-gozaïmasu*, and *onegai-itashimasu* for *onegai-shimasu*. Between good friends, men usually say *Warui-ne. Ja, tanomu-yo* and women *Warui-wane. Ja, onegai-suru-wa.*

After some help has been received, one usually says

Arigatoo-gozaïmashita.
ありがとうございました。

While *Arigatoo-gozaïmasu* is used before the action of helping starts or during its performance, *Arigatoo-gozaïmashita* is used when the action has been completed. This implies that the action of helping has been completed after a long time or with much effort.

In a similar way, the *ta* form is also used for apology when the speaker wants to emphasize that an action has finally been completed. For instance, one uses *Sumimasen* when one feels that he is going

to cause someone trouble or that he actually is causing someone trouble, but when that is finished, one says

Doomo sumimasen-deshita.
どうも すみませんでした。

or

Honto-ni sumimasen-deshita.

meaning "I'm so sorry that you have been caused so much trouble." More politely, one can say

Makoto-ni mooshiwake arimasen-deshita.

In familiar conversations *Warukatta-ne* or *Warukatta-wane* is used.

After thanking someone for his help, one often indicates that it has been valuable by saying things like

Okagesama-de, hayaku katazukimashita.

(Thanks to your help, I could finish it quickly.)

Okagesama-de ii mono-ga dekimashita.

(Thanks to your help, I could make a good one.)

Tetsudatte-itadaite, honto-ni tasukarimashita.

(Your help has saved me so much trouble.)

The intonation of *Soo-desu-ka*

Mr. Lerner can now make himself understood in Japanese and is improving in his vocabulary and grammar, but he still has some problems with his intonation. Just this morning, when Mr. Mori, the director of the company, remarked that his golf game had improved recently, he said

Soo-desu-ka. (Is that so?)

It was a very simple sentence, but it seemed to be unpleasant to Mr. Mori. Miss Yoshida, who was with them, later told Mr. Lerner that the tone had sounded impolite because he had raised the last *ka* sound.

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To make a sentence a question, *ka* is usually added, as in

Oisogashii-desu-ka. (Are you busy?)

This *ka* is said with a higher pitch than *desu* as in

So *-ka?*
 o-desu

How high the *ka* is said depends on the speaker's intention. When he is anxious to know the answer he raises the *ka* very high. Otherwise *ka* should not be raised too high. And foreigners are advised not to keep going up as in

-ka?
su
-de
o
So

Just the last *ka* should be raised.

Sentences ending with *ka*, however, do not always indicate a question. Just like the English "Is that right?", *Soo-desu-ka* is often said as an answer. When it is used as an answer, the last *ka* should not go up.

Such sentences should be said as in

So
o-desu-ka.

If the *ka* goes up, it implies that the speaker has doubts. Mr. Lerner probably unconsciously used this intonation, which sounded impolite. Especially when the *ka* is said long and raised as in

So *a?*
 -ka
 o-desu

it definitely indicates distrust.

Ne as in *Soo-desu-ne* and *yo* as in *Soo-desu-yo* are also said either with a falling intonation or a rising one, depending on the speaker's intention. *Ne* is said high when one solicits agreement, and is raised higher to indicate warmth or anxiousness. *Yo* is usually said with a falling tone; if you raise it, it will sound as if you are talking to a child.

Parting from someone you meet every day

Mr. Lerner recently noticed that his colleagues use various expressions when they leave the office, and that *Sayonara*, which he had thought to be the most common, is actually not used very often. He wondered if he should start using *Ja* or *Osaki-ni* instead.

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When one parts from one's colleagues after a day's work, such casual expressions as

Ja (So long — *lit.* Well, then)

Ja, mata (See you soon — *lit.* Well, again)

are commonly used. And when one leaves the office before others, one says

Osaki-ni (*lit.* Before you)

and the remaining workers will respond with such expressions as

Otsukaresama. (*lit.* You must be tired.)

Toward one's superiors, one says either *Shitsuree-shimasu* (Excuse me) or

Osaki-ni shitsuree-shimasu.

お先に 失礼します。

(*lit.* I'm rude enough to leave before you.)

Some people use *Sayonara* when parting from their colleagues and some do not; that depends upon how they regard their relations with each other. If they regard their fellow workers as

members of a very closely united group, they do not use *Sayonara*. While *Sayonara* implies the parting of two individuals, *Osaki-ni* implies a member of a group leaving the others.

This is related to the fact that *Sayonara* is never used among family members. Children use it not only to their friends but also to older people because they still do not make distinctions about whom they are talking to. When they grow up, they start using different kinds of expressions for parting depending on the listener; namely, they use *Sayonara* to their equals and *Shitsuree-shimasu* to their superiors. And when they join a group of workers, they use either *Sayonara* or other expressions toward their fellow workers.

There are various other expressions also used for parting. Some people, especially older people or women, prefer such traditional expressions as *Gokigen-yoo* (Farewell), *Gomen-kudasai(mase)* (Please excuse me), and *Gomen-nasai(mashi)* (Please excuse me). On the other hand young people, especially young women, often use *Bai-bai* (Bye).

You do not have to use many different expressions. *Sayonara* can be used when you do not have to be polite. But when politeness seems to be required, we recommend that you use *Shitsuree-shimasu* instead. And you should not use *Sayonara* to people who treat you like a family member.

Parting from family members

Mr. Lerner went to visit a town in Hokkaido, where he stayed with Miss Yoshida's relatives. When he went out for sightseeing in the morning, the wife saw him off with

Itte-rasshai.

行ってらっしゃい。

(lit. Please go and come back.)

Mr. Lerner responded with

Itte-mairimasu.

行ってまいります。

(lit. I'm going and coming back.)

While doing so, he wondered if he could also say
Sayonara.

* * *

When a family member goes out, those remaining say *Itte-rasshai* and the one leaving says *Itte-kimasu* or *Itte-mairimasu*. This can never be replaced by *Sayonara*. We heard about a boy, 10 years old, who wanted a change and said *Okaasan, sayonara* when he left for school one morning. His mother frantically ran after him and asked if he was running away from home.

Family members never use *Sayonara* between themselves in any situation. When they meet outside their home and part, they say *Ja* (Well, then) or *Ja, ato-de* (Well, then, later). They use these expressions when talking on the phone too. Even when a family member is going abroad and will not be back for years, they never use *Sayonara*. In fact, family members do not use expressions that mean

parting. One uses *Sayonara* to one's family members only when he is going to leave forever.

Sometimes one extends this custom toward non-family members. A neighbor may greet you with *Itte-rasshai* when you go out, and with *Okaerinasai* (Welcome home) when you come home.

A visitor staying with a family is usually treated as a member of that family. If he is coming back to them later, he is greeted with *Itte-rasshai* instead of *Sayonara*. Mr. Lerner was right when he responded with *Itte-mairimasu*. If he had said *Sayonara*, it would have meant that he was leaving the family for good.

When you are staying with a Japanese family and are treated like a family member, you should use family-like greetings. Even when you are leaving them after your stay, and are not likely to visit them again, it is better to use such expressions as

Ja, kore-de shitsuree-shimasu.

じゃ、これで失礼します。

(Well, please excuse me.)

or

Dewa kore-de.

(Well, excuse me.)