

■ *Nanka* and *Kurai*: Focus of Low Rating

Kurai expresses that the speaker thinks it is obvious that what is in focus is of low rating.

(1) *Aisatsu kurai kichinto shinasai* ‘At least greet properly.’

In (1) [the parent] has in mind a series of what a child should be able to do, on the gradable scale of simpler to more difficult, such as greeting to keeping tidy appearance to cleaning one’s own room, and so on. Greeting is at the bottom of the scale, and the child should be able to at least do that. The implied corollary is that the child is not expected to do all other things.

The focus particle *nanka* may also express that the speaker considers what is focused is of low rating.

(2) *Nisemono no daiya no yubiwa nanka hoshikunai* ‘I don’t want a diamond ring if it’s a fake.’

In (2), the gradable scale of fake diamond to genuine ruby to genuine diamond, etc., is implied, and the speaker considers fake diamond to be low rating, but it does not have to be the worst. The low rating expressed with *nanka* simply represents the speaker’s feeling that fake diamond is of low rating and is out of the question to her. The speaker, thus, paradigmatically implies that genuine diamond is an object for consideration to her.

Nanka and *kurai* are both focus particles of low rating, but they are often not interchangeable.

(1) *Aisatsu {*nanka/kurai} kichinto shinasai*.

(2) *Nisemono no daiya no yubiwa {nanka/*kurai} hoshikunai*.

Kurai basically is used in affirmative sentences, and *nanka* in negative sentences is not interchangeable with *kurai* in many cases.

(3) *Chūkōsha {nanka/*kurai} hoshikunai* ‘I don’t want car if it’s used.’

Nanka and *kurai* are of the same meaning and interchangeable only in affirmative sentences where there is a context that, since X (the focus) is low rating, there is no dispute about Y.

(4) *Nisemono no daia {nanka/kurai} ima suguni demo kaeru sa* ‘I can buy a fake diamond any time, like right now.’

Kurai is often used when the speaker feels that the reality is contrary to her/his prediction or expectation, and when the speaker tells the listener about this discrepancy. (The utterance often takes the form of conative utterance, such as advice and command.) It is not interchangeable with *nanka* in this usage.

(5) *Mada hanashite inai no ka. Kazoku ni {*nanka/kurai} byōjō o hanasu beki da yo* ‘Haven’t you told your family yet? You should at least tell your family about the status of your illness.’

→ とりたて Focus (2-I), ナンカとナンテー低評価のとりたて *Nanka* and *Nante*: Focus of Low Rating (2-I)

● References

Numata, Yoshiko & Noda Hisashi ed. (2003) *Nihongo no toritate – gendaigo to rekishiteki henka, chiriteki ihen* (Focus in Japanese – Contemporary Japanese and Historical Change & Geographical Change). Kurosio Publishers.

Numata, Yoshiko (2000) ‘Toritate’ “Focus” in Kinsui, Satoshi et al., *Nihongo n bunpō 2 toki, hitei to toritate* (Japanese Grammar 2: Time, Negation and Focus). Iwanami Shoten.

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