

Expressiveness-deficiency disease of speech

Toshiyuki SADANOBU and Hiroko SAWADA

(Kobe University) (Kyoto University)

Abstract

Although the distinction between spoken and written language is often made in correspondence with the differences of medium, it has been pointed out that their nature can be seen to interplay in discourse in various settings. Features of discourse that have been thought 'written' are found in natural conversation, and what has been thought 'spoken' is found in literary text. Based on these observations, the distinction between spoken and written language is sometimes regarded in a gradual way along with a continuum on various perspectives including at least (i) medium (sound vs. letter); (ii) structure (fragmental vs. integrated); (iii) strategy (somatic, meta-communicative vs. communicative); and (iv) content (experience vs. knowledge).

Modern Japanese has a phenomenon which seems to contradict this generalization especially on structural perspective. In some cases, spoken language rather than written language likes integrated structure and dislikes fragmented structure. Thus, a sentence consisting of just one word "Shogatsu-yasumi." (i.e. the New Year holidays.) can be seen as a part of ad copy of an electronic information service company as in (1), whereas in spoken conversation, it is likely to be integrated with the next sentence to construct a composite structure as in (2).

(1) Shogatsu-yasumi. Sore-demo asa-kara shinbun-de joho-shushu-desu-ka.

"It is the New Year holidays. In spite of that you are collecting information by newspaper early in the morning, right?"

(2) Shogatsu-yasumi-demo asa-kara shinbun-de joho-shushu-desu-ka.

"It is the New Year holidays, but you are collecting information by newspaper early in the morning, right?"

Our investigation suggests that this phenomenon is a matter of sentence and of speech both. Based on the content distinction of spoken and written language (i.e. experience vs. knowledge), we suggest a hypothesis that a speaker of his/her experience needs strong attitudinal/emotive motivation (expressiveness) to make one-word sentence speech like

"Shogatsu-yasumi." in (1). This hypothesis, linked with discourse setting, genre, style, and speech character, explains the unnaturalness of (1) in spoken conversation, and its naturalness in written text such as ad copy.