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Abstract

Twenty listeners were exposed to spoken and sung passages in English produced by three trained vocalists. Passages included representative words extracted from a large database of vocal lyrics, including both popular and classical repertoires. Target words were set within spoken or sung carrier phrases. Sung carrier phrases were selected from classical vocal melodies. Roughly a quarter of all words sung by an unaccompanied soloist were misheard. Sung passages showed a seven-fold decrease in intelligibility compared with their spoken counterparts. The perceptual mistakes occurring with vowels replicate previous studies showing the centralization of vowels. Significant confusions are also evident for consonants, especially voiced stops and nasals.

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