You (U) are at a kaitenzushi (rotating sushi) counter with a close Japanese friend of a similar age.

You (U) are at a mobile phone shop, asking questions of the salesclerk.
DIALOGUE OVERVIEW
In the dialogues, U differentiates his speech style in the two scenes, depending on his counterpart. He uses direct-style in Scene 1 and distal-style in Scene 2.

(Scene 1: at kaitenzushi)
U: This is tuna, isn’t it?
J: Yeah, that’s right.
U: What about that one (near you)?
J: This one? It’s bonito.
U: Then, what about that one (over there)?
J: Oh, that’s yellow tail.

(Scene 2: at a mobile phone shop)
U: This cell phone is new, isn’t it?
J: Yes, that phone is pretty new, too, but this is even newer.
U: Well, then, what about that mobile (over there)?
J: Oh, that is a bit old, but it is very cheap, sir.
U: Oh, is that so.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

Nouns
maguro  tuna
katsuo  bonito
buri  yellow tail
keitai  [abbreviation of keitaidenwa (mobile phone)]
mâmâ  so-so [Adverbial]
motto  even more [Adverbial]
totemo  very [Adverbial]

Adjectives
atarashii  new, fresh
hurui  old [N.B., never used for people’s age]
yasui  inexpensive, cheap

GRAMMAR FOCUS
The Japanese language does not clearly distinguish between first person (I, we), second person (you), and third person (he, she, they), unlike many languages (including English).

Japanese does have a conceptually similar notion, however. It is what is called the ko-so-a-do series of words, which is usually introduced as equivalent to “this” and “that” in English. I do not think that “this” and “that” capture the essence of these words. Today we focus on this very useful and important set of words.
Kore, Sore, Are, Dore – used for thing, item (or person, in a limited context)
The most typical of the ko-so-a-do series is this set. Each word is typically translated as below, with added parenthetical information for precision:

- **kore**
  - this one (near me within my domain)

- **sore**
  - that one (near you within your domain)

- **are**
  - that one (over there away from both you and me)

- **dore?**
  - which one? (of the given items)? [interrogative]

As seen in the translations, English does not distinguish between *sore* and *are*: both are covered by “that.” Although “this” and “that” are the normal English translations, the essence of *ko-so-a* is rooted in an idea very similar to the first-second-third person notion.

**Kono, Sono, Ano, Dono** – Noun-modifier

None of these words is ever used on its own, but they always modify the subsequent noun; for example:

- **kono sakana**
  - this fish (near me within my domain)

- **sono sakana**
  - that fish (near you within your domain)

- **ano sakana**
  - that fish (over there away from both you and me)

- **dono sakana?**
  - which fish? (of the given ones)? [interrogative]

**Konna, Sonna, Anna, Donna** – Noun-modifier

- **konna hon**
  - this type of book (as I’m showing)

- **sonna hon**
  - that type of book (as you’re showing)

- **anna hon**
  - that type of book over there (as they’re showing)

- **donna hon?**
  - what type of book? [interrogative]

**Koko, Soko, Asoko, Doko** – place

- **koko**
  - this place (where I am), here

- **soko**
  - that place (where you are), there

- **asoko**
  - that place (over there away from both you and me), there

- **doko?**
  - which place? where? [interrogative]

**Kochira, Sochira, Achira, Dochira** – area; alternative of the two

This series has two clearly different meanings. One refers to an area in a vague way, and the other to one alternative between two given items.

- **kochira**
  - this area (where I am); this one (near me) of the two alternatives

- **sochira**
  - that area (where you are); that one (near you) of the two alternatives

- **achira**
  - that area (over there away from both you and me); that one (away from both you and me) of the two alternatives

- **dochira?**
  - which area? whereabouts?; which one of the two?

**Kô, Sô, Â, Dô** – manner, way

- **kô**
  - this way as I do/say

- **sô**
  - that way as you do/say

- **â**
  - that way as they do/say

- **dô?**
  - which way? in what way? how?
ADDITIONAL REMARKS

Anata and Donata

Some of you who have studied Japanese are familiar with these words. Anata is generally taught to mean “you,” with donata a polite alternative for dare (who). You may be surprised and interested to know that these are remnants of yet another ko-so-a-do series. There used to be konata, sonata, anata and donata, to indicate direction and people:

- konata: this direction (as I indicate); me, myself
- sonata: that direction (where you are); you
- anata: that direction (over there, away from both you and me); he, she, they
- donata?: which direction; who (politely)?

In any language, overuse makes a word sound too direct (“toilet” is an example from American English). Sonata is an example. So, anata, the third person word, replaced it, to make for a more indirect and soft way of addressing people. These days anata has itself fallen into the same overuse trap. Among natives, anata now has only limited use. It sounds too direct to the modern ear.

* Anata is mostly restricted to use by wives to address their husbands, and as an anonymous “you” as found in questionnaires.

CULTURE FOCUS

In the Japanese culture, naming people, let alone pointing at them, is considered rude. When possible, we use a person's title. In normal conversation one uses family names, not first names, as these do not indicate the person per se, but the household. In a polite context, a word indicating the place relevant to the person is used. Anata (the direction/area where you are) was such an example.

At present, the kochira set is often used to politely indicate a person, too. Therefore, kochira effectively means “this person (here, near me)” in a physical context, or “I” in a phone conversation. Achira indicates “that person over there” or “he/she/they,” both politely. So, sochira, one might think, should politely indicate “you.” While it is polite, it may not be polite enough, as most Japanese opt for sochira-sama over sochira. By the same token, dochira-sama is used to politely ask someone’s name; hence, Dochira-sama desu ka? (May I have your name, please?)