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Using abstract

ko_ so_ a_

in conversations

Pera Pera Penguin's
5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama
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While talking with a friend about a new **sushiya** (**sushi** restaurant) over the phone, we both began to feel like eating **sushi**. He said, "**jaa, ano sushiya de shichi-ji ni**" over the phone, but when I went to the new **sushi** place he didn't show up. I was worried so I called him. He then said, "Huh? Where are you, now? I'm waiting for you at the **sushiya!**" When I told him I was at the new **sushiya**, he said, "**itsumono ano sushiya desu yo!**" (I'm at the **sushiya** we usually go to!) On the phone, I had talked about the new **sushiya**, so I was sure we were going to that one. Ms. Hirayama, why on earth did he go to the **sushiya** we usually go even though he did not mention it by name?

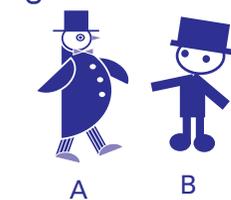
■■■The problem you faced was probably caused by a misunderstanding of the usage of "**ko_**, **so_**, **a_**" which are used for abstract matters or things that cannot be seen directly. They may seem simple, but can be confusing in reality. Even advanced students become confused and cause misunderstandings, and their Japanese sounds very poor when they get the usage wrong. If you master this lesson, your Japanese sounds much better!

◆ "**ko_**, **so_**, **a_**" are used when abstract matters or things that cannot be seen directly are discussed.◆
(Here I explain part of typical usage.)

I) When both A and B know the subject, they use "**a_**".

あの魚 **ano sakana**

e.g.,
Talking about a time that A and B experienced together (あの時 **ano toki**)



★ "**a_**" is used when you are talking to yourself or writing in your diary, etc.

e.g.,
(in diary) It has been one year since then...
(あれから1年... **arekara ichi-nen...**)

II) When the speaker is not familiar with the subject, he uses "**so_**".

その人 **sono hito**

e.g.,
When discussing a person whom the speaker does not know (or who cannot be seen), he uses "the person" (その人 **sono hito**)

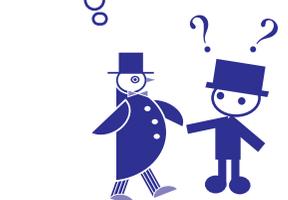


speaker

III) When the speaker is familiar with the subject but the listener is not, he uses "**ko_**".

この魚 **kono sakana**

e.g.,
A subject or issue that the speaker knows but the listener does not is "this matter," (この件 **kono ken**), "this issue" (この問題 **kono mondai**)



speaker listener e.g., その件 **sono ken** → as if he knows it → この件 **kono ken**

Let's practice! Both A and B know the subject

sushiya (寿司) Since both of them know the sushi restaurant, they know what they are talking about without naming it. **sushiya** (寿司)

A: 昨日 (1) 寿司屋に行きました。
kinō (1) sushiya ni ikimashita
I went to the sushi restaurant yesterday.

B: (2) 寿司屋はおいしいですね。
(2) sushiya wa oishi desu yo ne
The **sushi** restaurant serves delicious **sushi**, doesn't it?

When the subject becomes the main topic in the middle of conversation, "**ko_**" is used.

A: (3) 店は安いですよね。
(3) mise wa yasui desu yo ne
This restaurant is cheap, isn't it?

B: (4) 店はいつも混んでます。
(4) mise wa itsumo kondemasu
This restaurant is always crowded.

Answers (1) **ano** (2) **ano** (3) **kono** (4) **kono**

Let's practice! Either one of them is familiar with the subject

sushiya (寿司)

A: (2) 店はどこにありますか?
(2) mise wa doko ni arimasu ka?
Where is the restaurant?

B: 昨日寿司を食べました。
kinō sushi o tabemashita
(1) 寿司屋はおいしいですよ。
(1) sushiya wa oishi desu yo
I had **sushi** yesterday. This (that) **sushi** restaurant serves delicious **sushi**.

(The listener does not know it.) (The speaker knows of the restaurant.)

When he feels that the subject becomes the main topic while discussing it, he starts to use "**ko_**".

A: (4) 店は有名ですか?
(4) mise wa yūmē desu ka?
Is this restaurant famous?

B: (3) 店は雑誌によく載ります。
(3) mise wa zasshi ni yoku norimasu
This restaurant has appeared in magazines many times.

Answers (1) **kono** (2) **sono** (3) **kono** (4) **kono**

Put one proper pronoun in the box.

Visiting **Kyōto**

colleague: Do you know the **Gion** in **Kyōto**?

You: No, I don't. Where is it?
いいえ、はどこにありますか?
ie, **wa doko ni arimasu ka?**
(1)

colleague: It's near the Kiyomizudera temple.

You: How can I get there?
には どのように行きますか?
 niwa donoyōni ikimasu ka?
(2)

colleague: You can take a taxi from the train station.

You: What kind of place is it?
は どのような所ですか?
 wa donna tokoro desu ka?
(3)

■■■■■■■■■■ A few weeks later ■■■■■■■■■■

You: I went to the Gion last week.
It's a beautiful place, isn't it?
は きれいないい所ですね。
 wa kirē na ii tokoro desu ne
(4)

■■■■■■■■■■ talking to yourself ■■■■■■■■■■

I can't find my cell phone! I wonder if I dropped it that time?
携帯がない! 時に落としたのかな?
kētai ga nai! **toki ni otoshita nokana?**
(5)

Or, maybe at that temple?
それとも 寺かな...?
soretomo **tera kana.....?**
(6)

Answers (1) **sore** (2) **soko** (3) **soko** (4) **asoko** (5) **ano** (6) **ano**