

■ Action-Requesting

The function of asking the listener to perform an action is called action-requesting. In a sentence of action-requesting, such as *Soko ni suwarinasai* ‘Sit there,’ the action has not been performed, and the speaker wishes it to be performed.

Typically, expressions of action-requesting are made through the use of volitional verbs, as in *Kotchi ni koi* ‘come over here,’ which asks that the action be realized. The speaker may direct the listener to make an effort toward the realization of the action with verbs of weak volitionality, as in *Ano toki no koto o omoidasinasai* ‘Remember what it was like at that time.’ Non-volitional verbs cannot express action-requesting (e.g., **Kono hon ga yomero*).

There are a wide variety of expressions of action-requesting. This is because action-requesting inevitably puts a burden on the listener, and in order for the speaker to realize her/his intention of making the listener perform an action, as expressed in her/his utterance, s/he must take a wide variety of factors into consideration to choose the right form. Some of the factors include the relationship between the speaker and the listener, the amount of burden on the listener, and who benefits from the action.

The most direct form to demand the execution of the action is the imperative, as in *Koko ni iro* ‘stay here’ and *Hayaku nenasai* ‘Go to bed now.’ The imperative form *shiro* expresses a very strong sense of forcefulness, and is not suitable to use in daily conversation in a command that does not benefit the listener, such as *Mado o akeru* ‘Open the window.’ It is OK to use it when the command form is meant as an encouragement, as in *Genki o dase* ‘Cheer up!’ and *Hayaku okiro. Chikoku suru zo* ‘Get up now. You’ll be late.’ *Shinasai* is more polite than *shiro*, and used often by a parent to a child, or the manager of an athletic team to players.

Expressions of request include giving and receiving verbs to state explicitly the gratitude the speaker feels from the execution of the action involved. There are expressions of request that belong to the imperative group (e.g., *Kotchi ni kite kure* ‘Come over here,’ *Kanojo o yonde kudasai* ‘Please send for her’) and those that belong to the question group (e.g., *Chotto matte kurenai?* ‘Can you wait for a minute?’).

Expressions of request in the question group tend to be polite requests because the speaker gives the listener the final authority to decide on the execution of the action. One may emphasize politeness further by adding *deshō ka*, as in *Tetsudatte moraemasen deshō ka?* ‘Would you please help me?’

O...kudasai is used when the speaker gives permission to the action that the listener wishes to perform (e.g., *O-hairi kudasai* ‘Please come in’), or when the speaker is someone with authority who wants to make a polite request (e.g., *Dōzo furutte go-sanka kudasai* ‘Do please join us.’)

Expressions of wish, which is used to communicate that the speaker wants the action to be performed, may also express action-requesting indirectly. In this usage, “leaving-unsaid” expressions are often used at the end of the sentence to soften the explicit desire of the speaker (e.g., *Tetsudatte hoshii n da kedo* ‘It’d like it if you could help me, but...’)

→モダリティ Modality (2-H), 疑問形式の用法 Usages of Interrogative Forms (2-H)

● References

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