Creating Japanese Political Corpus from Local Assembly Minutes of 47 Prefectures

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Abstract

This paper describes a Japanese political corpus created for interdisciplinary political research. The corpus contains the local assembly minutes of 47 prefectures from April 2011 to March 2015. This four-year period coincides with the term of office for assembly members in most autonomies. We analyze statistical data, such as the number of speakers, characters, and words, to clarify the characteristics of local assembly minutes. In addition, we identify problems associated with the different web services used by the autonomies to make the minutes available to the public.

1 Introduction

Many local autonomies in Japan provide access to various political documents on their websites. Such documents include basic urban development plans, local assembly minutes, and ordinances. The information obtained through the Internet can be used to compare the autonomies and identify characteristics of individual autonomies. Local assembly minutes are an especially important source of such characteristics because they include various representatives’ positions on policies enforced by the autonomy. Some studies that compare local assembly minutes have been conducted by political scientists (Tadashi Masuda, 2012). However, some issues arise with the analysis of local assembly minutes that should be addressed. One such issue is the different ways used to release the minutes to the public. There are 47 prefectures and several cities, towns, and villages in Japan, and local assembly minutes are made available in a variety of ways. Therefore, collecting local assembly minutes and unifying the format of the collected data for analysis on a national level is cost inefficient. In this paper, we attempt to create a corpus of local assembly minutes in Japan. This corpus realizes some research findings from NLP and sociolinguistics. Our objective is to develop a corpus that can be used for a broader range of interdisciplinary research.

We collected opinions from political scientists and economists to identify their research requirements with regard to local assembly minutes. It became clear that the scope of minutes must be controlled to conduct a strict comparative analysis. Specifically, the following requirements were identified as important: i) the periods must be identical and ii) autonomies must be classified as prefectures and other small regions such as cities, towns, and villages. For the first requirement, we collected minutes from assemblies held between April 2011 and March 2015. This four-year period is consistent with the term...
of office for assembly members’ in most autonomies. To satisfy the second requirement, we collected assembly minutes from all 47 prefectures.

The objectives of this study are as follows: i) collect local assembly minutes (each of which have different formats) from all 47 prefectural assemblies, ii) obtain fundamental statistical data from the collected text data, and iii) extract political keywords using term frequency-inverse document frequency (tf-idf) weighting for a preliminary comparative analysis.

2 Collecting local assembly minutes

2.1 Outline

In this study, our primary purpose was to collect minutes of assemblies between April 2011 and March 2015 from all 47 prefectures. In the assembly minutes, all utterances are transcribed and recorded. Thus the assembly minutes will reveal policy planning and consensus building processes. As a result, assembly minutes are valuable documents for political analysis.

Local autonomies are independent, and the methods used to release assembly minutes differ, thus making the collection of assembly minutes. For example, a customized web crawler will be required for each autonomy.

The variety of text formats presents another difficulty. We need to extract assembly members’ utterance from crawled web documents. Utterance attribute information, such as the speaker’s name and the meeting’s name and date must also be extracted. Thus, the format must be considered for each autonomy.

In the next section, we describe the procedure used to extract assembly minutes and create the corpus.

2.2 Procedure

As shown in Table 1, there are four types of primary web services used to release assembly minutes, and 42 of the 47 prefectures adopt one of these four primary web services. We prepare a web crawler for the primary four web services. However, many local autonomies have partially customized these services. We use semi-automated crawling depending on how the local autonomies release such documents. The remaining five prefectures have developed unique services, and assemblies that use such unique systems are downloaded using semi-automated crawling.

| Name of Web service | Number of prefectures |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Discuss             | 18                    |
| DB-Search           | 16                    |
| VOICES              | 6                     |
| Sophia              | 2                     |
| Others              | 5                     |

Table 2 lists the database items for the corpus. We automatically divided the raw into database items. Below, we illustrate the method used to input text into the database after collecting the local assembly minutes. First, we designed a web crawler to automatically extract each value, such as “Year,” “Month,” “Day,” and “Name of meeting,” from a document. The following figure illustrates the extraction of “Name of meeting”.

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Table 2: Corpus database items.

| Number | Name of item          | Explanation                                                   |
|--------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1      | Reference number      | Unique key for each utterance.                                |
| 2      | Name of prefectures  | Name of autonomy.                                             |
| 3      | Year                  | Year the meeting was held.                                    |
| 4      | Month                 | Month the meeting was held.                                   |
| 5      | Day                   | The day of the meeting.                                       |
| 6      | Name of meeting      | The name that includes the meeting type, volume and number.   |
| 7      | Name of speaker      | The name often includes a title such as “Mr.”, “Pres.”, and “Chair.” |
| 8      | Utterance             | The utterance is split by either “period” or “new line mark”. |
| 9      | Other                 | Other means outside the field of the utterance.              |

The description example of name of the meeting

Example1

平成25年度栃木県議会第320回通常会議,09月17日-01号

Example2

平成25年　Year
第1回 沖縄県議会（定例会）　Name of meeting
第1号 2月26日　Month Day

Second, we extract speakers’ names and their utterances from the body text of the minutes using a post-processing program. Then, the extracted values are registered to the database.

The example of body text of assembly minutes

The body text of the assembly minutes does not intend to process by the program. The delimiters between speaker name and utterance differ among autonomies, with some of them having no delimiter. Some vary their delimiters arbitrarily. In such cases, we split the text manually.

3 Collecting minutes

In this section, we first clarify the characteristics of each prefecture by counting the words of the local assembly minutes. Then, we extract political keywords using the tfidf weighting method for a preliminary study of comparative analysis.

3.1 Fundamental statistical data

Here, we show fundamental statistical data of the collected text data. Table 3 shows an overview of the minutes from the 47 prefectures. We explain two main categories in Table 3, i.e. “Prefectures” and “Speakers.” The “Prefectures” column includes the web service name, the numbers of speakers, characters, words, and different words. The “Speakers” column includes the maximum number of words, minimum number of words, and the average number of words for words and characters. Hence, we explain the definition of “words” for counting. The Japanese language does not use spaces to divide

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sentences into words. Therefore, we must write a Japanese sentence with some space between words or grammatical units prior to counting words. If we count either the number of words or different words, the result changes according to the word division method. The results of a word division method differ depending on the employed morphological analysis tool and dictionary. In Table 3, we use MeCab (Kudo et al., 2004) in combination with the IPAdic dictionary.

First, we focus on the minimum and maximum number of “speakers.” Speakers includes local assembly members, a governor, and someone acting on behalf of the governor. In Table 3, the minimum and maximum number of “speakers” is 61 (Akita) and 1,091 (Saitama), respectively. In contrast, according to the “Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications” website published in March 2012, the minimum and maximum number of “local assembly members” is 35 (Fukui and Tottori) and 125 (Tokyo), respectively. Although speakers include a governor and someone acting on behalf of the governor, the number of “speakers” was larger than that of assembly members because speaker’s names were spelled in several different ways. For example, for the “Toda” local assembly member, four different representations of the name were found.

Second, we focus on minimum and maximum number of characters. In Table 3, the minimum and maximum number of characters is 2,191,589 (Yamagata) and 19,389,614 (Nagano), respectively. In prefectures having too many characters, the collected text includes non-utterances such as “symbols,” “table of contents,” “description of circumstance,” and “supporting data.” In particular, the size of “supporting data” is the largest one among non-utterances, and it is difficult to determine whether a sentence is an utterance.

Finally, we summarize the problems associated with creating a Japanese political corpus from local assembly minutes. Using the fundamental statistical data, we could not completely extract both “Name of speakers” and “Utterances.” We faced two problems: i) a speaker’s name was spelled in several different ways and ii) it was difficult to determine whether a sentence is an utterance.

3.2 Extracting political keywords using tf-idf

In this section, we attempt to detect specific political keywords from each prefecture. This is a pilot political comparative analysis study.

First, utterances in the minutes are divided into words by morphological analysis. We use MeCab (ipadic-NEologd) for this analysis. The target part of speech is a noun. We exclude “noun-dependent,” “noun-number,” “noun-pronoun,” “noun-suffix” and “noun-proper noun-person’s name” forms.

Then specific political words are calculated by applying tf-idf weighting. The TF is a term’s occurrence within the minutes of each prefecture divided by the number of words in the minutes. The TF of term \( t \) for document \( d \), where \( d \) denotes minutes, is expressed as follows. The minutes contain a significant number of words; therefore, we use a logarithmic value for \( tf \).

\[
\text{tf}(t,d) = \log \frac{\text{count}(t), t \in d}{|d|}
\]

A term’s DF is the number of documents (i.e., prefecture minutes) containing that term divided by the total number of documents. The DF of \( t \) in \( N \) documents is expressed as follows. In this case, \( N \) becomes 47.

\[
\text{df}(t, N) = |\{d_i : t \in d_i, i = 1..N\}|
\]

The multiplied value of TF and IDF is the score of the word.

Table 4 shows the top three words obtained using tf-idf weighting. We find many political keywords spoken in the assembly. For example “HAC,” the first-ranked word in Hokkaido Prefecture, is a regional airline company whose largest shareholder is the prefecture. “Daisetsu Ribaa-netto,” the third word in Iwate Prefecture, is an NPO that is known to commit crimes using subsidized money. “Shimane Japanese beef cattle,” the second word in Shimane prefecture, is a bland of Japanese beef cattle which is promoted by this prefecture.

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1https://osdn.jp/projects/ipadic/
2http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000151136.pdf
Table 3: Overview of collecting minutes of 47 prefectures in Japan.

| Prefecture | Speakers |
|------------|----------|
| Hokkaido   | DB-Search |
| Aomori     | VOICES   |
| Iwate      | Other    |
| Miyagi     | Other    |
| Akita      | Other    |
| Yamagata   | Other    |
| Fukushima  | Other    |
| Ishikawa   | Other    |
| Fukuoka    | Other    |
| Nagano     | Other    |
| Gunma      | Other    |
| Saitama    | Other    |
| Chiba      | Other    |
| Tokyo      | Other    |
| Kanagawa   | Other    |
| Niigata    | Other    |
| Toyama     | Other    |
| Ishikawa   | Other    |
| Fukuoka    | Other    |
| Yamanashi  | Other    |
| Nagano     | Other    |
| Gunma      | Other    |
| Shiga      | Other    |
| Kyoto      | Other    |
| Osaka      | Other    |
| Hyogo      | Other    |
| Ibaraki    | Other    |
| Wakayama   | Other    |
| Tottori    | Other    |
| Shimane    | Other    |
| Okayama    | Other    |
| Hiroshima  | Other    |
| Shizuoka   | Other    |
| Takamatsu  | Other    |
| Kagawa     | Other    |
| Ehime      | Other    |
| Kochi      | Other    |
| Fukuoka    | Other    |
| Saga       | Other    |
| Nagasaki   | Other    |
| Kumamoto   | Other    |
| Oita       | Other    |
| Miyazaki   | Other    |
| Kagoshima  | Other    |
| Okinawa    | Other    |

| Total      | Name of service | Number of speakers | Number of characters | Number of words | Number of different words | Max | Min | Ave | Ave |
|------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 11,853     | VOICES         | 305,889,642       | 191,246,307         |               |                          | 38  | 38  | 38  | 38  |

There are many compound words in Japanese political words. For example “zaisei-kaikaku (fiscal reform)” comprises two nouns, i.e., “zaisei (fiscal)” and “kaikaku (reform).” Therefore, we combine continuous nouns and attempt to handle them as a single compound word. Table 5 shows the top three compound words obtained by tf-idf weighting. We find many titles of the officer, i.e., “Mr.” and “Prefectural Assembly”. The title of an officer is typically derived from political agendas. For example, the third words in Aomori Prefecture are “Director-General of the Tourism and International Strategy Bureau.” The first words in Gunma Prefecture are “Director-General of the Transportation Infrastructure Department.” The first words in Shizuoka Prefecture are “Director-General of the Transportation Infrastructure Department.” From these examples, we can identify the primary political subjects in each prefecture at that time.

However, this methods has some drawbacks such as incorrect compounding. We perform preliminary comparative analysis of political keywords using a simple tf-idf-weighting method. Further study will be required, e.g. statistical analysis such as corresponding analysis and machine learning methods.

4 Related work

Recently, some studies have explored document analysis, sentiment analysis, and political debates with respect to politics (Yano et al., 2009; Chambers et al., 2015; Cano-Basea et al., 2016). These studies
used various documents as political corpora. In this section, we describe corpora that include political information.

Political document analysis has employed various document collections on the web, such as blogs (Yano et al., 2009). Probabilistic models have been proposed to generate blog posts and comments jointly within a blog site. Hassanali et al. (2010) proposed a technique to automatically tag political blog posts using support vector machines and named entity recognition. They used blog documents as a political debates corpus comprises 20 debates that took place between May 2011 and February 2012. Iyery et al. (2014) applied a recursive neural network framework to detect political positions. They performed experiments using a dataset of Congressional debates and an original political dataset as a corpus. As mentioned above, political corpora typically comprise blogs, Twitter data, newspaper articles, and original political datasets. Therefore, a political corpus constructed from local assembly minutes is a novel and valuable source of political information.

| Number | Prefecture | 2 | 3 |
|--------|------------|---|---|
| 1 | Hokkaido | HAC | Shigatani |
| 2 | Aomori | Mutsu bay | NOVA |
| 3 | Iwate | Uchimaru, Morioka city | Odashima |
| 4 | Miyagi | Teizan canal | Sendai beef |
| 5 | Akita | Kita-akita city | Ani Brue Farm |
| 6 | Yamagata | Mogami-oguni River | Papan state |
| 7 | Fukushima | total inspection | South Aizu |
| 8 | Ibaraki | National Athletic Meet at Ibaraki | Tsukuba city |
| 9 | Tochigi | Tochimaru-ku | Haga district |
| 10 | Gunma | Gunna’s | Gunma Prefectural Assembly |
| 11 | Saitama | Sasho-no-kai | Saitama red cross hospital |
| 12 | Chiba | Lake Inba | Hokuso railway |
| 13 | Tokyo | metropolitan government-owned land | an honorary citizen of Tokyo |
| 14 | Kanagawa | Sagami Longitudinal Expressway | KAST |
| 15 | Niigata | Shibata | Shihata city |
| 16 | Toyama | members of Toyama Prefectural Assembly | kinokio |
| 17 | Ishikawa | Noto Satoyama Kaido | Noto Railway |
| 18 | Fukui | Kuzuryu River | Asuwagawa Dam |
| 19 | Yamashita | Minami-Alps city | Kofu castle |
| 20 | Nagano | Asakawa Dam | Matsumoto Airport |
| 21 | Gifu | Mirai hall | Uchigatani |
| 22 | Shizuoka | Granship | Yazu fishing port |
| 23 | Aichi | Aichi Triennale | Linimo |
| 24 | Mie | Shinsui-Mie | AMIC |
| 25 | Shiga | Omi Ohatsu bridge | Mother Lake |
| 26 | Kyoto | Kyoto Stadium | Muku city |
| 27 | Osaka | OTK | Neyaawaga |
| 28 | Hyogo | Hometown, Hyogo | Muku River |
| 29 | Nara | Nara City Hospital | Yamatotakada city |
| 30 | Wakayama | Nisaka Yoshinobu | Ohana Masahiro |
| 31 | Tottori | Lake Koyama-ike | Kurahoshi city |
| 32 | Shimane | Sanko line | Shimane Japanese beef cattle |
| 33 | Okayama | Lake Kojima | Okayama marathon |
| 34 | Hiroshima | Yuzuki Hidehiko | Kaia town |
| 35 | Yamaguchi | Suo-oshima Island | Minaiji-Nakanoko Port |
| 36 | Tokushima | Mima city | Awa city |
| 37 | Kagawa | rare sugar | Kagawa Canal |
| 38 | Ehime | Micari | whole |
| 39 | Kochi | Kochi Junior College | Eikoku-tei Temple |
| 40 | Fukui | Mount Hiko | Yabe River system |
| 41 | Saga | Jobara River | Ogi city |
| 42 | Nagasaki | Saikai city | Tosa city |
| 43 | Kumamoto | Japanese brown cattle | Kumamoto urban area |
| 44 | Oita | Usa city | Hot Spring Prefecture Oita |
| 45 | Miyazaki | Horoshima Port | Miyazaki Hospital |
| 46 | Kagoshima | Matsusaka | Dolophine Port |
| 47 | Okinawa | Shinojishima Airport | Nakagusuku Bay |

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5 Conclusion

In this paper, we described a Japanese political corpus constructed from the local assembly minutes of 47 prefectures collected over four years (April 2011 to March 2015), which represents a full term of office for assembly members in most autonomies. We collected local assembly minutes from all 47 prefectoral assemblies, obtained fundamental statistical data from the collected text data, and extracted political keywords using a tf-idf weighting method.

As a result, we confirmed the following. First, we could collect 47 local assembly minutes for four years. Second, we could not completely divide the body text into “Name of speakers” and “Utterance” because the delimiter differs depending on the various autonomies. Finally, we demonstrated that the system can automatically extract political keyword using a tf-idf weighting method. We believe that this new corpus will be useful for comparative studies of local politics.

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| Number | Prefecture | 1                                      | 2                                      | 3                                      |
|--------|------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1      | Hokkaido   | Prefectural residents' life             | Tomari power plant                     |                                        |
| 2      | Aomori     | District Administration Office          | Director-General of the Department of  | Director-General of the Tourism and    |
|        |            |                                        | Planning and Policies                  | International Strategy Bureau          |
| 3      | Iwate      | rules of Iwate Prefectural Assembly    | big earthquake and tsunami             | adding                                 |
| 4      | Miyagi     | ecological life, agriculture, forestry, | the -th Miyagi                        | rules of Miyagi                        |
|        |            | and fisheries                         | Prefectural Assembly                  |                                        |
| 5      | Akita      | Chairperson of the Education and       | Kitakaita city                         | hometown Akita cheering up plan        |
|        |            | Public Safety Committee                |                                        |                                        |
| 6      | Yamagata   | within the committee’s jurisdiction     | general branch office                  | Yamagata prefecture general accounting |
|        |            |                                        |                                        | supplementary budget for - fiscal year |
| 7      | Fukushima  | to hand out another paper              | the Superintendent of Education        | a report submitted by Chairperson      |
| 8      | Ibaraki    | rules of Ibaraki                       | Mr. Onodera, the Superintendent of     | Ibaraki Liberal Democratic Party       |
|        |            | Prefectural Assembly                   | Education, takes the rostrum.          | Branch                                 |
| 9      | Tochigi    | rules of Tochigi                       | Prefectural Assembly                   | Tochigi                                |
|        |            | Prefectural Assembly                   |                                        | Genki Plan                             |
| 10     | Gunma      | Director-General of the Life            | Director-General of the Citizens       | maximum time limit for the speech      |
|        |            | Culture and Sports Department          | and Cultural Affairs Department        |                                        |
| 11     | Saitama    | proposed bills                         | Director-General of the Department of | Manager of the Sewerage Works          |
|        |            |                                        | Crisis Management and Disaster Prevention |                                        |
| 12     | Chiba      | Hokkaido Railway                       | Eastern Chiba Medical Center           | Kitte Chiba Road                       |
| 13     | Tokyo      | following idea                         | examination of a petition              | to meet an objective                   |
| 14     | Kanagawa   | emergency                              | Director-General of the Public Health  | Chairperson of Kanagawa                |
|        |            | financial measures                     | and Welfare Bureau                     | Prefectural Assembly                   |
| 15     | Nagano     | the -th proposed bill                  | members of Nagano                      | Aichi Prefecture                        |
|        |            |                                        |                                        | general administrative work            |
| 16     | Toyama     | Chairperson of Toyama                  | Prefectural Assembly                   | Aichi of Nagoya                        |
|        |            | Prefectural Assembly                   |                                        | priority reform program                |
| 17     | Ishikawa   | Noto Satsuyama Kado                    | Noto Railway                           | Shizuoka Prefectural Audit Commissioners |
|        |            |                                        |                                        |                                        |
| 18     | Fukuoka    | Energy Research & Development          | examination report of a petition       | Yoshokuchi                             |
|        |            | Centralization Plan                    |                                        |                                        |
| 19     | Yamashita  | Chairperson of Yamashita               | rules of Yamashita Prefectural Assembly| minutes speech                         |
|        |            | Prefectural Assembly                   |                                        |                                        |
| 20     | Nagano     | to declare the agenda                  | general administrative work            | to declare the schedule                |
| 21     | Gifu       | country Gifu                           | supplementing                          |                                        |
|        |            |                                        | of the budget                          |                                        |
| 22     | Shizuoka   | Director-General of the Transportation | Director-General of the Economy,      |                                        |
|        |            | Infrastructure Department              | Trade and Industry Department          |                                        |
| 23     | Aichi      | Aichi and Nagoya                       | priority reform program                |                                        |
|        |            |                                        |                                        |                                        |
| 24     | Mie        | visions of citizens power              | Shimizu-Mie                            |                                        |
|        |            |                                        |                                        | Higashi-ku                            |
| 25     | Shiga      | Director-General of the Department of  | Director-General of the Department of  | Chairperson of Shiga                   |
|        |            | Public Works and Transportation        | Lake Biwa and the Environment          | Prefectural Assembly                   |
| 26     | Kyoto      | festivals and events                   | kissing touch                          | management of the commission in general |
|        |            |                                        |                                        |                                        |
| 27     | Osaka      | Osaka Prefectural Government Sakushima Building | made in Osaka                          | OTK                                    |
| 28     | Hyogo      | Governor Ito takes the rostrum.        | Kenmin Rengo Prefectural Assembly     |                                        |
|        |            |                                        | members                                | Hyogo Development                      |
| 29     | Nara       | Prefectural Nara Hospital              | bills for the year                     | Mount Wakakusa                         |
| 30     | Wakayama   | Mr. Yoshinobu Nisaka                   | Mr. Yoshinobu Nisaka, Governor         |                                        |
| 31     | Tottori    | Kurayoshi city                         | Mango Expo                            | Lake Koyama-ike                        |
| 32     | Shimane    | Minshu-Kenmin Club                     | Mr. Mishima, a member of a Prefectural Assembly | the agenda                   |
| 33     | Okayama    | Director-General of the Department of  | Mr. Kenzo                              |                                        |
|        |            | Environment and Culture                |                                        |                                        |
| 34     | Hiroshima  | Mr. Hidehiko Yuzaki, Governor           | bills brought together for discussion  | explainer in charge                    |
| 35     | Yamaguchi  | renewable counselor                    | Magazine Industrial Strategy Promotion Plan |                                        |
|        |            |                                        |                                        |                                        |
| 36     | Tokushima  | full name                              | be unique to Tokushima                 |                                        |
|        |            |                                        |                                        | A member attends the Prefectural Assembly. |
| 37     | Kagawa     | rare sugar                             | Mr. Keizo Hamada, Governor             | Kagawa Prefectural Assembly Minutes    |
| 38     | Ehime      | passage and verdict                    | Ehime National Sports Festival         |                                        |
|        |            |                                        | everyone raise their hands (no agreement) |                                        |
| 39     | Kochi      | opinion and poll                       | Director-General of the Community      | Kochi Junior College                   |
|        |            |                                        | Welfare and Services Department       |                                        |
| 40     | Fukuoka    | within the -th bill’s jurisdiction     | bills brought together for discussion  | Chikusho area                          |
|        |            |                                        |                                        |                                        |
| 41     | Saga       | Chairperson of Saga                    | Director-General of the Transport Policy Department | Director of the Health and Welfare Headquarters |
|        |            | Prefectural Assembly                   |                                        |                                        |
| 42     | Nagasaki   | Chairperson of the committee           | Mr. Magome, a committee member         | Mr. Yamaguchi, Chairperson              |
| 43     | Kaminoto   | Chairperson of Kaminoto                | rules of Kaminoto                      |                                        |
|        |            | Prefectural Assembly                   | Prefectural Assembly                   |                                        |
| 44     | Oita       | Mr. Nonaka, the Superintendent of      | rules of Oita                          |                                        |
|        |            | Education                               | Prefectural Assembly                   |                                        |
| 45     | Miyazaki   | bills proposed by a member of a        | Hoshimotai Port                        |                                        |
|        |            | Prefectural Assembly                   |                                        |                                        |
| 46     | Kagoshima  | Kagoshima                               | Matsuura                               | order of votes                         |
| 47     | Okinawa    | We would like to take a break           | Shimojishima Airport                   |                                        |