

## 日本語流 12

### The Nihongo Way 12

< Today's dialogue >

You (U) have invited three Japanese friends to your house for a small tea party. You have bought a variety of cakes and are now trying to share them.



J1: うわあ、みんなおいしそう！

*Uwá, minna oishisô.*

J2: 色々なケーキがありますねえ。①

*Iroiro na kêki ga arimasu né.*

U: ええ、全部違いますよ。

*Ê, zenbu chigaimasu yo.*

ティラミスとモンブランとチーズケーキとチョコレートムース

*Tiramisu to monburan to chîzukêki to chokorêtomûsu desu.*



U: まず、ティラミスは誰が食べますか。②

*Mazu, tiramisu wa dare ga tabemasu ka?*

J1: 私です。私がいただきます。③

*Watashi desu. Watashi ga itadakimasu.*

U: わかりました。

*Wakarimashita.*

道子さんはティラミスですね。

*Michiko-san wa tiramisu desu ne.*



U: 由希子さんはどれがいいですか。④

*Yukiko-san wa dore ga ii desu ka?*

J2: そうですねえ…。

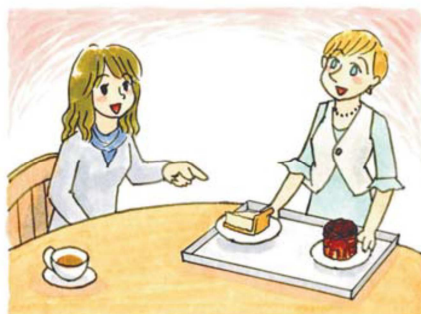
*Sô desu né...*

私はモンブランが欲しいです。⑤

*Watashi wa monburan ga hoshii desu.*

モンブランをお願いします。⑥

*Monburan o onegai shimasu.*



U: あとはチーズケーキとチョコレートムースですけど、エリカさんは？

*Ato wa chîzukêki to chokorêtomûsu desu kedo, Erika-san wa?*

J3: じゃあ、チーズケーキをください。⑦

*Jâ, chîzukêki wo kudasai.*

U: じゃあ、私はチョコレートムースを食べます。

*Jâ, watashi wa chokorêtomûsu wo tabemasu.*

Today we look at a couple of other common particles. I have chosen to discuss the essential function of *ga* and *wo*.

\* While spelled *wo* here, its pronunciation has weathered into *o* today – originally it was pronounced *wo*.

## DIALOGUE OVERVIEW

Today's dialog may be translated as follows:

J1: Wow! They all look delicious!

J2: You have a variety of cakes, don't you!

U: Yes, they are all different.

They are tiramisu, Mont Blanc, cheesecake and chocolate mousse.

First, who will eat tiramisu?

J1: Me. I will have it.

U: Alright, Michiko.

You'll have tiramisu.

Which one would you like, Yukiko?

J2: Let me see...

I want Mont Blanc.

Please let me have Mont Blanc.

U: The rest is cheesecake and chocolate mousse.

What about you, Erika?

J3: Well, please give me cheesecake.

U: OK, I'll have chocolate mousse.

## VOCABULARY FOCUS

### **Nouns**

<i>minna</i>	(to the extent of) all
<i>zenbu</i>	(to the extent of) all [Chinese origin]
<i>oishisô</i>	{delicious-looking}, looks delicious
<i>iroiro</i>	various
<i>watashi</i>	I, me [used by both male and female adults]
<i>kêki</i>	cake
<i>tiramisu</i>	tiramisu
<i>monburan</i>	Mont Blanc
<i>chîzukêki</i>	cheesecake
<i>chokorêtomûsu</i>	chocolate mousse

### **Verbs**

<i>arimasu</i>	{sth exists} there is/are sth, has sth
<i>chigaimasu</i>	is different; is wrong
<i>onegai-shimasu</i>	(humbly) request
<i>itadakimasu</i>	(humbly) accept
<i>kudasai</i>	{honorably give me} please give me sth [abb. of <i>kudasaimase</i> ]

\*{ } indicates a literal translation.

## GRAMMAR FOCUS

As discussed previously, a Japanese predicate, be it a verb, adjective or noun predicate, is a valid sentence on its own. For discussion, let's take *tabemashita* as an example verb predicate:

A: Tabemashita?

B: Hai, tabemashita.

Literally, this is:

A: {Eating occurred?}

B: {Yes, eating occurred}

In common situations, it typically translates as:

A: Did you eat (it)?

B: Yes, I did.

If the situation requires further information as to who, what, when, where, how, how much, etc., corresponding words (nouns) go BEFORE the verb:

*Kinô Suzuki-san sushi takusan tabemashita.*

(Yesterday Mr Suzuki ate lots of sushi.)

In this sentence, *kinô*, *Suzuki-san*, *sushi* and *takusan* all connect with *tabemashita* providing each word's meaning, *i.e.*, when, who, what and how much.

As long as the verb is at the end, word order is free. So, the sentence may be restated many ways, including:

*Suzuki-san kinô takusan sushi tabemashita.*

*Sushi takusan Suzuki-san kinô tabemashita.*

Now, this freedom in word order may cause problems.

Suppose *sushi* is replaced with *wani* (alligator):

Whether you say:

*Suzuki-san wani tabemashita.*

or

*Wani Suzuki-san tabemashita.*

we cannot tell whether Suzuki is epicurean or whether he met his demise in the jaws of a predator.

We need another linguistic tool – particles – to save Mr. Suzuki.

**X-ga:** X being the doer of the action; X being the subject matter of the state

When the verb is an action, *X-ga* indicates that X is the actor.

“dare ga tabemasu ka” ({who as doer, the eating will occur?} who'll eat it?) in ② and “watashi ga itadakimasu” ({Me being doer, the eating will humbly occur} I'll have it) in ③ are such examples.

When the verb is not an action but a state, *X-ga* indicates that X is the subject matter involved in the state.

“Kêki ga arimasu” ({cake exists} there is cake) in ①, “dore ga ii desu ka” ({which one is the subject matter for being good?} which one will be good? which one would you like?) in ④, and “monburan ga hoshii desu” ({Mont Blanc is desirable} I want Mont Blanc) in ⑤.

**X-wo:** X being the item the action is acted upon

Broadly speaking, X in *X-wo* is presented as an object of a verb. Many textbooks explain this particle this way.

Strictly, however, “object” in the English grammatical sense of the word is misleading because *X-wo* is also used for intransitive verbs, such as *kimasu* (come), *arukimasu* (walk), etc. Japanese rightly say “Kono michi o kimashita” {I’ve come this road} or “Ano kôen o arukimasu” {I walk that park}; their English equivalents are never possible.

*X-wo* is not just an “object marker” in the English sense of the word: X is presented as a selected item for the action to be acted on. When people say *X-wo* instead of just X, they imply that they selected X for acting on, among other choices.

Savor the difference between the following sentences, both of which would normally be translated into the same English:

*Monburan wo onegaishimasu.* ⑥ {I humbly request Mont Blanc among other choices}

c.f. *Monburan onegaishimasu.* {I humbly request Mont Blanc}

*chîzukêki wo kudasai.* ⑦ {Please give me the cheesecake as selected}

c.f. *chîzukêki itadakimasu.* {Please give me the cheesecake}

Now that you understand *X-ga* and *X-wo*, the earlier sample sentence's ambiguity can be eliminated. By saying “*Suzuki-san ga wani wo tabemashita,*” you clearly state that Mr Suzuki ate alligator (meat), not vice versa. Of course, if Suzuki is known to be alive, “*Suzuki-san wani tabemashita*” is quite sufficient.

### ADDITIONAL REMARKS

Spoken communication always has a context; *i.e.*, a time, place, situation, some relationship between speaker and listener, and so forth. Frequently, particles are not used because they are unneeded. When they are used, however, there is some reason for it – some emphasis is sought. This is exactly why the written Japanese would normally employ particles since there is no context.