

■ Usage of Interrogative Forms

The interrogative particle *ka* is combined with other forms to derive forms with various functions. Such interrogative forms include *darōka*, *dewa naika*, and *no dewa naika*.

The speculation form *darō* and affix *ka* make up *darōka*. *Darōka* simply expresses that the speaker is unable to make judgment, but that the speaker is not posing a question to the listener. *Darōka*, as in *Kare, ma ni au darōka to tsubuyaita* ‘I murmured if he’d make it,’ is a monological expression. *Ka* is often dropped in suppletive questions, such as *Ima, nanji darō* ‘I wonder what time it is.’ *Kana*, as in *Ima nanji kana* ‘I wonder what time it is,’ has a similar function. These sentences are called sentences of doubt.

Sentences of doubt only go so far as to express the internal doubt. Sometimes several possibilities are expressed, as in *Are darōka, kore darōka* ‘I wonder if it’s that one or this one,’ or convincing imagination is expressed, as in *Kare, mō mokutekichi ni tsuita kana* ‘I wonder if he’s arrived at the destination.’

Sentences of doubt may be used in dialogue for the very reason that they do not pose a question to the listener. In contrast to general questions, which are asked on the premise that the listener has some kind of an answer, sentences of doubt (e.g., *Ima nanji kana* ‘I wonder what time it is’) are used in a situation where it is not known if the listener has an answer. They can also function as polite questions, as in *Anata wa Tanaka san deshōka?* ‘I am wondering if you are Ms. Tanaka.’ *Kana* has the function of a question that the speaker gently poses to her or his subordinate, as in *Toshi wa ikutsu kana?* ‘I am wondering how old you are.’ A sentence of doubt may be used to answer a question when the precise answer is not known (e.g., *Kono hashi, nan meetoru gurai aru no?* ‘Roughly how many meters long is this bridge?’ *Saa, 30 meetoru gurai kana* ‘Oh, I don’t know, approximately 30 meters, perhaps?’)

Dewa naika, and *no dewa naika* are expressions formed from the joining of a negative form and the interrogative particle.

Dewa naika confirms that the speaker and listener have the same understanding when the listener is not aware of it. *Soko ni aru janai* ‘It’s right there’ directs the listener’s attention to what is in front of her/him, and *Hora, ichido atta koto aru ja arimasenka* ‘Don’t you remember? We’ve met once before,’ coaxes the listener to remember what s/he has forgotten. It can also confirm generally understood knowledge, as in *Kōhii o nomu to nemurenaku naru ja nai desuka* ‘As you know, you cannot sleep when you drink coffee.’ When one finds what s/he has lost, one may say monologically, *Nanda, koko ni aru janai* ‘Hey, here it is,’ to express that the problem is solved.

No dewa naika is a form developed from the negative question of the type which one asks when one anticipates that some kind of judgment will be presented. Basically, the speaker poses a question based on her/his uncertain prediction or memory in anticipation for some kind of judgment. Examples: *Ame, futteru n janai?* ‘Isn’t it raining?’ ; *Moshikashite, watashitachi dokokade atta koto aru n janai?* ‘Haven’t we maybe met before somewhere?’

No dewa naika does not focus on getting an answer from the listener. Rather it is often used to communicate the speaker’s prediction to the listener. In this function, it is used in response sentences (e.g., Question: *Kare, doko?* ‘Where’s he?, Answer: *Soko ni iru n janai?* ‘Isn’t he

there?’). It may be used with an adverb of modality, as in *Kitto kuru n janai?* ‘Surely, he’ll come, won’t he?’ In text, it is frequently used to express one’s opinion without assertion, as in *Kono mondai wa tsugino yōni kaiketsu dekiru nodewanaika* ‘We might be able to solve this problem in the following manner.’ One’s opinion is further softened if one affixes a verb of thinking or *darōka* at the end of the sentence, as in *No de wa naika to omowareru* ‘It is my speculation that...’ and *No dewa nai darō ka* ‘My guess is that....’

→疑問文の種類 Types of Interrogative Sentences (2-H), 確認表現 Expressions of Confirmation (2-H)

● References

Adachi, Taro (1999) *Nihongo gimonbun ni okeru handan no shosō* (Aspects of Judgment in Japanese Interrogative Sentences). Kurosio Publishers.

Miyake, Tomohiro (1993) ‘Haseteki imi nit suite – nihongo shitsumon no ichi sokumen’ (On Derivational Meaning – One Aspect of Japanese Questions) in *Nihongo Kyoiku*, Vol. 79.

(Adachi Taro)