

WILD LAB

Free Sample Pack 01

There Is More Than One Right Answer

*For people who want to speak a language,
not pass a test in it.*

I asked an AI to correct my own language

One day I had a conversation with an AI in English. Afterwards I asked it to correct my English.

It gave me a mountain of corrections. I lost a little confidence.

Then I had an idea. I had the same kind of conversation in Japanese, my native language, and asked it to correct my Japanese.

What do you think happened?

Just like with English, it was a mountain of corrections.

So the idea that native speakers speak a perfect language is an illusion. Native speakers make many mistakes too, and almost none of us notice or care.

If nobody speaks perfectly in their own language, why do we demand it from ourselves in a foreign one?

TRY THIS FIRST

Just test how perfectly you speak your own native language. It is the first step to liberating yourself from foreign-language perfectionism.

Which answer is perfect?

A friend asks you a simple question in Japanese:

「なあ今日の天気わかる？」

"Hey, do you know today's weather?"

Here are three possible answers.

ANSWER A · A FRIEND

「昼から雨ちゃう？」

"Rain from noon, maybe?"

ANSWER B · THE WEATHER FORECAST

「本日の天気です。今日は南からの湿った空気の流れによる前線の影響で、昼からは雨、所により強く降るでしょう。」

"Here is today's weather. Because of a front caused by humid air from the south, rain is expected from noon, heavy in some areas."

ANSWER C · THE LOGICIAN

「その質問には答えられません。なぜならあなたの問いには時と場所が含まれておらず、私はそれを断定することができないからです」

"I cannot answer that question, because it does not state a time and a place, so I cannot be certain."

The answer

Answer B has perfect grammar. Answer C has perfect logic. Say either one to a friend and they will think: "What is this guy talking about?"

Answer A is the only one that works. A test might mark it wrong. In a real conversation, it is the right sentence.

"Perfect" has no single meaning. It depends on who you are talking to, and why.

This is the trap of chasing perfection. Most people learn a language to enjoy talking with other people. But school tests have one correct answer, and everything else is marked wrong. A small grammar slip or the wrong preposition means zero.

After years of that, people believe they must speak perfectly, and so they never reach the kind of language they can really use.

Six ways to say one thing

Here is something I need to say about my own work: my new business has to pay for my living costs.

In Japanese, there is not just one way to say the key part:

お金を稼ぐ

生活費を得る

利益を取る

利益を得る

軌道に乗せる

成功させる

In English, it is the same:

- I need to earn money.
- I need to make a living.
- I need to cover my living costs.
- I need to turn a profit.
- I need to get the business off the ground.
- I need to make it work.

The feeling changes a little each time. The message arrives every time. A test accepts one of these. A conversation accepts all of them.

When it really is a mistake

None of this means that anything goes. Some mistakes change the meaning, and those matter.

LEFT AND RIGHT

右 / 左

"right" / "left"

Say "left" when you mean "right", and your friend walks the wrong way.

ONE SMALL WORD

午後まで雨 / 午後から雨

"rain until the afternoon" / "rain from the afternoon"

Only one small word is different. But one sentence says the rain stops in the afternoon, and the other says it starts.

So there are two kinds of "wrong":

- **A different way to say the same thing.** This is not a mistake. Leave it.
- **A sentence that says a different thing.** This is a mistake. Fix it.

The only question that matters: did the other person understand what I meant?

5 · TRY IT

Your turn

This takes five minutes. Use the language you are learning.

1. Choose one thing you really want to say. Something from your own life, such as why you are learning this language.

2. Say it three different ways. Short is fine. Simple is fine. Do not look for the best one.

3. Ask a different question. If you check your sentences with an AI or a friend, do not ask "Is this correct?" Ask:

"Would a native speaker misunderstand any of these?"

If the answer is no, all three of your sentences work. You now have three right answers where a test would give you one.

WHAT IS NEXT

This is the first sample from WILD LAB, a small lab in Kyoto working with language, animation and the story of CHIKA. More samples are announced in the newsletter.

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