Title of Project： **Interdisciplinary Empirical Research Project on Disfluent Utterance Patterns**

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【Purpose and Background of the Research】

Defining fluency as smoothness and freedom from errors like the speech of a newsreader reading the headlines, traditional linguistics has assumed that native speakers speak fluently. That is, it has seen disfluent utterances by native speakers as exceptional cases. Against this background, I have considered disfluency of utterances, centered on Japanese, since the early 1990s. In the course of this research, I came to realize keenly that in real-world communication disfluent utterances by native speakers sometimes are easy to overlook and tolerate, instead of being treated as disfluent. For example, a hesitating *anoo* when turning down an invitation will, in fact, be received favorably. But how, and on what points, does the disfluency of native speakers differ from the essence of disfluency? This study will consider the question "What is the essence of disfluency?" through comparison of the disfluency of native speakers with two other types of disfluency considered more disfluent (the disfluency of language learners and the disfluency of people with linguistic disabilities), focusing chiefly on contemporary Japanese.

【Research Methods】

The above awareness of the issues concerns the four research areas of linguistics, conversation analysis, second-language education, and research on linguistic disabilities. The method employed in each of these fields is introduced below.

Method 1 (linguistics): We will observe the regularity of disfluent utterances by native Japanese speakers linguistically, to identify, extract, and describe any regularity therein. This observation will be conducted from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives.

Method 2 (conversation analysis): We will elucidate, through methods of conversation analysis, when and how patterns of disfluent utterances by native speakers are acceptable in communication.

Method 3 (second-language education): We will identify the distinguishing features of the disfluency of Japanese-language learners in comparison with the disfluency of native speakers and identify the main reasons why the disfluency of language learners is more likely to be considered problematic.

Method 4 (research on linguistic disabilities): Through physiological observation of disfluency in utterances of native Japanese speakers and language learners and comparison with that of people with linguistic disabilities

(e.g., stuttering, aphasia, motor speech disorders, and unclear enunciation due to hearing impairments), we will elucidate the distinguishing features of each type of disfluency.
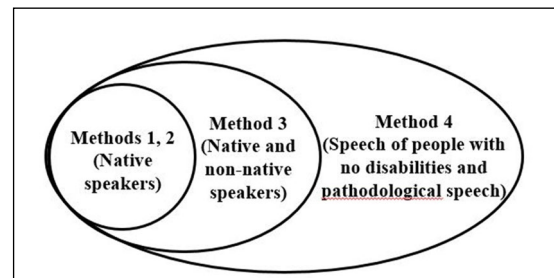

Figure 1   Four methods

To verify and refine the results of observation, we plan to develop a voice-synthesis system which speaks disfluently like native speakers. We also plan to release an online digital archive of typical disfluent utterances.

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

Since disfluency of utterances is a ubiquitous phenomenon in real-world communication, elucidation of its essence could lead to considerable progress in communication research. This study will attempt to elucidate the essence of disfluency of utterances and build a foundation for new research on communication, through researchers from four fields working together under a single shared awareness of the issue.

【Publications Relevant to the Project】

· Sadanobu, Toshiyuki. Komyunikeshon e no Gengoteki Sekkin (A Linguistic Approach to Communication), Tokyo: Hituzi Shobo, 2016.
· Sadanobu, Toshiyuki. Bunsetsu no Bunpou (A Grammar of Bunsetsu), Tokyo: Taishukan, 2019.

【Term of Project】 FY2020- 2024

【Budget Allocation】 112,500 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

http://www.speech-data.jp/kaken_hiryu/index_en.html