

■ Obligation and Permission

● Obligation

To express that a particular action is obligatory, *nakereba ikenai* and some other expressions are used.

(1) *Yakusoku wa mamoranakereba ikenai* ‘One must keep one’s promise.’

(2) *Kaigi ni ma ni au ni wa, 7ji ni ie o de nakereba ikenai* ‘I must leave home at 7:00 in order to make it to the meeting.’

This form has a wide variety of application, such as expressing moral obligation, as in (1), and physical necessity as in (2).

Some other forms that have these functions are *nakutewa ikenai*, *naito ikenai*, *nakereba naranai*, and *nakutewa naranai*. There is practically no difference in meaning among them, but *naranai* is slightly more formal than *ikenai*. In conversation, *nakereba* tends to change to *nakya*, and *nakutewa* into *nakucha*, and also the ending parts, *ikenai* and *naranai*, may be omitted.

Hitsuyō ga aru is an expression that is close in meaning to the aforementioned forms. It is used to express necessity in a particular situation that is described in (2), but it is not appropriate in a situation such as in (1).

Zaruoenai is another expression that requires discretion as to when to use it.

(3) *Kōnetsu ga aru node shigoto o yasumazaruoenai* ‘Due to high fever, I have no choice but be absent from work.’

It is similar to *nakereba naranai*, but it expresses unavailability rather than obligation, and may be used when the situation is against the speaker’s will. *Naiwake ni (wa) ikanai* and *shika nai* have a similar function.

Beki da may also be used in the same context as *nakereba ikenai*, but it only expresses that the action is appropriate. It does not have the binding power that *nakereba ikenai* has.

(4) *Yakusoku wa mamoru beki da* ‘One should keep one’s promise.’

■ Permission

Temo ii is an expression of permission, which expresses that a certain action is permissible.

(5) *Tanaka kun, mō kaettemo ii desu yo* ‘Mr. Tanaka, you may go home now.’

(6) *Yasumi dakara, nanji ni kite kuretemo ii yo* ‘It’s a day off, so you may come at any time.’

(7) *Eakon o kittemo ii deshō ka* ‘Would it be OK to turn off the air conditioner?’

When this form is used in a declarative sentence, it means permission to the listener's action. When it's in a question form asking about the speaker's action, it is a request for permission from the listener.

In (8), the speaker expresses his intention in a declarative sentence using *temoii* about the intention of his action.

(8) *Isogashii nara, boku ga yattemo ii yo* 'If you are busy, I can do it.'

There is a form *te ii*, which does not have *mo* in it. In many cases *temo ii* and *te ii* are interchangeable, but *te ii* cannot be used with a question word as in (6). It also cannot express intention as in (8).

Ii may be replaced by *yoroshii* and *kamawanai*.

(9) *Haitte mo yoroshii desu ka* 'May I come in?'

(10) *Kono heya wa jiyūni tsukatte kamaimasen* 'You may use this room freely.'

→モダリティ Modality (2-H), 助動詞 Auxiliary Verbs (2-B)

● References

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