



むずかしいですね... **difficult?**  
**muzukashi desu ne...**

When I finished a business conference with a client, I wanted to make an appointment for our next meeting, asking, "**raishū no kinyōbi wa dō desu ka?**" (What about meeting on Friday next week?) But he said, "**ummm... raishū no kinyōbi wa chotto muzukashi desu ne.**" I couldn't believe what he said! He is Japanese, but he said, "It is a bit difficult for me (to understand) '**raishū no kinyōbi**' (next Friday)." So, I changed the day, and said, "**soredewa kondo no kayōbi wa?**" (Well, what about this coming Tuesday?). But his reply was, "**gomennasai. kayōbi mo chotto muzukashi desu ne...**" (I'm sorry, but it is still difficult for me (to understand) '**kayōbi**' (Tuesday)." What! This Japanese man doesn't even understand "**kayōbi**" (Tuesday)? I am not a native speaker but I do know what that means! Why is it so **muzukashi** (difficult) for him?

**Pera Pera Penguin's**

5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama

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■■■ Would you be surprised if I said to you, "**Pole-san, watashi mo raishū no kinyōbi wa 'muzukashi' desu ne...**?" The word "**muzukashi**" can be used in another way, rather than simply meaning "difficult." The phrase implies that something is being refused or declined. If you don't want to do something and say, "**dame** (No)" or "**dekimasen** (I can't do it)" in everyday life, it may sound offensive, and you may be expected to explain your reason. But if you want to decline an offer without stating a reason, it is better to say, "**muzukashi desu ne...**" (I'm afraid...)." It is a very useful phrase because you don't have to explain why you are making the refusal.



difficult; hard; tough

**難**

**muzuka(shi) / nan / kata(shi)**

Please match the sentences in the first section with those in the second.

A) One calamity follows on the heels of another.

**一難去ってまた一難**

**ichi-nan satte mata ichi-nan**  
(one trouble) (leave) (again) (one trouble)

B) It is easier said than done.

**言うは易く行うは難し**

**iu wa yasuku okonau wa katashi**  
(say) (easy) (do) (difficult)

C) Various difficulties lie ahead.

**前途多難**

**zen to ta nan**  
(the future) (full of difficulties)

1) New employees don't know how to give greetings. I know various problems lie ahead of them.

新入社員はあいさつもできない。ふう～  
**shinnyū-shain wa aisatsu mo dekinai fuuu...**  
(fresh man) (greeting)(even) (can't)

Various problems lie ahead. **danaa danā**

2) My son failed his school entrance exam, and now my husband is out of work! One misfortune followed close on the heels of another.

息子が受験に失敗したら  
**musuko ga juken ni shippai shita ra**  
(my son) (fail an examination)

今度は主人が失業...  
**kondo wa shujin ga shitsugyō...**  
(this time) (my husband)(lose one's job)

One misfortune followed close on the heels of another. **です。 desu**

3) It is easier said than done! It is not that easy!

It is easier said than done. **そう簡単には出来ません。 sō kantan niwa dekimasen**  
(so) (easy) (cannot)

Answers 1) C 2) A 3) B

Refusal .....

Keep in mind that "**muzukashi**" also means "no" or "I can't do it." In the following phrases, say "**chotto...**" (well...) in a doubtful and negative tone and remain silent briefly. To sound like a native speaker, inhale shortly through closed teeth before saying, "**ummm... chotto...**" Both techniques imply that you are thinking about it for a minute.

(inhaling briefly)  
Hmm... well...  
(implying "no")  
んん...ちよっと...  
**ummm... chotto...**

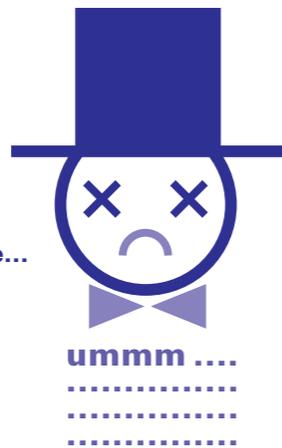
(inhaling briefly)  
Hmm... well... I'm afraid not...  
(implying "no" or "I can't do it")  
んん...ちよっと 難しいですね...  
**ummm... chotto muzukashi desu ne...**

e.g. Can you do it by tomorrow?

明日までにできますか。  
**ashita made ni dekimasu ka**

■ When a reason is not necessary  
(inhaling briefly)  
Hmm... well... I'm afraid not...  
んん... ちよっと 難しいですね...  
**ummm...chotto muzukashi desu ne...**

■ When a reason is necessary  
I can't do it because there is no time.  
時間がないのでできません。  
**jikan ga nai node dekimasen**  
(time) (there is no) (can't)



**難しい muzukashi**

1. Complicated: (antonym: easy): **muzukashi** 難しい

Hmm... It's complicated!  
√2 × √5 ÷ 8 - 20...  
難しい ですね...  
**muzukashi desu ne...**

We'd better stop talking about complicated issues.  
もう難しい話はやめましょう。  
**mō muzukashi hanashi wa yamemashō**

2. Refusal: (I am afraid...): **muzukashi** 難しい

Friend: Would you like to have a dinner with me tomorrow night?  
明日の夜 食事でもしませんか。  
**ashita (asu) no yoru shokuji demo shimasen ka**  
You: Well... I'm afraid tomorrow's no good.  
(明日は) ちよっと... 難しいですね...  
**(ashita wa) chotto... muzukashi desu ne...**

You: Can I get a discount?  
もうちよっと 安くなりませんか。  
**mō chotto yasuku narimasen ka**

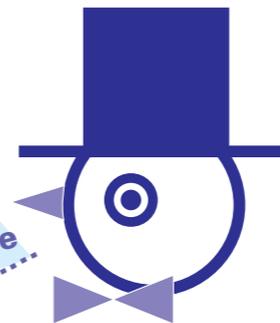
Clerk: Hmm... well... I'm afraid not.  
んん...ちよっと 難しいですね...  
**ummm... chotto muzukashi desu ne...**

3. Difficult (hard, tough, terrible): **taihen** 大変

It is hard to live in Japan because it is so expensive.  
日本に住むのは物価が高くて大変です。  
**Nihon ni sumu no wa bukka ga takakute taihen desu**

Ah, we are done at last! It was really hard, wasn't it!?  
あ～ やっと 終わりました。  
**a~ yatto owarimashita**  
大変でした ね。  
**taihen deshita ne**

**muzukashi desu ne**



Oh, no! How terrible!  
大変! 大変!  
**taihen taihen**

I think it's a tough job.  
大変な仕事 ですね。  
**taihen na shigoto desu ne**