Increased fronto-temporal connectivity

by modified melody in real music

Chan Hee Kim[1, 2], Jaeho Seol[2, 3], Seung-Hyun Jin[2], June Sic Kim[2, 4], Youn Kim[5],

Suk Won Yi[6, 7], and Chun Kee Chung[1, 2, 8, 9, *]

[1] Interdisciplinary Program in Neuroscience, Seoul National University College of Natural Science, Seoul 08826, Korea

[2] Human Brain Function Laboratory, Seoul National University, Seoul 03080, Korea

[3] W-Mind Laboratory, Wemakeprice Inc. Seoul 06173, Korea

[4] Research Institute of Basic Sciences, Seoul National University, Seoul 08826, Korea

[5] Department of Music, School of Humanities, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

[6] College of Music, Seoul National University, Seoul 08826, Korea

[7] Western Music Research Institute, Seoul National University, Seoul 08826, Korea

[8] Department of Brain and Cognitive Science, Seoul National University College of Natural Science, Seoul 08826, Korea

[9] Department of Neurosurgery, Seoul National University Hospital, Seoul 03080, Korea

* Corresponding author: chungc@snu.ac.kr

Abstract

In real music, the original melody may appear intact, with little elaboration only, or significantly modified. Since a melody is most easily perceived in music, hearing significantly modified melody may change a brain connectivity. Mozart KV 265 is comprised of an original melody of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" with its significant variations. We studied whether effective connectivity changes with significantly modified melody, between bilateral inferior frontal gyri (IFGs) and Heschl's gyri (HGs) using magnetoencephalography (MEG). Among the 12 connectivities, the connectivity from the left IFG to the right HG was consistently increased with significantly modified melody compared to the original melody in 2 separate sets of the same rhythmic pattern with different melody ($p = 0.005$ and 0.034, Bonferroni corrected). Our findings show that the modification of an original melody in a real music changes the brain connectivity.

Significant statements

Our data show how a regional connectivity changes when the original melody is intact or significantly modified, consistent in two different sets of variations with the same rhythmic patterns but with the different melody pattern. The present study employed real music of Mozart's Variation KV 265 as musical stimuli, dissected musical elements in each variation, and devised the two comparable sets of variation, which have the same rhythmic pattern but different melody. We exploited naturalistic conditions in real music instead of devising artificial conditions, and successfully demonstrated how variations of melody in real music change a regional connectivity in the brain.

Introduction

Melody is a feature effortlessly extracted from music, which sometimes represents the music itself. Beethoven symphony No. 9 is known as "Ode to joy", since the melody of "Ode to joy" appears repeatedly across the 4th movement of the symphony, which is easily and prominently detected. The human brain has several interconnected key regions processing melody, including bilateral inferior frontal gyri (IFGs) and Heschl's gyri (HGs) (Maess et al., 2001; Patel and Balaban, 2001; Janata et al., 2002; Patterson et al., 2002; Schneider et al., 2005; Grahn and Rowe, 2009; Seol et al., 2011). Extracting and interpreting a melody in music would be accompanied with changes in a regional connectivity.

Mozart 12 Variations KV 265 on "Ah! vous dirai-je Maman" of a French chanson is well-known as "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" Variations, of an English lullaby. In some of the variations, the original melody appears intact or with little elaboration only. In others, it is significantly modified. We call the former variations with original melody (VOM) and the latter variations with modified melody (VMM). The original melody of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" in the *Theme* is modified or repeated in 12 variations. Five conditions of the *Theme*, *Variation I*, *Variation II*, *Variation III*, and *Variation IV* are composed in the same key, harmony, meter, timbre, and ternary form. Among the five conditions, the original melody is present in the *Variation II* and *IV*. However, the original melody is significantly modified in the *Variation I* and *III*. In terms of rhythmic pattern, the *Variation I* and *II* are of 16th notes, while the *Variation III* and *IV* are of 8th notes. Hence, two sets of "*Variation I* vs. *II*" and "*Variation III* vs. *IV*" are of the same rhythmic patterns, but of different melodies (Fig. 1). We hypothesized that the presence or absence of the original melody in the two sets of "*Variation I* vs. *II*" and "*Variation III* vs. *IV*" would change effective connectivity between the bilateral IFGs and HGs. For

effective connectivity, we calculated the linearized time delayed mutual information (LTDMI) (Jin et al., 2010).

Materials and Methods

Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Clinical Research Institute, Seoul National University Hospital (IRB No. C-1003-015-311). All experiments were conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines and regulations.

Participants

Twenty-five participants (15 females, mean age, 26.8 ± 3.4 years) were all right-handed (mean Edinburgh Handedness coefficient, 95.7 ± 7.1). All participants had normal hearing, and had not received any formal musical training. Prior to the experiments, all the participants provided the informed consent in a written form.

Musical stimuli

Out of the theme and the 12 Variations in Mozart's Variation on "Ah! vous dirai-je Maman" KV 265, we selected the five conditions of *Theme*, *Variation I*, *II*, *III*, and *IV* in Fig. 1, composed in the same key (C major), harmony (tonic-tonic-subdominant-tonic…), meter (2/4), and structure (ternary form). In magnetoencephalography (MEG) experiment, all participants were asked to passively listen to the musical stimuli without to paying any attention to any specific musical feature, such as melody.

Time window

The time window was selected based on the concept of the motif (Drabkin, 2014). Previous studies reported that differences in melody were detected by listening to a segment of three to six notes in a motif of an original melody (Bella et al., 2003). The ascending five quarter notes of "C5 - C5 - G5 - G5 - A5" (2,100 ms) of the time window were in the motif of "C5 - C5 - G5 - G5 - A5 - A5 - G5 - G5". For the five quarter notes of in the *Theme*, the number of 16th notes or 8th notes (in triplets) subdivided in accompaniments was the same between the *Variation I*, *II*, *III*, and *IV*.

The present musical stimuli were recorded music that was presented continuously, without intervening breaks between movements of a theme and variations. To select the proper time window, we had to consider all the subdivided notes included in a quarter note in each time window in all conditions. The time window of 2,100 ms was the most suitable duration because (1) 2,100 ms covered the onset of the first quarter note to the offset of the last quarter note in the time window; (2) the number of additional notes did not exceed a quarter note in all the conditions; and (3) fade-out times of the final note in the preceding condition did not overlap with the onset of the time window in the following condition. The same phrases of the time window were repeated four times in each condition. However, to rule out the effect of repetition (Guo and Koelsch, 2015), we analyzed only the "C5 - C5 - G5 - G5 - A5" in the opening in each condition.

Data recording

The MEG signal was recorded with a sampling frequency of 1,000 Hz using a 0.1–200 Hz band pass filter in a magnetically shielded room with a 306-channel whole-head MEG System (Elekta Neuromag Vector View™, Helsinki, Finland). Electrooculograms (EOG) and

electrocardiograms (ECG) were also simultaneously recorded to remove ocular and cardiac noise at a later time. We eliminated the environmental magnetic noise of raw MEG signals with the temporal signal space separation (tSSS) algorithm in MaxFilter 2.1.13 (Elekta Neuromag Oy, Helsinki, Finland) (Taulu and Hari, 2009).

During the MEG recording, for about five minutes, all participants sat in a magnetically shielded room and passively listened to music (Mozart 12 Variations on "Ah! vous dirai-je Maman" KV 265, 2011, Brilliant classics, Dutch). Musical stimuli were presented binaurally through plastic tubal silicone earpieces, 50 cm in length using STIM2™ (Neuroscan, Charlotte, NC, USA) at 100 dB. Visual stimuli of a silent movie clip (Love Actually, 2003, Universal Pictures, USA) were presented on a screen to keep the participants awake (Koelsch and Jentschke, 2008; Ruiz et al., 2009) while the musical stimuli were being presented. For MEG signals, EOG, ECG, muscle artifact was removed using the independent component analysis. Epochs were determined from -100 ms to 2,100 ms after the onset of each condition, and the baseline of each epoch was from -100 ms to 0 ms.

Data analysis

The source coordinates for the ROIs of the bilateral HGs and IFGs were based on the standard Talairach coordinates; Heschl's gyrus (transverse, BA 41, BA 42) and the inferior frontal gyrus (triangular part, BA 45); the x, y, and *z in* Talairach coordinates (millimeters) were -53.5, -30.5, and 12.6 in the left HG, 55.4, -30.5, and 12.6 in the right HG, -55.5, 11.7, and 20.6 in the left IFG, and 53.5, 12.7and 20.6 in the right IFG, respectively (Fig. 2). The signal for each regional source of 4 ROIs (bilateral HGs and IFGs) was extracted using a 14–30 Hz band-pass filter for each participant using BESA 5.1.8.10 (MEGIS Software GmbH, Gräfelfing, Germany), which

was averaged at MATLAB 7.7.0.471 (Math Works Inc., Natick, MA, USA). In Fig. 2, The Talairach coordinates were visualized using BrainNet Viewer (http://nitrc.org/projects/bnv/).

For the twelve connections among the bilateral HGs and IFGs, effective connectivity for twelve connections was estimated using LTDMI (Jin et al., 2010). The mutual information (MI) is a measure testing the relationship between the conditions by measuring the amount of information between two random variables. The LTDMI is an information theoretic measure estimating the directional information transmission of functional coupling based on MI:

$$MI = MI_{AB} = MI_{BA} = MI\big(A(n), B(n)\big) = -\sum_k p\big(A(n), B(n)\big)\log\frac{p(A(n),(B(n))}{p(A(n))(p(B(n))} \quad (1)$$

Based on MI, the linear correlation for the information transmission between time series A and B is estimated by LTDMI:

$$LTDMI_{AB} = LTDMI\big(A(n), B(n+\tau)\big) = -\frac{1}{2}\log(1 - \rho^2_{A(n)B(n+\tau)})$$

$$LTDMI_{BA} = LTDMI\big(B(n), A(n+\tau)\big) = -\frac{1}{2}\log(1 - \rho^2_{B(n)A(n+\tau)}). \quad (2)$$

where τ is delay time, and $\rho_{A(n)B(n+\tau)}$ or $\rho_{B(n)A(n+\tau)}$ is a cross-correlation coefficient. The LTDMI value was averaged over delay time, which was calculated for every individual participant for each of the four conditions and twelve connections. See our previous study[3] for the details of the LTDMI.

The mean LTDMI value for the time window of 2,100 ms in each condition was calculated for the twelve connections between the four ROIs. Because the data set was not normally distributed, the differences in LTDMI values of the conditions including "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" melody or not were tested by the Wilcoxon signed rank test using SPSS 21.0 software (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA). Multiple comparisons for the twelve connections in each set were adjusted by the Bonferroni test ($p < 0.05$).

Results

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed that the LTDMI from the left IFG to the right HG was significantly different between "*Variation I* vs. *Variation II*" (Z = -3.512, p = 0.005, Bonferroni corrected) as well as between "*Variation III* vs. *Variation IV*" (Z = -2.987, p = 0.034, Bonferroni corrected) (Table 1). In this fronto-temporal connection, the LTDMI values increased in the VMM (*Variation I* and *III*) compared to the VOM (*Variation II* and *IV*) (Fig. 2).

Discussion

Effective connectivity from the left IFG to the right HG increased when the original melody of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" was significantly modified (VMM), compared with that when the original melody was intact (VOM). It appeared consistent in two different sets with the same rhythmic patterns but with the different melody pattern.

The present study employed real music with its variations as musical stimuli, dissected musical elements in each condition, and devised the two comparable sets of conditions, which have the same rhythmic pattern but different melody. Here, we exploited naturalistic conditions in real music instead of devising artificial conditions, and successfully demonstrated how significant variations of melody in real music change a regional connectivity in the human brain. These are distinct from the attempts in previous studies using original musical pieces (Platel et al., 2003; Plailly et al., 2007; Sridharan et al., 2007; Burunat et al., 2014; Wilkins et al., 2014).

An fMRI study, using a real music of "Adios Nonino", studied the effects of motif repetitions on effective connectivity changes. Specifically, they found that the hippocampal connectivity is modulated by motif repetitions, showing strong connections with working memory-relevant areas (Burunat et al., 2014). In another fMRI study using real musics of

classical, country, rap/hip hop, rock, and unfamiliar cultural musical genres, connectivity strength enhanced for preferred music (Wilkins et al., 2014). These studies show real musics and characteristics within those can change the brain connectivities.

When hearing real music, the brain regions would interact to support complex cognitive processes (Patel, 2008; Salimpoor et al., 2011). In the perspective of the brain networks, the change in effective connectivity from the left IFG to the right HG could be interpreted in the syntactic process. The effective connectivity from the left IFG to the right HG would underlie the processing of the original melody of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star". It is familiar and is repeated in the musical piece. Musical syntax arouses an expectation in musical context. Therefore, "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" melody may arouse an expectation when each condition is sequentially presented following the *Theme*. Then, the significantly modified melody, relatively novel melody, would enhance effective connectivity involving relevant brain regions. The enhanced connectivity in our results is a further extension of previous studies that the conditions in violating syntax enhance not only the ERP responses such as the ERAN but also connectivity strength (Maess et al., 2001; Seger et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2014). Even though the bilateral IFGs are associated with musical syntactic processing, the left IFG is especially crucial (Sammler et al., 2011). In our previous study (Kim et al., 2019), the brain networks centered in the left IFG was related with the processing of particular information which only the musically trained people could identify. In this regards, the fronto-temporal connectivity was increased in the VMM compared to the VOM with the "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star".

Also it is interesting that the change in fronto-temporal connectivity was observed in the beta frequency band (see also the Materials and Methods section). The connectivity changes were consistent in the two sets of "*Variation I* vs. *II*" and "*Variation III* vs. *IV*", which are different in the rhythmic patterns of 16th and 8th notes sequences, respectively. Generally the beta frequency band is associated with the processing of deviant stimuli (Kim and Chung, 2008)

and memory/categorical perception (Weiss and Mueller, 2012). The connectivity in the beta frequency band would reflect the categorization of the deviant WMM and the WOM based on the information of the original melody acquired in real-life.

Also, beta frequency is related with beat perception. While regular auditory stimuli were presented, beta oscillation was synchronized with the beat, while it was increased when the beat was omitted (Fujioka et al., 2009, 2012). Therefore, the changes in fronto-temporal connectivity at the beta frequency band might reflect omission of the beats on the original melody of quarter notes sequence in each condition, regardless of changes in rhythmic patterns. It may be an alternative explanation why the fronto-temporal connectivity increased with modified melody conditions compared to the original melody.

In our study, the time window of five notes, "C5 - C5 - G5 - G5 - A5" (2.1 sec) was set based on the "C5 - C5 - G5 - G5 - A5 - A5 - G5 - G5" motif of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" song in the *Theme*. In a previous study, the isolation point, the point at which a melody is correctly identified, is about 2.5 sec of 5 notes for highly familiar melodies (Bella et al., 2003). Therefore, the five notes in the motif, which we analyzed were long enough to detect the original melody.

There are several limitations in our study. The present study looked at the particular music, Mozart KV 265 with its theme and 4 variations. Hence, we could not assert that our findings could extend to the other real musics. Also the present study was limited to 4 regions of interest, including bilateral inferior frontal and superior temporal area. There should be further studies covering the whole brain. Finally, in order to focus on melody difference, we tried our best to eliminate the effects of other elements implied in naturalistic conditions. However, it should be discovered through further studies.

In conclusion, the fronto-temporal connectivity from the left IFG to the right HG was enhanced when the modified melody was presented, compared with the original melody of

"Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" in Mozart "Ah! vous dirai-je Maman" KV 265. Our findings show that the modification of an original melody in a real music changes the brain connectivity.

Author Contribution

C.H.K., J.S., and C.K.C. conceived the study. J.S. performed experiment. S.H.J. and J.S.K contributed analytic tools. Y.K. and S.W.Y. contributed music-theoretical background. C.H.K. analyzed the data. C.H.K. and C.K.C. wrote the paper. All authors discussed the results and reviewed the paper.

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Figures

Figure 1. Musical stimuli. Five conditions of the *Theme*, *Variation I*, *II*, *III*, and *IV* selected in Mozart 12 Variations on "Ah! vous dirai-je Maman"KV 265. The original melody of "C5 - C5 - G5 - G5 - A5 (Twin- kle twin- kle lit-)" is included in the *Theme*, *Variation II*, and *Variation IV* (orange boxes). The *Variation I* and *Variation III* include the modified melodies (gray boxes). Rhythmic patterns are consistent in each set of "*Variation I* and *Variation II*" (16th notes) and "*Variation III* and *Variation IV* " (8th notes).

Figure 2. Difference in effective connectivity from the left IFG to the right HG for the modified and original melodies. Effective connectivity in both sets of "*Variation I* vs. *Variation II*" and "*Variation III* vs. *Variation IV*" showed an identical pattern in the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. Violin plots show that the LTDMI values are significantly higher for the *Variation I* and *III* with the modified melodies than for the *Variation II* and *IV* with the original melody; "*Variation I* vs. *Variation II*", $Z = -3.512$, $p = 0.005$, Bonferroni corrected; "*Variation III* vs. *Variation IV*", $Z = -2.987$, $p = 0.034$, Bonferroni corrected (See also Table 1).

Table

Table 1. LTDMI difference between the conditions with the modified or original melodies. For the both sets of "*Variation I* vs. *Variation II*"

and "*Variation III* vs. *Variation IV*", the LTDMI values differed in a connection from the left IFG to the right HG among twelve connections

(Wilcoxon signed-rank test, N = 25, Bonferroni corrected *$p < 0.05$ and **$p < 0.01$).

	Variation I vs. Variation II			*Variation III vs. Variation IV*		
	Z	*P(uncorrected)*	*P(corrected)*	*Z*	*P(uncorrected)*	*P(corrected)*
Left HG → Right HG	-0.565	0.572	1.0	-1.090	0.276	1.0
Left HG → Left IFG	-0.727	0.468	1.0	-1.843	0.065	0.784
Left HG → Right IFG	-0.148	0.882	1.0	-0.229	0.819	1.0
Right HG → Left HG	-1.493	0.135	1.0	-0.175	0.861	1.0
Right HG → Left HG	-1.286	0.199	1.0	-1.029	0.304	1.0
Right HG → Right HG	-1.305	0.192	1.0	-0.148	0.882	1.0
Left IFG → Left HG	-1.117	0.264	1.0	-1.655	0.098	1.0
Left IFG → Right HG	-3.512	0.0004	**0.005 **	-2.987	0.0028	**0.034 *
Left IFG → Right IFG	-0.875	0.382	1.0	-1.238	0.216	1.0
Right IFG → Left HG	-1.129	0.259	1.0	-0.498	0.619	1.0
Right IFG → Right HG	-1.762	0.078	0.936	-0.982	0.326	1.0
Right IFG → Left IFG	-2.193	0.028	0.340	-0.848	0.397	1.0