EXPRESSION AND DEEP STRUCTURE: THE INCIDENCE OF PERFORMANCE IN MUSICAL ATTENTION

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Background

Literature about music perception and cognition explains that surface components vie with underlying voice-leading, generating expectations of continuity and thus eliciting a particular way in which listeners pay attention to the stream of musical information. Similarly, performers would operate on the same features in order to communicate their interpretation of the conflict between structure and surface. In previous experiments, a click detection technique was used with the aim of studying the listener's response to the prolongational structure of musical synthesized excerpts, without expressive features. Evidence of the representation of prolongation as a constituent structural unit was obtained. However, the click detection technique has barely been used in studies using expressive music performance. It is assumed that this technique might contribute to studying the listener's response to the performer's communication of the underlying voice-leading.

Aims

1) To provide evidence about the incidence of performance in the communication of prolongational representation of the musical piece at a local level and 2) to explore further sensitivity to prolongation during musical attention, applying the click detection technique to stimuli with expressive features.

Method

Excerpts of musical pieces belonging to the western tonal art music repertoire were selected from the literature on Schenkerian analysis. A panel listened to different well-known commercial recorded versions of the musical excerpts and assessed them in terms of their projection of the analysis of the underlying structure.

Clicks were superimposed in different focal points of hypothetical conflict between the surface and/or the underlying voice-leading component. A click detection test was run in which subjects (N=30) listened both to expressive and deadpan synthesized versions of each fragment and pressed a key as soon as they detected the click. A distraction task was included requiring quality estimation of expressiveness of each fragment.

Results

Subject's Reaction Time (SRT) was measured in milliseconds. It is assumed that differences in the excerpts will influence the SRT. Results are currently being processed.

Conclusions

Implications for the analysis of listener's experience of prolongational structure are discussed according to representational theories.

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