Abstract

A total of 12 Chinese and 11 French non-musicians listened to 120 short musical phrases that were either famous children's songs or composed for the experiment. The phrases ended either congruously or incongruously (i.e., with a harmonic-melodic violation). The incongruous category was further subdivided into small incongruous and large incongruous endings. Both the Chinese and French participants were better at correctly classifying the normal and large incongruous endings as compared to the small incongruous endings. However, native language did not affect accuracy rates. Besides, Chinese participants responded significantly faster than French participants in the normal and large incongruous ending conditions. Moreover, the pattern of reaction times to the three types of phrase endings was different for the Chinese and French participants. Chinese participants responded slowest to small incongruities whereas French participants responded fastest to small incongruities. Although the main effect of language was not found on accuracy, it did find on the reaction time in the normal and large incongruous conditions.