

Answer to Question # 28: Answers 2, 3, 4 & 5 are correct.

As discussed in Answer 27, there are at least four ways to say “SEEMS TO BE” in Japanese: そう (SOU), よう (YOU), らしい (RASHII) and みたい (MITAI).

Sometimes よう (you), らしい (rashii) and みたい (mitai), in addition to meaning “seems to be,” can mean “RESEMBLES.” らしい (RASHII) is only used to say that PEOPLE resemble things, whereas よう (you) and みたい (mitai) can be used to say that any noun resembles another noun.

For example, 子供のようです (kodomo no you desu) = 子供らしいです (kodomo rashii desu) = 子供みたいです (kodomo mitai desu), and these sentences can all mean either “she appears to be a child” or “she resembles a child,” the difference being that in one case you are saying that she looks like a child, while in the other you might be saying that she is like a child or is child-like.

There are some important DIFFERENCES between そう (sou), よう (you), らしい (rashii) and みたい (mitai).

そう (SOU) expresses the speaker’s GUESS, based on what he SEES.

よう (YOU) expresses a judgment, based on evidence, and implies a certain degree of CERTAINTY.

らしい (RASHII) is also based on some evidence, usually just HEARSAY, and implies LESS CERTAINTY than よう (you).

みたい (MITAI) is essentially a COLLOQUIAL VERSION OF よう (YOU).

As discussed in Answer 27, そう (SOU) cannot be used with nouns in AFFIRMATIVE sentences, if you intend to say “seems to be.” そう (SOU) CAN be used with nouns in NEGATIVE sentences, but ONLY if the term ない (NAI) is converted to なさ (NASA). In other words, you may say あひるじゃなさそうです (ahiru ja nasa sou desu) if you mean to say “it seems not to be a duck.”

ない (NAI) is converted to なさ (NASA) whenever it is used with そう (SOU) [meaning “appears to be” or “resembles”], whether or not nouns are involved. For example, in order to form the sentence おいしくなさそうです (oishikunasa sou desu) = “it appears to be not

delicious,” おいしくない (oishikunai) = “not delicious” is converted to おいしくなさ (oishikunasa).

Answer 1, あひるじゃないそうです (ahiru ja nai sou desu), fails to convert ない (nai) to なさ (nasa). This answer actually means “REPORTEDLY it’s a duck.”

Therefore, ANSWER # 1 is INCORRECT.

Answer 2, あひるじゃなさそうです (ahiru ja nasa sou desu), DOES convert ない (nai) to なさ (nasa).

Therefore, ANSWER # 2 is CORRECT.

よう (YOU), らしい (RASHII) and みたい (MITAI) can ALL be used with nouns in negative sentences.

Therefore, ANSWER # 3, ANSWER # 4 and ANSWER # 5 are all CORRECT. However, keep in mind that in Answer 4, あひるじゃないらしいです (ahiru ja nai rashii desu), you are essentially saying, “according to what I’ve heard (or read), it seems not to be a duck.”

Addendum, 3-2-15. It recently occurred to me that there are three other possible ways to say “it seems not to be a duck”:

- 1) あひるのようじゃない (ahiru no you ja nai [desu]) – this sounds awkward to a Japanese ear.
- 2) あひるらしいくない (ahiru rashikunai [desu]) – this is correct.
- 3) あひるみたいじゃない (ahiru mitai ja nai [desu]) – this is also correct.

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Question 28. “Seems NOT to Be”

You see a bird in the park, and you want to say, “It seems NOT to be a duck.”

Which of the following 5 Japanese sentences is correct?

1. あひるじゃないそうです (ahiru ja nai sou desu).
2. あひるじゃなさそうです (ahiru ja nasa sou desu).
3. あひるじゃないようです (ahiru ja nai you desu).

4. あひるじゃないらしいです (ahiru ja nai rashii desu).

5. あひるじゃないみたいです (ahiru ja nai mitai desu).