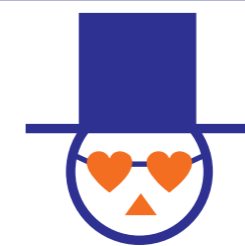




Design: Masako Ban

日本語が好きなんです！ Nihongo ga sukinan desu!



Because I know Japanese people often use "ん" in conversation, I tried to use it when I spoke to a friend. I said, "**Nihongo ga sukinan desu.**" He looked at me as if he was waiting for me to continue. He ended up asking me if I wanted him to teach me the Japanese language or introduce me to some of his Japanese friends. That wasn't what I meant at all; I just wanted to say I like Japanese. Why did he assume I wanted him to do these things when I said nothing like that? Please tell me, Hirayama-san.

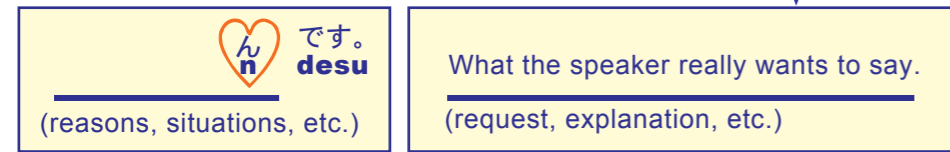
It is true that Japanese people often use "ん" in conversation. By using "ん," you can express your innermost feelings. I consider it a wonderful form of expression that helps smooth communication and makes it easier to broach difficult topics. This will be the final installment of Pera Pera Penguin. I hope it has helped you improve your Japanese. Please hang in there: "**gambatte!**" Thank you all for your support!

★ Following are the main ways of using "ん." I'll explain them in my own "Hirayama" way. Polite form: の (no), Friendly form: ん (n)

① The sentence that follows "n desu(んです)" is the most important.

It is the second sentence that expresses what the speaker really wants. "ん" signals that what follows is important. This is why the listener will wait to hear what comes next. It feels awkward to native speakers if you merely end with "んです."

The listener will usually pay more attention to the sentence that follows. ▼



It is possible to swap the order.

e.g., 忙しいんです。(I'm busy.) 手伝って下さい！(Please help me.)
isogashiin desu **tetsudatte-kudasai!**
 →It conveys the feelings that he/she is really busy and wants help.

② Waiting for the listener's response

You can imply something that is hard for you to say, for example, when you ask permission or seek suggestions, advice, etc., by using "ん" and wait for the response.



e.g., A: あの…来週休みたいんですが…
ano...raishū yasumitain desuga...
 I'd like to take a day off next week.

B: 来週? いいですよ。
raishū? ī desu yo
 Next week? Yes, that's OK.

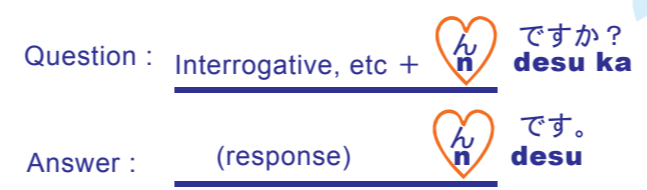
★ If you explain the reason for the sentence, including "n desuga...", it will sound more considerate.



e.g., 両親が日本に来るので来週休みたいんですが…
ryōshin ga Nihon ni kuru node raishū yasumitain desuga...
 My parents are coming to Japan, so I'd like to take next week off.

③ Question and answer with feeling

Using "ん" makes conversation more emotionally sensitive for each participant in the conversation, thereby helping better convey information. The sentences usually imply things such as concern, worry, excuses, advice and explanations.



e.g., Q: どうしたんですか? ← This sentence expresses empathy such as: "Are you OK?" "Do you need my help?" etc.
dō shitan desu ka?
 What's wrong?

A: 頭が痛いんです。 ← This sentence expresses an underlying thankfulness for the concern expressed.
atama ga itain desu
 I have a headache.

④ Wishful thinking

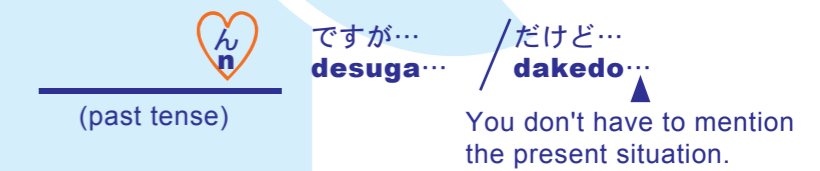
A shallow statement/response based on wishful thinking. The speaker uses the sentence in conversation when he/she is speaking reflectively. Because there's usually not much depth to the statement, it sometimes comes across as flippant. The expression conveys a message along the lines of: "I think so. Don't you think so, too?"



e.g., あした来るんじゃない。
ashita kurunjanai
 I imagine he's coming tomorrow.
 (I think so. Don't you think so, too?)

⑤ Then and now

By referring to a past situation, there is a hint that the present situation is opposite of what it was before.



e.g., 平山さんは昔はきれいだったんだけど…
Hirayama-san wa mukashi wa kirē dattan dakedo...
 Hirayama-san used to be beautiful...
 (implying that Hirayama-san isn't beautiful now!)