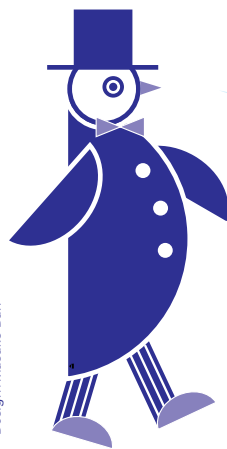


Design: Masako Ban



Pera Pera Penguin's

5 minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama Vol. 19

I have noticed that most Japanese companies hold long meetings almost every day, without making any decisions at all. Sometimes I can't even make out what they are talking about. tsumari (After all)...it's a waste of time...to yūka (I mean)...ikaereba (in other words) ..exhausting...yōsuruni (to sum up)... Grr...I can't stop talking like the people in the meetings!

■■■ I know what you mean, Mr. Pole. yōsuruni, you think that such meetings should be shorter and more efficient, don't you? It is true that the Japanese tend to hold long meetings. They hold these conferences over and over because they don't wish to make their final decisions until they are sure of each other's ideas. sonoue (In addition), Japanese people use ambiguous words when they know they have to make decisions by the end of the meeting. Instead of making statements, the speaker makes ambiguous comments, to avoid offending listeners. The other participants have to work out what he actually means, or guess at what has been left unsaid.

Japanese culture treasures the concepts of space, silence, and nonexistence. For instance, when designing a Japanese garden, the landscaper thinks of a window as the frame, and calculates the amount of space within the frame when the trees have leaves in summer, and when they are bare in wintertime. For a Noh actor, the most difficult thing is silence, or absence of movement. Silence is a form of expression in Noh. And as for a Japanese tearoom, nonexistence is represented by the fact that it contains only a few things.

Even if you don't understand all the Japanese words during the meeting, please pay careful attention when someone uses the key words listed below. They indicate that the speaker is going to say something important next, and that's what he or she actually means. If someone keeps silence for a while, look carefully at that person and try to guess what he wants to say.

e.g. (Talking about something for a long time) ... **to sum up**, I think it will be impossible ...

(Talking about something for a long time) ... **要するに** 無理 ですね。
yōsuruni muri ... desu...ne...
in short impossible

Pay attention! This is what he actually means!

Key words during the meetings. No.1 (friendly form / polite form)

1) if it is possible もし できたら / できましてら moshi dekitara / dekimashitara	2) whether or not ... か どうか ... ka dōka	7) I wonder if...?(very casual form) ...かなあ; かしら kanā; kashira (male style) (female style)	8) for the time being; for now とりあえず toriaezu	9) I guess (not a fact, just guessing) ...だろう; でしょう ...darō; deshō (male style) (female style)
3) after all; in the end 結局 kekkyoku	4) with that reason; That will do it! ...という事で ...to yū koto de	10) to handle the problem positively 前向きに検討します。 maemuki ni kentō shimasu	11) I thought so; as I expected, やっぱり / やはり yappari / yahari	12) almost hopeless; difficult 難しい muzukashī
5) to sum up; in short 要するに yōsuruni	6) well then, じゃあ / では jā / dewa	13) in other words ; after all つまり tsumari	14) hm ye...s... ええ ... まあ ... ê... mā...	15) What do you mean?; ...and you mean? と言うと / と言うことは to yūto / to yūkoto wa
10) to handle the problem positively 前向きに検討します。 maemuki ni kentō shimasu	11) I thought so; as I expected, やっぱり / やはり yappari / yahari	12) on the contrary; instead かえって kaette	13) in other words ; after all つまり tsumari	14) almost hopeless; difficult 難しい muzukashī
15) What do you mean?; ...and you mean? と言うと / と言うことは to yūto / to yūkoto wa	16) as ... as possible できるだけ ... dekirudake...	17) it may be ... (uncertain) ...かも / かもしれない ...kamo / kamoshirenai	18) first of all, ; at first, まず / まず最初に mazu / mazu saishoni	19) hm ye...s... ええ ... まあ ... ê... mā...

One day, Mr. Pole attended a conference. ポールさんのある日の会議 Pole san no aruhi no kaigi

Mr.Pole: First of all, about the budget for next year ...

① first of all 来年の予算ですが...
rainen no yosan desu ga

Well, Mr. Mori, please tell us.

② well then 森さん からです。
Mori-san kara desu

Mori-san: Last year, it was pretty bad ...

③ it may be 去年は かなり 厳しかった...です...
sakunen wa kanari kibishikatta...desu...
rainen wa yosannai de dekiru (polite form) desu ga...

Next year, we may be able to balance the budget ...

④ it may be 来年は...予算内 ができる...
rainen wa yosannai de dekiru (polite form) desu ga...

Or maybe not ...hm ...

⑤ it may be できない ④ it may be ⑤ it may be
dekinai (polite form) desu... ūn...

Shachō: What do you mean?

⑥ What do you mean?

Mori-san: In other words, hm ..If it is possible, a little bit more ...

⑦ in other words ⑧ if it is ⑨ if it is
...ええ... (polite form) ...もう少し ...
...ê... possible mô sukoshi ...

Mr.Pole: To sum up, we need a larger budget than last year, right?

⑩ to sum up ⑪ to sum up ⑫ to sum up
昨年より多く ...ですか ?
sakunen yori ōku ... desu ka

Mori-san: Frankly speaking...yes.

⑬ hm .. ye..s ⑭ hm .. ye..s
はっきり言えば ...そう ですか...
hakkiri ieba ... sō desu ga...

— One hour later —

Mr.Pole: After all, it would be difficult to make our decision, now ...

⑮ after all ⑯ after all ⑰ after all
結論 は ⑱ terrible ⑲ terrible
ketsuron wa terrible desu ne

Let's postpone it for the time being ...

⑳ for the time being ㉑ for the time being
次回 また ...
jikai mata ...

Shachō: Well, we'd better handle the problem positively ...

㉒ handle the problem positively ㉓ handle the problem positively
まあ ㉔ handle the problem positively が...
mā ga ...

Mr.Pole: That will do it ...

㉕ That will do it ...

Answers ① 18 ② 6) ③④ 17) ⑤ 15) ⑥ 13) ⑦ 1) ⑧ 5) ⑨ 19) ⑩ 3) ⑪ 14) ⑫ 8) ⑬ 10) ⑭ 4)



あいまい言葉

aimai kotoba Ambiguous words

① If it is possible, ...your answer by tomorrow ...

if it's possible ... あすまでに 御返事 を...
... asu made ni gohenji o ...
tomorrow by replying (polite form)

② On the contrary, ...a bad result ...

on the contrary ...悪い結果 が...
... warui kekka ga ...
bad result

③ I thought so.

I thought so !

④ I wonder if it is impossible ...

無理 ... I wonder ...
muri ... impossible

⑤ I guess it's probably today ...

おそらく... 今日 I guess ...
osoraku ... kyō

⑥ It may be hopeless...

ダメ it may be (uncertain) ...
dame hopeless; impossible

⑦ Was it in vain after all?

in the end ムダ足... ?
muda-ashi ... ?
a fool's errand

⑧ ...as cheap as possible ...

as ... as possible 安く...
yasuku ...
cheap

⑨ ...and you mean? (inviting him/her to say more)

and you mean ?

⑩ ...whether or not I can finish my work by 9 p.m.

残業が 9時までに終わる whether or not ...
zangyō ga ku-ji made ni owaru
over work 9 o'clock by will finish

Answers

- ① 1)
- ② 12)
- ③ 11)
- ④ 7)
- ⑤ 9)
- ⑥ 17)
- ⑦ 3)
- ⑧ 16)
- ⑨ 15)
- ⑩ 2)