The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Department of Psychology

PSYC 4920 Senior Thesis Research II

Motor signal hidden in music perception:

Verifying the Shared Affective Motion Experience Model

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Abstract

Music is one of the most intriguing experiences in life. Despite of its recreational function, across different cultures and times, music serves for social communication that even without any reliance on language, emotional state can be comprehended and interpreted through sole musical sound. Yet, the mechanism underlying emotional induction in music remains controversial, that researchers have so far been unable to offer a satisfactory account. The potential role of the human mirror neuron system (MNS) to musical experience has recently been outlined in a Shared Affective Motion Experience (SAME) model (Molnar-Szakacs & Overy, 2006), which postulates a motor-limbic connection when listening to music. Here we addressed the question of whether affective response evoked by music indeed, involves motor component. Using an affective priming paradigm, participants performed emotion judgment task on positive and negative face pictures, preceded by listening to music excerpts. The experiment yielded results in line with the mechanism proposed by the SAME model, showing a significant role of the motor component in eliciting affective response in music.