

STEPS TO A COMMON DESCRIPTION OF MELODY IN MUSIC AND SPEECH

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Background

There are two modes of melody, the “plain” in speech and the “stylized” in music. Although characteristic differences show up between these modes, a partially unified competence can be assumed on which melody processing is based. As a complement, there are common principles of structure applying to melody in music and speech.

Aims

A description of melodic structure will be represented, equally applicable to music and speech materials. The description is based on the Kiel Intonation Model (KIM; Kohler 1991), but also consults other approaches to intonation, and includes concepts of emotion research, music psychology, and music theory.

Main contribution

Essential traits of an intonation-based approach to melody will be worked out:

- (1) The notions of melody viewed as tone sequence and of melody viewed as tonal motion are set apart.
- (2) This distinction leads to the assumption of two forms of melody processing, local processing, directed to features of contour, and holistic processing, directed to the tonal reference space.

(3) Melody arises from accent based patterns.

(4) Intonational universals are considered.

(5) The relations between the plain and the stylized mode of melody are discussed.

Considering these five aspects, a model of melodic syntax will be set up that has a linguistic and a musical manifestation, which allows a formalized mutual assignment of intonational and musical patterns.

Implications

The parallel representation of the linguistic and the musical mode of melody yields a comprehensive conceptualization of melodic structure. This representation can also be implemented in a computer assisted analysis of musical signal data. A musical labelling system analogous to prosodic labelling has already been constructed and has been tested for read and sung speech data. The intonation-based approach to music may be useful for performance analyses, for research on the declamation of texts in music, and for didactic purposes.