【Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S)】

Studies on the mechanism by which narrative manifests itself in terms of the relationship between language and music for the purpose of constructing its development model in the human history

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Purpose and Background of the Research

●Outline of the Research

We can regard storytelling as an evolved survival strategy for humankind. Narrative generation is a universal human capacity, sharing personal experiences as social memory. In today's society, a new, global digital environment has emerged. It has seemed that this situation would lead to a better understanding of others and the elimination of prejudice and discrimination. However, on the contrary, we are now in an age of intolerance. When it comes to our world, in which we have connected with others in order to create communities through narratives or stories, how it will change in the future? In order to grasp the reality of this global society, an alternative framework to the conventional analytical model is needed. This research aims to challenge the fundamental question of what narrative (or story) means to humans and to establish a new field of integrative research on narrative. To this end, we will introduce the concept of narrative as an information processing function that predicts the unknown from the known, and while relating it to other communication media such as music, we will approach the problem by situating the relationship between humans and narrative in the present age through the human history.
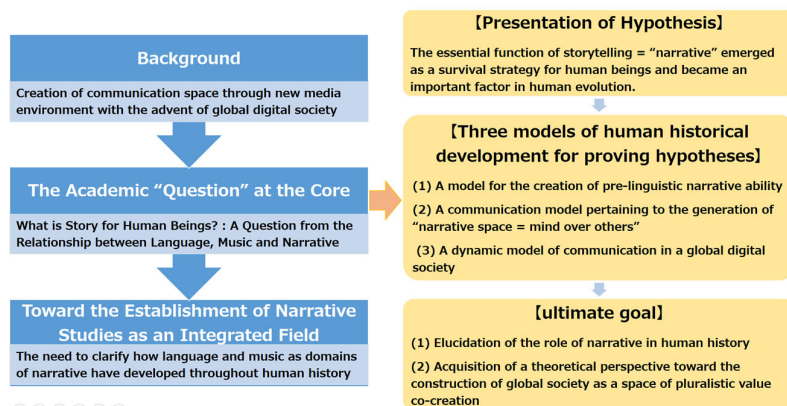

Figure 1. Outline of the Research

●Features of the Research

We attempt to answer the question of what narrative (or story) means to humans, but the field of integrative research on narrative has not been established. In order to pioneer narratology as a new integrative research field, we will reexamine not only language but also music, which are other communication media in which stories are expressed, in a unified manner from the viewpoint of narrative informatics and then, we will rethink the origin of language as an emergent process from the undifferentiated state of language/music. From this perspective, we will construct a theoretical platform that encompasses literary theory, language theory, narrative theory, and music theory, which have been treated separately.

●Significance of the Research

We can answer the question of the origin of language, which has been approached from linguistics, anthropology, psychology, cognitive science, and animal communication research, from a new perspective. We can also present a theoretical perspective on the new communication spaces that are emerging with the global digital environment.

Folktales, songs, and other data that can be considered the intangible cultural heritage of humankind are currently stored as isolated databases throughout the world. Through this research, we will complete the foundation of a system that enables international cross-referencing of data. The findings from the analysis of big data on the mechanisms of narrative manifestation and narrative information will lead to new developments in the possibility of narrative generation in AI in the future.

This will lead to a consideration of the pressing issue of how individual people can work together to create a global society, which in turn will lead to the development of a new field of study of the possibilities of a global literature.

Expected Research Achievements

●Research Strategy

We propose the hypothesis that narrative (or story) has emerged as a survival strategy for humans and has become an important factor in human evolution. To prove this hypothesis, we will construct a model of human historical development by collaborating the analysis of ethnographic data observable in contemporary society and informatics analysis based on a narrative information database of folk tales and songs, and ultimately elucidate the role of narrative in human history.

●Research Plan

To prove the hypothesis of the human historical development model, we set up three research groups corresponding to each diachronic stage of narrative manifestation (ritual narrative, musical narrative, and literary narrative), and one research group to study human cognitive structures related to narrative production by analyzing findings from the information science perspective.

Dividing the research period into two phases, we first analyze the dynamics of observable narrative/music activities in contemporary society and rearrange them into the domain where narrative manifests itself, corresponding to the three phylogenetic stages, thereby constructing a theoretical platform that integrates linguistic, musical, narrative, and literary theories. Next, we present a theoretical perspective on new communication spaces by analyzing how the domain where narrative manifests itself is being transformed by the emergence of a new media environment, the global digital environment.
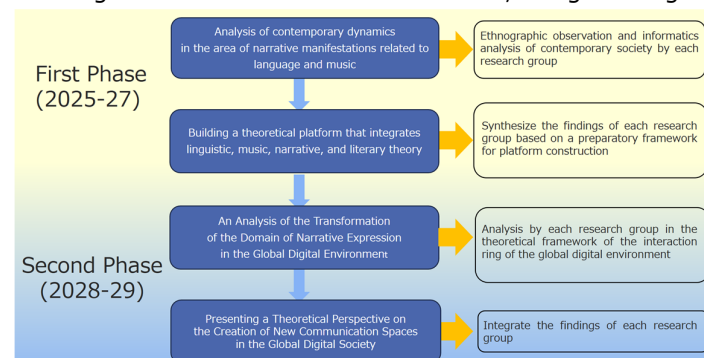

Figure 2. Schedule of Research

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