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# mahō no kotoba (magic words) kara, node, de

One of my colleagues came to work late the other day because she had a hangover. She said to me, "yūbe nomi-sugita kara, chikoku-shichatta!" (I am late because I drank too much last night!) But when she was talking to her boss, she said, "yūbe nomi-sugita node, chikoku-shimashita." Is there any difference between kara and node when explaining the reason for something?



## Pera Pera Penguin's

5 minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama

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■■■When you want to explain the reason for something, you can choose kara or node to convey different impressions to your listeners. kara is used for emotional expressions. It may sound illogical or like an excuse. Japanese children use kara, but when they grow up, they start saying node. It might be best to say node during business meetings or when speaking polite Japanese, since node gives the impression that what you are saying is logical.

There are three words of expressing a reason or cause.

reason / cause

から 1)  
 ので 2)  
 で 3)

result / conclusion

1) kara is used for emotional expressions.

It is used for friendly conversations where the reason or cause is personal. But you should be careful how you use it, because it can sound selfish.

忙しかった  
isogashi-katta

I was busy

から  
kara

キャンセルをしました。  
cancel o shimashita

I canceled

I canceled it (the job) because I had another appointment (to meet a friend).

Even if the reason/cause is unreasonable, it starts to sound more logical if you use the magic words, node and de!

2) 3) node and de are used for logical expressions (de is used for nouns).

They are used in public situations and polite speech. Public situations include business meetings and speeches. Logical reasons for something might be earthquake (natural phenomenon), fire (accident), illness, etc.

忙しかった  
isogashi-katta

I was busy

ので  
node

キャンセルをしました。  
cancel o shimashita

I canceled

I canceled it because I was busy with work.

仕事  
shigoto

work

で  
de

キャンセルをしました。  
cancel o shimashita

I canceled

I canceled it because I had to work.

e.g., I was late because the roads were crowded. (traffic jam ... jūtai, became late ... osoku-narimashita)

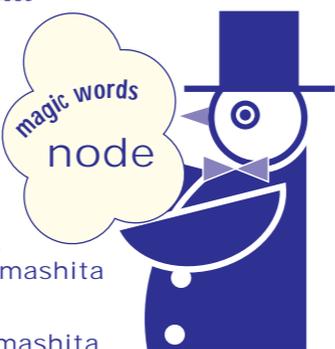
(implying the inevitable cause)

渋滞で遅くなりました。  
jūtai de osoku-narimashita

渋滞だったので遅くなりました。  
jūtai datta node osoku-narimashita

(implying my fault)

渋滞だから遅くなりました。  
jūtai datta kara osoku-narimashita



(talking to your boss) May I go home now because I have a headache?

頭が痛い 1 帰ってもいいですか。  
atama ga itai 1 kaettemo ii desu ka  
head painful May I go home?

(talking to your friend) I'm taking a day off tomorrow because a friend is coming over from France.

フランスから友達が来ます 2 あした会社を休みます。  
France kara tomodachi ga kimasu 2 ashita kaisha o yasumimasu  
from friend come tomorrow company absent from -

(talking politely) I'd like to take a day off tomorrow because my friend is coming from France.

フランスから友達が来ます 3 あした会社を休みます。  
France kara tomodachi ga kimasu 3 ashita kaisha o yasumimasu

(talking politely) I couldn't buy it because I didn't have any money.

お金がなかった 4 買えませんでした。  
o-kane ga nakatta 4 kaemasen-deshita  
money didn't have couldn't buy

(talking to your friend) I stayed at home all day yesterday because it was raining.

昨日は雨だった 5 一日中うちにいました。  
kinō wa ame datta 5 ichinichi-jū uchi ni imashita  
yesterday was rain all day long house was (exist)

(inevitable causes...noun) The buildings collapsed because of the earthquake.

地震 6 建物はメチャクチャです。  
jishin 6 tatemono wa mecha-kucha desu  
earthquake building destroyed (onomatopoeia)

(inevitable causes...noun) Many companies have gone bankrupt because of the recession.

不況 7 多くの会社が倒産をしています。  
fukyō 7 ōku no kaisha ga tōsan o shiteimasu  
depression many company have gone bankrupt

(talking to your client) It is because I am going on a business trip.

出張をします 8  
shucchō o shimasu 8  
go on a business trip

Answers

1. node 2. kara 3. node 4. node 5. kara 6. de 7. de 8. node



	Sounds logical	Sounds illogical
Reason	理由 (を言う) riyū (o yū) to explain the reason	訳 (を言う) wake (o yū) to justify something
Excuse	弁解 (をする) benkai (o suru) to rationalize something	言い訳 (をする) iwake (o suru) to defend oneself with poor excuses

1. Stop making excuses! (illogical excuse)

illogical excuse は やめなさい。  
wa yamenasai stop

2. I have no way to justify. (illogical reason)

どうしてこうなったのか 1 がわからないです。  
dōshite kōnatta noka 1 ga wakaranai desu  
why become like this don't know

3. You'd better acknowledge your mistakes, instead of trying to rationalize them. (logical excuse)

logical excuse をするより素直に認めたほうがいいですよ。  
o suru yori sunao ni mitometa hō ga ii desu yo  
obediently had better acknowledge

4. The more you defend yourself with poor excuses, the more you sound like a liar! (illogical excuse)

illogical excuse をすればするほど嘘に聞こえます。  
o sureba suru hodo uso ni kikoemasu  
more ~ more a lie can hear

5. Did he explain the reason? (logical reason)

何か 2 を言っていましたか。  
nanika 2 o itte-mashita ka  
something said to you?

6. Please don't make me justify this! (illogical reason)

illogical reason は聞かないで下さい。  
wa kikanaide-kudasai  
please don't ask

7. No matter how hard you try, it is too late to rationalize this! (logical excuse)

いくら 3 してももう遅いです。  
ikura 3 shitemo mō osoi desu  
even though already too late

Answers

1. iwake 2. wake 3. benkai 4. iwake 5. riyū 6. wake 7. benkai