

Spotlighting an expression #23

ちがいない



The Basics

We use the supposing auxiliary **ちがいない** to indicate a strong belief about something—the kind of intuitive, gut feeling that tells us this thing *must be*. In fact, we possess so much conviction about this thing that we'd be inclined to say, "We'd bet on it," or "There's no doubt about it."

Like other supposing auxiliaries, it carries the weight of personal certainty, but importantly, still remains a guess. So, unlike **はずだ** (EP20) which is exclusively used when our reasoning can be tied to a *specific point of reference* (e.g., something we read, hear, or know from experience), **ちがいない** lacks this restriction and possesses broader application. As a result, it can be used with reason, but it can also be used when we're still just guessing—albeit an *educated* guess.

みなは英語がすごく上達した。何か特別なことをしているにちがいない。

Mina's English has greatly improved. She must be doing something special.

Auxiliaries like structure, and **ちがいない** is no different. Its common form is:

[current state] ⇒ [our accepted reason as to why that current state exists]

With this form we are truly guessing, and we often end up asking *why* a situation is the way it is before pitching that guess. For example:

今日の三宮はやたら人が多い。

さんのみや

current state

Ridiculous amount of people out here in Sannomiya today...

何か催し物があるからだろう。

もよお

why?

...because there is some event going on, I think.

今日の三宮の人がやたら多いのは、何か催し物があるからにちがいない。

Ridiculous amount of people out here in Sannomiya today.

There must be some event going on.

ちがいない and はずだ can be used interchangeably, but because はずだ is restricted in application, attempting to use it within ちがいない's common form would result in an unnatural sounding sentence.

Here is はずだ's common form:

[objectively drawn reason] ⇨ [conclusion drawn based upon that reason]

Note: even though this conclusion cannot be confirmed, there is reason to suspect it is accurate.

今日の三宮はやたら人が多い。

reason

Ridiculous amount of people out here in Sannomiya today.

どこかで何か催し物があるのだろう。

conclusion

I suppose some event is going on somewhere.

今日の三宮はやたら人が多いから、どこかで何か催し物があるはずだ。

With such a ridiculous amount of people out here in Sannomiya today, there is likely some event going on somewhere.

As an aside, はず (the noun) can be used when something we expect is in disagreement with our current reality. Such a situation might have us wondering aloud, (or commenting) that this situation we expect is (or, was) "supposed to be," a certain way. For example:

あれ、五番目のねじはどこへ行った？ここに置いてあったはずなのに。

Now, where did that fifth screw go? It's supposed to be right here.

父さんが駅まで迎えに来てくれてるはずだけど、あれ、いないな。

My dad is supposed to pick me up here at the station—where is he?

Dazai's usage

そこには、殿様という隔絶された御身分に依る不幸もあったに違いない。

かくぜつ よ

There must have been some misfortune that came from the lord's isolating social status.

 Practice 

1 Consider the case of the missing glasses.

Doc can't find his glasses. It's time to take Chiro out, and wandering outside without his eyes wouldn't be one of his best ideas. In asking for help, he could approach talking about it one of two ways based on whether or not he could tie some sort of prior knowledge to his guess.

Consider this scenario first. If he wasn't sure precisely where he took them off, but had a pretty good guess (based on the prior haphazard placement of said spectacles) that they might be either at the computer or in the kitchen, how do you think he would say in Japanese: *knowing me, I must have left them either at the computer or in the kitchen again.*

1. 僕のことだから、またパソコンの所かキッチンに

Now, what if he remembered he had them on just prior to sitting down at his desk, then took them off to check out Discord really fast? How do you think he would say in Japanese: *because that's when I took them off, they're most likely to be at my desk.*

2. あのタイミングで眼鏡を外したから、眼鏡は



tip

ちがいない and **はずだ** tend to accompany the below adverbs which suggest feelings of confident certainty (i.e., *surely, undoubtedly, almost certainly, most likely, absolutely, definitely, almost always...* etc.)

きっと / **たしか** / **まぎれもなく** / **絶対に** / **必ず**

犯人は**きっと**あいつに**違いない**。 *He must be the perpetrator. (I'd bet on it.)*

And, you'll never see *maybe, conceivably, by some possibility...* etc. with

ちがいない or **はずだ**, as these adverbs lack assuredness and are more akin to assumptions. Instead, you'll often see them with **かもしれない** (EP28).

もしかしたら / **もしや** / **ひょっとして** / **あるいは**

もしかしたらあの人**が**犯人**か**かもしれない。 *He might be the perpetrator. (maybe?)*