

Abstract

Past studies suggested a shift from absolute to relative pitch processing with increasing age and experience. The current study explored the timing of this developmental shift, and examined whether absolute pitch and relative pitch were strategically deployed depending on the task. Sixty-six infants with thirty-three 5-months old and thirty-three 7-months old were tested using a head-turn paradigm. After familiarization, tone sequences were presented and looking time to each stimulus were recorded, so as to investigate to what extent 5 and 7 months infants represent absolute and relative pitches. Within each age group, approximately half of the participants were tested immediately after familiarization, while another half were tested after an 8-minutes delay. Although results were insignificant, there was trend indicating that 5-months infants preferred absolute pitch processing while 7-months infants preferred relative pitch processing, when they were tested immediately after familiarization. Another trend observed was that, among 5-months infants, relative pitch processing was more prominent in the delayed condition while absolute pitch processing was favored in immediate condition.

Keywords: absolute pitch, relative pitch, pitch perception