

The role of musical experience in Cantonese lexical tone perception by native speakers of Thai

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Abstract

Adult non-native perception is subject to influence from a variety of factors, including native language and musical experience. The present study investigates the influence of these two factors in the perception and learning of non-native lexical tones. Native Thai-speaking musicians and non-musicians completed pre- and post-test identification tasks on five Cantonese tones, with 4 days of lexical identification training. Higher identification accuracy scores for musicians suggest that extensive experience with musical pitch enhances perception of non-native linguistic pitch. However, patterns of tonal accuracy improvement were similar across groups and

manifest in their patterns of tonal accuracy, such that the Cantonese lexical tones with close analogues in the Thai tonal

Figure 1. A 3-way mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with Group (non-musician, musician) as a between-subjects factor, and Test (pre, post) and Tone (high-level, high-rising, low-falling, low-rising, low-level) as repeated measures.

pitch acuity to include musicians with a tonal L1. The results demonstrate that Thai musicians were significantly more accurate at identifying non-native lexical tones than Thai non-musicians overall, which is consistent with previous findings on the influence of musical experience of non-native