

DEIXIS, INDEXICALITY AND POINTING AS HEURISTIC GUIDES FOR ENACTIVE LISTENING: ROUTE DESCRIPTION, CUE ABSTRACTION AND COGNITIVE MAPS

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Background

Music cognition has been related traditionally to an objectivist position that conceives of music as a structure or an artefact. The process of dealing with music, however, calls forth a construction of meaning as the result of an interaction with the sound both at a manifest and at an internalized level. This interaction can keep step with the unfolding through time but it can keep distance with respect to the sonorous articulation as well, allowing the listener to deal with music both at the level of sensory experience and of symbolic modeling.

Aim

This paper argues for an enactive approach to dealing with music that brings together the experiential and cognitive points of view. It provides the concept of pointing as a heuristic tool for sense-making, both as a primitive marking system and as a mechanism of selection that can be directed to focal points or more extended time intervals. As such it is related to principles of categorization and cognitive economy. The role of cue abstraction and cognitive mapping must be considered here.

Main contribution

Our principal aim is to apply the concept of deixis and deictic devices to the process of dealing with music. Deictic terms are words that pick out or

point to things in relation to the participants in a speech situation. They locate individual elements in context and provide socio-spatio-temporal anchoring. As such they stress the field of pointing rather than the symbolic field of cognition. Introducing these terms in music focuses primarily on the concepts of deictic space and temporal and spatial deixis. Deictic terms, furthermore, are related to the concept of indexicality and the notion of pointing. They entail processes of singling out, as is obvious from the use of pragmatic anaphora (deictic expressions accompanied by a pointing gesture) which allow us to refer back (catadeixis) and forward (anadeixis). In order to do this we must have access to the flow of discourse as a whole, where parts may be re-taken up and anticipated. For doing so the listener can build route-descriptions and cognitive maps which allow him/her to navigate mentally through the music and to compare the actual sounding elements with their imaginative projections.

Implications

Pointing - both as external and internal reconstruction of the sonorous articulation and its focal points - is a heuristic guide for the mental involvement of the listener. It reflects the sensory motor integrations of the listener and offers an alternative to the mere conceptual categorizations as static labelings of objective and external entities. As such, it is a mediating tool between perceptual input and processing by the listener.