



Learn Japanese online
from experienced teachers

nihongo-pro.com

Issue 3 ♦ September 18, 2014

Ready, Set, NihonGO!



We want to make this newsletter fun to read, useful, and interesting to everyone at Nihongo-Pro, whether you take lessons, take quizzes, play kanji games, or chat in the chat room.

<http://www.nihongo-pro.com/survey>

It's quick and easy, and your feedback helps us plan future newsletters. We appreciate your help!

なかみ INSIDE



NO END TO NIWA'S

Yutaka Aso serves up another Japanese tongue-twister, and it all has to do with chickens in the yard.

[Page 2](#)



2 WORDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Fusayo Nagatomi debuts with two of the most essential words in Japanese. Do you know them?

[Page 4](#)



OVERUSED JAPANESE

If you want to sound more natural when speaking Japanese, there's one word you have to go easy on.

[Page 6](#)



Nihongo-Pro Exclusives

- ✓ Earn free lessons with ProPoints
- ✓ Book lessons up to 30 days in advance
- ✓ Plus, free chat, quizzes, and kanji games!

言葉あそび＜早口言葉＞2

「おもしろ日本語」の2回目です。1回目は「すももももももものうち」で
したね。覚えていますか。さて、2回目は、

うらにわにわにわにわにわにわにわとりがいる

ぎゃ！「にわ」がたくさんありますね。なんじゃ、これは！

ええと、まず、声を出して、3回読んでみましょう。

どうですか。聞いて、なるほど、とわかった人は、えらい！

実はこの文にはトリックがあります。発音は同じですが、正しい文は、

うらにわにはにわにわにはにわにわとりがいる

です。そして「にわ」は、「庭」、「二羽」、にわたりの「にわ」の3つの意味があります。

また、「には」の「に」と「は」は、助詞です。

だから、漢字を使って書くと、こうなります。

うらにわ に わ にわ に わ
裏庭には二羽、庭には二羽、にわとりがいる

「裏庭」は「backyard」、「にわとり」は「chicken」。

もう、これでわかったでしょう。

じゃ、質問。にわとりは全部で何羽いますか。はい、答は4羽ですね。

おもしろい日本語、2回目はこれでおしまい。



ASO Yutaka

Nihongo-Pro Teacher

Aso-sensei, a veteran instructor with decades of teaching experience, teaches private lessons at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. He also teaches JLPT N3 and JLPT N4 group classes.

After teaching Japanese for many years in Taiwan, Vietnam, and Malaysia, Aso-sensei now lives in the [Yamagata prefecture](#), located on the Sea of Japan in northern Japan.

In between lessons and these humorous essays, you are likely to find Aso-sensei fishing, writing poetry, or, when the season is right, mountain-climbing.

Japanese Word Games: Tongue-Twister #2

Translator's note: To capture the full effect of Aso-sensei's humor, try reading the Japanese first, and refer to this translation only as needed. Or, read through the translation first, and then try the Japanese text.

This is the second in a series on fun(ny) Japanese. The first one was "[su-mo-mo-mo-mo-mo-mo-mo-mo-no-u-chi](#)", remember? OK, then, here's the second one:

u-ra-ni-wa-ni-wa-ni-wa-ni-wa-ni-wa-ni-wa-to-ri-ga-i-ru

What!? That's a lot of ni-wa's. What the heck is this? Well, for starters, try reading it aloud three times. ... How was it? If you got it just by hearing it, you are a superstar!

Actually, there's a trick in this sentence. The pronunciation is the same, but here's the grammatically correct sentence:

u-ra-ni-wa-ni-ha*-ni-wa-ni-wa-ni-ha*-ni-wa-ni-wa-to-ri-ga-i-ru

(Translator's note: ha is the character は (ha), which, in this context is pronounced "wa".)*

"niwa" has three meanings: 庭 (niwa, garden), 二羽 (niwa, two birds), and にわとり (niwatori, chicken). The に (ni) in には (ni-ha*) is a particle. So, if we write it in Kanji, it turns into this:

u ra ni wa ni ha* ni wa ni wa ni ha* ni wa ni wa to ri ga i ru
裏庭には二羽、庭には二羽、にわとりがいる

裏庭 (uraniwa) means "backyard", and にわとり (niwatori) means "chicken". Alright then, did you get it?

OK, a question: How many chickens are there in all? That's right—four. *(Translator's note: The tongue-twister translates to, "There are two chickens in the backyard and two in the front." Sounds a lot better in Japanese, don't you think?)*

That will do it for this edition of fun(ny) Japanese.



どんなとき使う？ 便利フレーズ

だい じょう ぶ

「ちょっと」と「大丈夫です」

にほんご はな つか こんかい しょきゅう
日本語で話すとき、どんなフレーズをよく使いますか。今回は初級から使
える2つのフレーズをご紹介します。



NAGATOMI Fusayo
Nihongo-Pro Teacher

Nagatomi-sensei teaches private lessons at all levels, as well as JLPT N2 group classes.

In addition to her lesson schedule at Nihongo-Pro and a full-time teaching job at a Japanese language school, Nagatomi-sensei is active with her daughters' girl scout troops.

She now lives in Japan's [Chiba prefecture](#), just east of Tokyo, and previously lived in China and the U.S. Nagatomi-sensei's English is spectacular, and you'll never find her without a smile on her face.

ちょっと

- ① A「ねえ、ちょっと。」
B「え？なに？」

だれ こえ はなし はじ
誰かに声をかけるとき、話を始めたいときに使います。

- ② A「明日一緒にカラオケに行かない？」

B「ちょっと用事があるて…」

き すす あいて さそ ことわ
気が進まないとき、相手の誘いを断るときなどに使えます。

- ③ A「そのケーキ美味しそうだね。ちょっと食べさせて！お願い！」

B「うーん、ちょっとだけだよ。」

すこ い み
これは「少し」という意味ですね。

じょうず なめ
ちょっとを上手に使うと、日本語が滑らかになりますよ。

大丈夫です

つぎ まほう ことば
次は魔法の言葉「大丈夫です」。

わたし いちにち ひ や か いいじょう
私は1日に100回以上この言葉を使っているような気がします。
レッスン中も「分かりますか。」よりも「大丈夫ですか。」と聞か
す。何かをお願いしたい時も、「これ、借りても大丈夫ですか。」と
言ったりします。

(Continued from page 4)

せんじつ にほんごがっこう かいわ ひとり がくせい とくべつ かだい ついか
先日、日本語学校でおもしろい会話がありました。一人の学生に特別な課題を追加しようとした。

いえ べんきょう
私「Aさん、これも家で勉強しますか。」

びみょう ひょうじょう
A (微妙な表情で) 「大丈夫です。」

私「？」

おも
私は思わず、「その『大丈夫です』は『します』の意味ですか？『しません』の意味ですか？」
と聞いてしまいました。「大丈夫です」はYesにもNoにもなる不思議なことばなのです。

スーパーのレジで

てんいん ぶくろ ゆうりょう
店員「レジ袋は有料ですが…」

きやく
客「大丈夫です。」

い い はんだん
こう言われると要るのか、要らないのか、お客様の表情で判断
するしかないですね (笑)

おな
「いいです。」も同じようにYesにもNoにもなるので気をつけま
しょう！



えいやく

英訳 ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Useful Japanese Phrases: “Chotto” and “Daijoobu desu”

What are some commonly used phrases when speaking in Japanese? I'd like to introduce two such phrases you can use even starting out in Japanese.

“Chotto”

① A: “Hey ...” B: “Huh? What is it?”

You use “chotto” when calling out to someone to start a conversation.

② A: “You want to go with me to karaoke tomorrow?” B: “Umm... I've got a thing I need to do ...”

When you aren't inclined to do something, you can use “chotto” to turn down an invitation.

③ A: “That cake looks yummy. Let me have some! Please!” B: “All right, but just a little.”

Here “chotto” means *sukoshi* (a little). If you are good with your usage of “chotto”, your Japanese will be smooth and fluent.

(Continued on page 6)

nihongo-pro.com

Next is the magical phrase “*daijoubu desu*”. I feel like I use this phrase over 100 times a day. During lessons, I more often ask a student, “*Daijoubu desu ka?*” (“*Is that OK?*”), rather than “*Wakarimasu ka?*” (“*Do you understand?*”).

The other day at my Japanese language school, I had an interesting conversation. I was about to give a student an extra assignment. I asked, “A-san, will you study this one at home, too?” With a subtle expression, A replied, “*Daijoubu desu.*” (“*It’s fine.*”)

I wasn’t sure what he meant, so, without thinking, I asked, “By *daijoubu desu*, do you mean you *will* study it or you *won’t* study it?” *Daijoubu desu* is a strange phrase that can mean either “yes” or “no”.

At the supermarket checkout, the clerk says, “The bags are extra, so ...” The customer replies, “*Daijoubu desu.*” (“*I’m OK.*”) In this situation, the only way to know whether the customer wants the bags is to judge his facial expressions.

OVERUSED JAPANESE: “WATASHI-WA ...”

One of the big differences in grammar between English and Japanese is that the subject of a sentence is often omitted in Japanese.

You may have noticed as much in Aso-sensei’s and Nagatomi-sensei’s articles—where the subject “I” or “you” would naturally occur in English, it goes unstated in Japanese. Of course, the subject isn’t *always* left out—the Japanese have perfected a fine skill of knowing when to say the subject and when to leave it out.

Unfortunately, for those of us learning Japanese as a second language, it is devilishly difficult to know when we should and shouldn’t say the subject. When talking about ourselves, we tend to start a lot of sentences with “Watashi-wa ...” (“*I ...*”), fearing that we won’t be understood otherwise.

“Watashi-wa”—that’s the word we non-Japanese need to go easy on. “Watashi-wa” literally means, “OK, here’s the topic: me,” so using it too much sounds like you’re saying, “It’s me, me, me!”

One of the many roles of the “wa” particle is to set the *conversation topic*—not just the subject of one sentence, the topic for the conversation to follow. So, when talking about yourself, it’s fine to start off with “Watashi-wa ...”, but after that, leave it out until the topic changes.

OK, I said Japanese have perfected this art of knowing when to say the subject, but the truth is, it’s an imperfect art. When subjects like “I”, “you”, “he”, and “she” are left unstated, even Japanese can lose track of who is doing what to whom. In that case, they might ask the speaker to confirm the subject by asking “Dare-ga?” (“*Who?*”) or “*speaker’s name-san-ga?*” (“*You?*”).

“Anata-wa” is another word to watch out for, but that will have to wait for another newsletter!



Steve Cooper
Nihongo-Pro Support

Steve helps out with the website. If you take lessons at Nihongo-Pro, you’re sure to meet Steve online at one time or another.

Steve lives with his partner in Missouri in the U.S. Soon, they are moving to warm and sunny Naples, Florida, and couldn’t be happier about it!