# Individual Differences in the Fluency Behaviour of Normally Fluent Speakers: Applications in Forensic Speaker Comparison Casework

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Date: 23 March, 2021 (Tuesday)

Time: 4:30pm - 6:15pm (Hong Kong Time, UTC +8)
*Seminar will be conducted via ZOOM

Registration Deadline:
12:00nn of 21 March 2021 (Sunday) – Hong Kong Time
The Zoom Meeting details will be provided on 22 March 2021
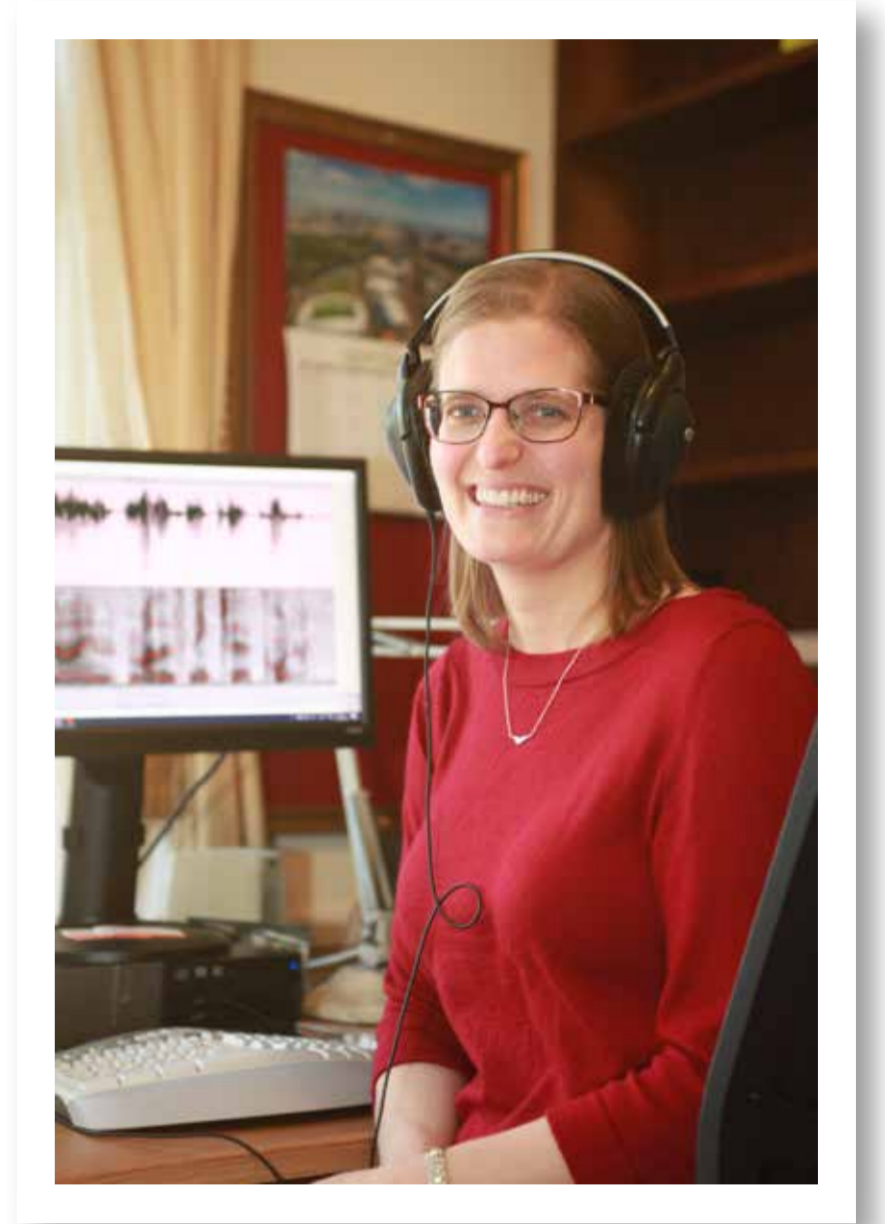
Prior registration is required

Abstract

While listeners tend not to notice when the speech of a normally fluent speaker contains perturbations to its flow, normally fluent speakers are not perfectly fluent. Disfluency features such as filled and silent pauses, repetitions, prolongations and self-interruptions all occur in the speech of normally fluent speakers. These features offer much scope for individual variation since they are related to a combination of physical, psychological and social demands in the planning and execution of speech, yet there is little research assessing the suitability of such features for forensic phonetic analysis. This talk will present findings from an ongoing programme of research by McDougall and Duckworth into individual variation in fluency behaviour and its application in forensic speaker comparison casework. The TOFFA framework 'Taxonomy of Fluency features for Forensic Analysis' devised by McDougall and Duckworth for quantifying individual differences in disfluency will be outlined and results from studies applying TOFFA in Standard Southern British English and York English data will be presented. In both accents, individuals exhibit speaker-specificity in both their rate of production of disfluencies and in the profile of fluency types they use, while accent-specific patterns also exist.

Forensic phonetic consultants at J.P. French Associates, United Kingdom, have been applying the TOFFA framework to characterise disfluency usage in forensic speaker comparison cases for several years. The present talk will illustrate the use of TOFFA in forensic casework practice, using a number of example cases where analysis of disfluencies was of key importance. The talk will conclude that when it can be implemented, systematic disfluency analysis is a valuable tool in the forensic phonetician's toolkit, and one which complements other types of analysis well.

Speaker

Kirsty McDougall is a Lecturer in Phonetics at the University of Cambridge, UK, and a Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge. Her research interests range across speaker characteristics, forensic phonetics, theories of speech production and the phonetic realisation of varieties of English. Among other things, her forensic phonetic research has focused on speaker-characterising properties of dynamic features of speech, perceived voice similarity and its implications for voice parade construction, and the development of techniques for analysing individual differences in disfluency behaviour. She is currently Principal Investigator on the IVIP project, 'Improving Voice Identification Procedures' (https://www.phonetics.mmll.cam.ac.uk/ivip/overview).

All are Welcome