

Advanced Level Curriculum: Speech Acts
–What to say and how to say it–
With implicit culture behind language

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1. Introduction

Several scholars have pointed out that research in pragmatics is an indispensable area in the field of second and foreign language teaching and learning. As Yule (1996) claims, with pragmatic knowledge, learners can function more appropriately in the context of the target language settings. It is clear to all that merely learning some linguistic forms in a language is not enough, and that learners should study the pragmatics of how these forms are used in regular patterns by social insiders. Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary does not suffice on its own; cultural knowledge is also essential for language learners in order to be able to interact appropriately with native speakers.

Adapting these useful ideas from pragmatics, the current paper will propose a model curriculum for an advanced Japanese language course. Within the domain of pragmatics, our central interest is on speech acts, because speech acts can frequently be difficult to perform appropriately without knowing the undefined social and cultural ways behind the words. It is critical that language curricula pay closer attention to “invisible” culture: ways of thinking, and ways of communicating, which are mutually complementary to “visible” culture: festivals, pop-culture, etc. This study proposes what to include in curriculum for enhancing advanced Japanese skills, based on our analyses of materials from printed textbooks and on-line resources for practicing speech acts in Japanese. More specifically, we would like to stress that the following two concepts should rigorously taught in advanced Japanese language teaching: (1) what to say, and (2) how to say it. The “What to say” aspect suggests the use of formulaic expressions, and non-lexical tokens of particular prefacing words (such as *a*, and *e*), and discourse markers (*de* for example). The “How to say it” aspect suggests the uses of expressions for showing hesitation and consideration to the interlocutor within recurring patterns as communicative strategies.

2. Speech acts as spoken language

Speech Acts are actions performed by the use of utterances to communicate, and they include such acts as: apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request (Yule 1996). The website CARLA (Center for Advanced Research On Language Acquisition by University of Minnesota) has asserted that there is a tendency among second language learners to struggle with speech acts, both understanding the intended meaning communicated by them, and producing them using appropriate language and manners in the target language and culture. Speech acts are deceptively easy; learners may think that merely memorizing and reproducing the language of the target speech act expression is enough. As we will see, speech acts are a little more complex than that; it should be treated with a wider perspective. CARLA researchers have found that classroom instruction on speech acts can be beneficial for learners to improve their performance of speech acts, leading to more problem-free interactions with native speakers.

It is because of the interactional nature of speech acts, that learners find them so challenging. Interactions with others are by their nature two-way speaking behaviors (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project 1999). In a more unidirectional situation, such as making a presentation, or giving a speech, learners have an easier time in a sense, since they can prepare what to say in advance to certain degree. Speech acts require a more flexible attitude in order to cope with whatever kind of response or reaction comes from the interlocutor. Learners need to

be able to react to the speaking environment appropriately, and to be able to express their understandings of the target culture while they are interacting with their interlocutors.

It is important to note that speech acts belong to spoken language. Chafe (1994) points out that in spoken language, speakers use language in order to cope with the circumstances and their needs in a contextual manner. This means that the speakers need to produce language while paying attention to their circumstances, contexts, and while reacting to their speaking environments-including their interlocutors and their utterances.

Unlike written communication, spoken communication has distinct sets of communicative properties in multiple ways. Spoken communication includes a certain number of intrinsic variables and elements, such as non-lexical tokens, formulaic expressions of phatic communions, tone of voice, speed of utterance, pauses, hesitations, repetitions, overlaps, volume, and so on. These convey not only meaning but feeling and emotion. Despite the best efforts of textbook authors and editors, some of these features can not reproduced or presented in textbook dialogues, which are unavoidably confined to the written format. Because of the limitations inherent in the written word, there are some missing crucial elements and perspectives that we can and should make efforts to include in teaching materials.

3. Analyses of materials

In recent years, the quantity of teaching materials specifically designed for advanced interpersonal speaking skills in Japanese have been on the rise. We would like to analyze some of these materials and discuss some areas where they fall short in teaching spoken language. In an actual speaking environment, there are so many factors to consider. Some of which can be represented using written language and some of which cannot. Elements such as tone or speed of utterance, for example, are difficult, if not impossible to notate in written course materials. Be that as it may, we would like to suggest some possible ways to improve the current curriculum. For the current paper, we would like to show how much more we are able to provide to learners.

For the purposes of our research, we have analyzed materials from four sources, in order to confirm recurring patterns of speech acts. These sources included three textbooks and one website which provides resources for improving speaking skills for advanced speakers of Japanese. The textbooks include, *Formal Expressions for Japanese Interaction* (Inter-University Center 1994), *Live from Tokyo* (Asano 2009), *Advanced Japanese: Communication in Context* (Ishihara and Maeda 2010), and the CARLA Japanese Speech Acts website (Ishihara and Cohen 2010). *Advanced Japanese* and CARLA website share the same audio materials. All of these resources focus on speech acts, and are aimed at learners of advanced spoken Japanese. They are designed to help learners produce natural and authentic interactions for real communication.

We have selected these particular materials for our present research, because the wordings in the dialogues are all the speakers' and are not scripted. The Japanese speakers are given only scenarios without any specific wording or lines. These

recordings provide us with some interesting insights into tendencies or patterns of communication when native-speakers perform speech acts.

The materials are very helpful in the sense that they provide the most natural spoken interactions possible for each speech act. However, there are some missing and unfocused elements in the explanations that accompany the materials. In this study, we would like to point out that the usage of formulaic expressions of phatic communions, non-lexical tokens, and discourse markers are not sufficiently brought into focus as essential elements in performing speech acts.

In the performance of speech acts, there are many formulaic expressions that are essential. Much current research points out that speakers rely heavily on prefabricated formulaic expressions (e.g. Wray and Perkins 2000, Pawley 2009, Corrigan et al. 2009). In speaking, speakers have to deal with multiple tasks concurrently, such as organizing thoughts, producing utterances, and paying attention to social relationships with the interlocutors. It is beneficial for speakers to utilize formulaic expressions as they can lessen their burdens of dealing with multiple tasks concurrently, as engaging ideational operation while talking. As asserted by Pawley and Syder (1983), ‘formulaic expressions create native-like naturalness in speech, and allow for a smooth production of utterances.’ In Japanese language education, also, we would like to emphasize the benefits of using formulaic expressions so that learners can learn and practice how to be native-like.

As for non-lexical tokens, and discourse markers, even though they are actually included in the four teaching materials we examined, their significance and vital roles in speech acts are overlooked. As Hayashi (2009) claims, *e* in Japanese is a non-lexical response token that prefaces questions, responses to assessments, or inquiry. *A* is another non-lexical response token that prefaces many crucial elements for performing speech acts. Also, *de* is an important discourse marker used in some speech acts that marks when a speaker moves or returns to his/her main point in interactions (Schiffrin 1987, Kawaguchi 1992). Both non-lexical tokens and discourse markers signal what the speaker is doing to the interlocutor and thus, they are essential in speech acts.

In order to deal with speech acts in language education, we instructors need to expand our views to have a more holistic view that incorporates the forms and the settings for speech acts. As for forms, we should include formulaic expressions and other non-lexical expressions or discourse markers, and not only the target expressions speech acts. As for the setting or the situation, we should include a greater variety of settings to illustrate range of interaction between native adult speakers.

4. Model curriculum for an advanced speaking course in Japanese

In this section, we would like to introduce and discuss a proposed curriculum that we have designed for an advanced speaking course in Japanese. We have created this curriculum, adding the pragmatic and interactional elements that are usually missing or not being emphasized in most learning materials for speech acts. The primary difference in the curriculum is that it includes the “what to say” and “how to say it” so that learners can perform speech acts more successfully.

The curriculum was created for a ten-week course. However, by adding or subtracting the number of speech acts, it can easily be adjusted to accommodate longer or shorter courses. The sample curriculum has three components: Stage One, Two, and Three: Stage One is for weeks one and two; Stage Two for weeks three to nine, and Stage Three for week ten. Stage One introduces key concepts for the course, and provides general key elements for interactions in Japanese. This stage also includes some simple speaking practices as warm-ups and preparatory activities for the next stage. Stage Two is the time for learners to practice actual speech acts using the key elements from Stage One. Stage Three is the final stage for learners to integrate all knowledge and information from the earlier stages. Most of the traditional materials only deal with Stage Two contents, the very part of the speech acts. However, we would like to emphasize Stage One as the critical foundation-building element in this string of speech act instruction, because it provides the key concepts and key expressions.

Table 1: Weekly schedule for ten-week course

week	content of class	target expressions
W1	Introduction - Speech acts, formulaic expressions	<i>a</i> , and all
W2	Phatic communions - Meeting people, leave taking	<i>a</i> , <i>ano</i> , <i>e</i>
W3	Expressing gratitude - Gift giving/receiving	<i>a</i> , <i>aa</i>
W4	Giving / responding to multiple complements	<i>a</i> , <i>ano</i> , <i>e</i>
W5	Making a request	<i>a</i> , <i>ano</i> , <i>jitsuwa</i> , <i>de</i>
W6	Accepting / refusing a request	<i>a</i> , <i>ano</i> , <i>e</i> , <i>hontooni</i>
W7	Discussing the terms of a request	<i>a</i> , <i>ano</i> , <i>aa</i> , <i>jitsuwa</i>
W8	Offering help	<i>a</i> , <i>ano</i>
W9	Accepting / declining an offer	<i>a</i> , <i>aa</i> , <i>hontooni</i>
W10	Making a request to write a letter of recommendation and having expanded conversations	<i>a</i> , <i>ano</i> , <i>jitsuwa</i> , <i>de</i>

Week one is for the introduction of speech acts and formulaic expressions. During this first stage, for the actual practices, we ask learners to use a non-lexical token *a* in order to have effective and native-like interactions. Week two is practicing for greetings as phatic communions. The practice situations include meeting people and leave taking. Again, the usage of *a* is emphasized for these tasks. Learners acquire basic expressions and strategies during these weeks. They are expected to utilize the learned phatic communions in the next stage exercises.

Stage Two is for actual speech acts, based on the knowledge imparted during Stage One. During weeks three through nine, learners will practice different kinds of speech acts as advanced speakers, using non-lexical tokens (*a*, *aa*, *e*, and so on) and discourse markers (*de* and others.) We put speech acts in order, from simple or basic to more advanced. Expressing gratitude in week three, for example, can be used with some

other speech acts, such as responding to complements, after making a request, and accepting offers.

Stage Three is for wrapping up activities, which integrate all the tasks learners have learned up until week nine. We suggest the task of meeting a learner's instructor, making a request to write a letter of recommendation, and having expanded conversation with him/her. This is because it is the most authentic and practical for learners, who have the distinct possibility of encountering such a situation sometime in the future.

5. Some details for the curriculum

This section takes a more detailed look at the curriculum. Stage One lays the foundation for the course, introducing some basic linguistic concepts, and some basic strategies for performing speech acts in Japanese.

Among the basic linguistic concepts introduced in this course are functions of language, types of communications, and phatic communions. At the outset, the course will clarify the functions of language in general, in order to broaden learners' concepts regarding the uses and goals of language. Even though the field of linguistics identifies more than two functions, the proposed course is for language learners, hence it is only necessary to focus on two functions: ideational formation and interaction. In other words, language can be used not only to convey information, but also in order to establish and maintain social relationships with interlocutors through interaction, which is crucial for performing speech acts.

Two types of communications are also introduced during Stage One: presentational and interactional communication. The purpose of the course is interpersonal communication, and speech acts. As speech acts are performed within actual interactions, the course also places emphasis on phatic communions so that learners are able to have a holistic picture for each speech act. Speech acts do not happen in isolation but with opening and closure of interactions. In the opening and closure of interactions, phatic communions are observed. Along with these introductions, the benefits of using formulaic expressions of phatic communions should be explicated.

In terms of basic strategies, we put emphasis on the "what to say" and "how to say it." The "what to say" aspect introduces the use of non-lexical tokens as a part of formulaic expressions for speech acts. The "how to say it" aspect introduces the use of hesitations, and the expressions of consideration towards the interlocutors in order to show politeness and propriety. Some of these elements have already been mentioned in traditional teaching materials. Our curriculum, however, will show the ideal timing of showing hesitation and consideration toward the interlocutors by providing model patterns for speech acts.

In order to visually convey the ideal timing, the proposed curriculum provides tables and color-coded conversation models which graphically show the timing of the key elements of speech acts within some patterns. In this way, the curriculum is able to support learners' comprehension visually. The tables and colored conversation models show how much and how often a speaker will utter non-lexical tokens, express his/her consideration to the interlocutor, as well as the ideal timing for such utterances.

The data shows that a non-lexical token *a* prefaces many important interactional components: such as addressing terms when a speaker is getting the attention of the interlocutor, greetings at the beginning of some interactions, or other speech acts of thanking / apologizing, or providing background information for an invitation, an apology, or a request. The data also shows that *a* is used with other interactional expressions such as *soo desu ka* ‘is that right’, or *ano / anoo* ‘umm’ or ‘well’ in the situation of many speech act contexts. *Ano* or *anoo* is observed when the native speakers hesitate in performing speech acts.

(1) Expressions with *a* in the data

- a* + addressing terms
- a* + greetings
- a* + thanking
- a* + apologizing
- a* + providing background information for an invitation,
an apology, or a request
- a* + *soo desu ka* ‘Is that right?’
- a* + *ano / anoo* ‘umm’ or ‘well’

In the data, *a* is used as an attention getter, a reactive token, just like ‘umm’, ‘uh’, and ‘oh’, depending on the situations. The utterances with *a* mostly appear at the beginning of the turn. This small token makes each utterance very naturally and native-like. Without the token *a*, the utterances would convey different impression; rather abrupt and not polite enough. We should teach this minimum token to help learners benefit from this great effect of making utterances native-like. The traditional teaching materials have not put on emphasizes of the usage of *a*, but highlight the expressions uttered after *a* listed above in (1).

The proposed curriculum also provides a list of useful expressions other than *a* for various essential functions in speech acts contexts. These expressions include discourse markers. Just like *a*, these make utterances native-like if they are used appropriately. These expressions are short and easy to remember, but the effects are great as they make utterances more effective and native-like.

(2) Samples of useful tokens and expressions for the context of speech acts

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>ano, anoo</i> ‘um’, ‘well’ | = showing hesitation |
| <i>e</i> | = showing surprise, or showing hesitation |
| <i>de</i> ‘and then’, ‘and’ | = getting or coming back to the main point |
| <i>jitsuwa</i> ‘actually’ | = getting an attention to the following utterance |

In sum, the “what to say” aspect places emphasis on saying the key elements: non-lexical token such as *a*, and other expressions of discourse markers in order to make utterances for speech acts native-like.

The “how to say it” element in the proposed curriculum provides the procedure of speech acts. The key notion of the procedure is showing consideration to the interlocutor during the performance of speech acts. Culling the data, this study has categorized utterances for showing consideration to the interlocutor by type, as seen in the following table:

(3) Types of utterances for showing consideration to the interlocutor:

- (a) mentioning something about the interlocutors' state and conditions,
- (b) modifying utterances considering the interlocutor's perspective, such as downgrading the imposition of the request by use of certain phrases and pronouncing utterances emphatically,
- (c) uttering something interactional, such as thanking, or apologizing, and
- (d) expressing hesitations to the interlocutors, by saying *ano* 'um', or *a*.

During the performance of speech acts, the native speakers from the data use such expressions listed above with great frequency. Let us take the speech act of making a request as an example. The following table shows the frequency and the timing with which speakers showed consideration to their interlocutors in the data. Using this kind of table, we can indicate when, and how often to show consideration to the interlocutor, and graphically represent to learners in order to reinforce their understanding of the procedure of speech acts. This way, learner can visually comprehend how frequently they need to verbally show consideration to the interlocutors.

Table 2: "How to say it": showing consideration to the interlocutor
 --- The process of making a request

Concerning the interlocutor	Purposes of the utterances	Concerning the speaker
✓	Attention getting	
✓	Asking availability	
✓	Noticing that the speaker has a request	✓
✓	Offering background information for the request	✓
✓	Mentioning the interlocutor's situation	
	Making a request	✓

We have created this table, incorporating strategies from Ishihara and Cohen (2010), that lists the necessary steps in the request-making process, based on actual request-making performances of native speakers. It breaks down the process for 'making a request' step by step, based on what the native speakers are doing. Native speakers actually perform some, or all of these steps shown in this chart before making the actual request. The data reflect the cultural reality that speech acts for making a request do not merely consist of the particular portion where the request is made, but that the pre-'making a request' parts are not only important, but necessary.

The center column lists the order of the procedure for making a request. The left column shows the timing of showing consideration towards the interlocutor. The right column shows when a speaker makes an utterance concerning his/herself. In this

process of making a request, speakers do not start the procedure by talking about their own matters.

In this table, we can see that some of the utterances concern both the interlocutor and the speaker. This is because there is a case where the main part of the utterance concerns the interlocutor's needs, but the speaker still expresses consideration to the interlocutor by starting with *ano* 'umm' to show hesitation. By adding the "what to say" data from Table 1 into Table 2, we get the following table.

Table 3: "What to say" + "How to say it": for making a request

Concerning the interlocutor	Purposes of the utterances	Expressions	Concerning the speaker
✓	Attention getting	<i>a</i>	
✓	Asking availability	<i>a</i>	
✓	Notifying that the speaker has a request	<i>ano, jitsuwa</i>	✓
✓	Offering background information for the request	<i>ano, de</i>	✓
✓	Mentioning the interlocutor's situation	<i>ano</i>	
	Making a request		✓

The third column of expressions shows what kind of actual expressions are appropriate to use in the process. By utilizing *a*, *ano*, or *de* at the right moment as indicated in the table above, learners will have smoother and more effective speech acts within this model procedure.

The table below describes what the native speakers do after making a request speech act. This is the procedure for after the interlocutor's acceptance of the request. It shows "what to say" and "how to say it" after the process of Table 3. Table 4 does not provide the fourth column as the focus after making a request is all towards the interlocutor.

Table 4: “What to say” + “How to say it”
 after the interlocutor’s acceptance of the request

Concerning the interlocutor	Purposes of the utterances	Expressions
✓	Confirming the acceptance	<i>a, or e</i>
✓	Expressing a gratitude	<i>aa</i>
✓	Apologizing for taking time	<i>aa, hontooni</i>
✓	Offering compensation in the future	<i>ano</i>
✓	Leave taking	<i>a, jaa</i>

The above table is important as it shows what to do after making a request. It reveals that native speakers, following these steps, continue to utter even after making his/her request. This is truer in cases where the request is more burdensome to the interlocutor or the social distance between the speaker and the interlocutor is greater. This means that if a request is a small one and would not be a burden to the interlocutor, native speakers skip some steps. The speech act of offering compensation in the future is also performed depending on the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor. Together with Table 3, Table 4 shows that there are pre- and post-speech act utterances.

Exercising phatic communions are helpful to teach learners to have a wider perspective of interaction. Many phatic communions are formulaic expressions, and appear especially at the beginning and at the end of encounters. Through practicing phatic communions, learners will get used to the ideas of utilizing set phrases or expressions at the appropriate moment, rather than trying to create a new utterance from scratch.

After the above key concepts and strategies are introduced, learners will start to practice speaking in week two. The following is what to practice using the proposed formulaic and other useful expressions with a variety of settings or situations. The focus here is to practice how to greet people in both encountering and taking leave situations. In order to prepare learners to function as mature speakers, it is recommended to provide a wider variety of settings. So, for meeting people, the curriculum should include more than everyday encounters at school, but also meetings with acquaintances after one week or one month, and meeting with their former teachers. For leave-taking, again the curriculum should not just include daily settings, but also situations where the speaker has not seen the interlocutor for a while. It is also important to teach advanced learners that *sayonara*, unlike *goodbye* in English, is not very versatile, and that there are some restrictions for usage governed by the relationship with the interlocutor, and the situation. By providing a wide variety of situations, learners will be ready for authentic situations.

(4) With more extended situations for phatic communions

Task 1: Meeting people

Situation 1. With classmates, teachers, friends (everyday)

Situation 2. With acquaintances (one week after)

Situation 3. With former teachers (after graduation, some years later)

Task 2: Leave taking

Situation 1. With classmates, teachers, friends (everyday)

Situation 2. When speaker does not see interlocutor for a while

Situation 3. When interlocutor is a sick person

Starting from week three, learners will start to practice a variety of speech acts. Throughout the course, adding color to the sample dialog will be beneficial by offering a visual aid to learners. The color-coding method colors the lines of dialog depending on the nature of the utterances. The following is a sample speech act of making a request during week five. In this conversation, K makes a request to Y. The yellow parts indicate where K shows consideration to Y. The gray parts show where K provides background information for the request, and the blue parts are actual speech act. The data shows the structure of speech acts for making a request have a common pattern: first, the requester expresses consideration to the requestee. These are the yellow highlighted parts shown below. Then, the requester provides background information and reasons for the request, which are shown in the grey shaded parts. Finally, the requester gets into the actual request utterance which are highlighted in blue. Note that even after the requestee accepts the request, the speaker keeps producing utterances that convey her consideration towards the interlocutor's state, expressing gratitude and apologies, and even offering compensation in the future. The conversation is in English translation with key expressions in Japanese.

(5) K is making a request to Y (Yamada senpai) from Ishihara and Cohen 2010 Rq11-2

1. K: A, Yamada senpai.
2. Y: Yeah?
3. K: A, do you have a second?
4. Y: Sure.
5. K: ANO, I JITSUWA 'actually' have something to ask you.
6. Y: Okay.
7. K: ANO, you are busy the day after tomorrow, aren't you?
8. Y: The day after tomorrow? Well, I'm not sure yet.
9. K: ANO, JITSUWA 'actually',
10. Y: Maybe I'll play mahjong with my friends.
11. K: Is that so, AA is that so, JITSUWA there is a movie I really want to go to,
12. Y: A movie?
13. K: Yes, DE 'and' a friend of mine gave me a ticket.
14. Y: I see, with your boyfriend?
15. K: No, not with him.
16. Y: I see.
17. K: ANO, DE 'so', I really want to go to see the movie ANO, with my friend, and
18. I was wondering if you could ANO, cover for me the day after tomorrow.
19. Y: I see, okay, then I'll cover for you, my dear clubmate.
20. K: A, really? ANO, I'm sorry. ANO, I'll cover for you ANO, when you're busy.
21. Y: I'll count on you in that case.

22. K: Yes, **thank you.**
23. Y: Yeah.

In this excerpt, the non-lexical tokens (*a* and *ano*) and discourse markers (*jitsuwa* and *de*) appear throughout the conversation. These expressions come at the beginning of utterances. *A* is used at the beginning of the procedure of making a request conversation (lines 1 and 3). *Ano* is used when K was getting a pre-commitment from Y in line 5. In line 9, K uses *Ano jitsuwa* when she begins to provide background information, or reasons for making a request. K utilizes *de* in order to come back to the points she wants to make (lines 13 and 17) after Y's interruptions (line 12 and 16). Also, K uses *ano* multiple times (line 20) when she offers compensation in the future.

Having this pattern of pre-speech act and post-speech act is not specific to this particular conversation but common with many other speech acts found in the teaching materials we mentioned earlier. Speech acts in Japanese are not just the part of target speech act but they include pre-speech act and post-speech act utterances. We would like to point out that there are consistent tendencies in performing speech acts in Japanese. If we use this color-coding method, the procedure is visually clearer. It shows amount of such utterances and timing of them within the pattern for the speech act.

Practicing this current pattern with a variety of speech acts will prepare learners to perform the final task of the curriculum in week ten at the Stage Three. Learners will have opportunities to make use of the material they have practiced in a reinforced setting. The task for the wrap-up activity is meeting a Japanese learner's instructor, making a request to write a letter of recommendation, and having an expanded conversation with him/her. Learners are ready to use non-lexical tokens, discourse markers, phatic expressions, with pre- and post-speech act utterances. This final activity will make learners ready to encounter such a situation sometime in the future.

6. Summary

This paper, adapting pragmatic views, proposed a model curriculum for an advanced Japanese language course for speech acts. The ten-week curriculum focuses on "what to say" and "how to say it," which the published materials tend to overlook. By examining the data found in some advanced speaking teaching materials, this study showed that there are some crucial elements Japanese instructors should include: (1) the use of non-lexical tokens and discourse markers, such as *a*, *ano*, *de*, and (2) the use of pre-, and post-speech act utterances. This paper points out that merely learning linguistic forms in speech acts is not enough, and that learners should study the pragmatics of how these forms are used in regular patterns by mature speakers of Japanese.

The step-by-step approach found in our curriculum will prepare learners to perform smoother speech acts in Japanese settings outside of classroom. We hope the proposed curriculum will contribute practical course ideas to the body of advanced speaking education for Japanese language education.

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