

## 日本語流 2

### The Nihongo Way 2

< Today's dialogue >



A: やあ、どうも。 <i>Yah, dōmo.</i>	A: 先日はどうも。 <i>Senjitsu wa dōmo.</i>	A: それじゃ、どうも。 <i>Soreja, dōmo.</i>
B: いやあ、どうも、どうも。 <i>Iyah, dōmo dōmo.</i>	B: いやいや、こちらこそ、どうも。 <i>Iyaiya, kochira koso dōmo.</i>	B: あ、どうも。 <i>Ah, dōmo.</i>

Following last month's kick-off column on Japanese greetings, let me continue by introducing a few more Nihongo greetings.

#### DIALOGUE OVERVIEW

The above dialog could be translated as:

- A1: Say! I'm sorry for keeping silent for a while, sir?  
B1: Oh, well! I'm sorry, too but how are you, sir?  
A2: Thank you for what you did for me the other day.  
B2: Oh, no. My thanks should go to YOU.  
A3: Well, good-bye for now.  
B3: Oh, good-bye now.

I'm sure you wonder how it is that the short Japanese utterances above can possibly translate into such lengthy English sentences when the originals say virtually nothing but *dōmo*.

One of my goals today is to reveal the secret of this mystery to you.

## VOCABULARY FOCUS

### **Dômo**

*Dô* (pronounced as “doh”) is an interrogative word meaning “how” or “(in) what way.” When the phrase-particle *mo* (meaning “also” or “even”) is attached to it, its meaning becomes “every how” or “in every way.” This happens with other interrogative words, too. Here are some examples:

*doko* (where) → *dokomo* (everywhere)

*dore* (which one of the given items) → *doremo* (every one of them)

*dochira* (which one of the two) → *dochiramo* (both of the two)

*itsu* (when) → *itsumo* (every when, i.e. always)

*dare* (who) → *daremo* (every who, i.e. everybody)\*

*nani* (what) → *nanimo* (every what, i.e. everything)\*

\*While *daremo* and *nanimo* are technically possible, *daremokamo* and *nanimokamo* are commonly used instead for “all-ness.” In negative sentences *daremo* and *nanimo* are usually used and mean “nobody” and “nothing.”

In all of the dialogs above, *dômo* is just the beginning of longer possible sentences:

*Dômo shitsurei-shiteimasu.* (In every way I’ve been rude.)

*Dômo gokigen ikaga desu ka?* (In every way how have you been?)

*Dômo sumimasen.* (In every way it does not end, i.e., I’m indebted. I’m sorry)

*Dômo arigatô gozaimasu.* (In every way it is precious, i.e., I’m thankful.)

*Dômo shitsurei-shimasu.* (In every way I’m being rude for leaving you, i.e., Goodbye now.)

### **Hesitation Noises**

Words such as *ah*, *yah*, and *soreja*, as used above, are hesitation noises, which do not actually mean much, just as “oh,” “ah,” “uh,” “well,” “say,” “then,” etc. often carry little meaning in English.

### **Senjitsu**

*Senjitsu* and *konoaida* mean the same thing (“the other day”). While *konoaida* is what is called *wago* (an authentic Japanese word), *senjitsu* is *kango* (a Chinese origin word). In principle, *kango* sound more formal and stiff than *wago*.

### **Iyaiya**

*Iyaiya* is repetition of *iya*, for emphasis. *Iya* in turn is a variation of *iie* (meaning “no”). *Iya* sounds less formal than *iie*.

### **Kochira koso**

*Kochira* is one of the so-called *ko-so-a-do* series of words. *Kochira* indicates the speaker’s domain, *sochira* refers to the addressee’s domain, and *achira* points to somewhere away from both the speaker and the addressee. Each can also often politely mean, respectively, “me/us,” “you” and “he/she/they.”

*Koso* is a phrase-particle that provides emphasis. By virtue of adding *koso*, *kochira* is emphasized. In this case, *kochira koso* could translate to “It’s ME (that should thank YOU).”

## CULTURE FOCUS

In a way, Japanese are lazy people: We tend to say only what is needed, and commonly do not mention what is contextually obvious.

In a scene such as this, where no particular message is called for, the fact that the two men communicated with each other is more important than what was actually said.

In Japanese, many greetings follow this pattern. The initial word of a phrase or sentence alone constitutes the greeting.

## OTHER EXAMPLES

こんにちは。 *Konnichiwa*.

*Konnichi* is an old word meaning “today,” and *wa* is a phrase-particle marking the topic for the moment. Literally, therefore, it means “as for today” or just “today.” Of course, it implies something like “Today (how are you doing?)” or “Today, (are you fine?)” It is a greeting used in daytime.

こんばんは。 *Kombanwa*.

As you might know already, *komban* means “this evening.” I’m sure you can now tell the phrase’s implication. This is a greeting for late in the day.

さようなら。 *Sayonara*.

*Sayo* (pronounced as “sayoh”) is an old Japanese term equivalent to the modern “so,” and *so* (pronounced “soh”) in turn happens to mean “so” in English. Meanwhile, “*X nara*” translates to “if it is X.” Together, therefore, *sayonara* literally translates as “if it is so,” which implies “if things are as such, it’s time that I went” - in other words, “Goodbye.”