

## **Aural Skills Pedagogy: Harmonic Dictation for Students with Absolute Pitch**

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### **Abstract.**

In teaching sophomore level aural skills, I have dealt with students with absolute pitch do poorly in my courses, particularly in harmonic dictation. They can identify triads; however, identifying quality of seventh chords or chromatic chords poses serious challenges. Most often, they need to spell all the pitches before identifying the chord qualities and Roman Numerals.

Growing up in a country where acquiring absolute pitch is considered essential, I started my early music training with *fixed do* system at age three and learned all my music with solfege. When I was assigned as a TA in aural skills courses at graduate school in US, I had to learn relative pitch quickly. My survival method was listening to music with absolute pitch first, then quickly "translate" to relative pitch.

In teaching my courses, I have been using chord progressions (5-8 chords total), in which students are asked to sing chord arpeggiation with *movable do* solfege. I use same progressions for harmonic dictation; I hoped that students learn to incorporate singing and listening skills by overlapping same materials.

This method has proven to be successful for most students; in particular, it has helped students with absolute pitch to hear chord quality and function. Although original progressions are written in C as a tonic, they can identify chords in harmonic dictation in other keys as well.

In short, I believe singing chord progression with *movable do* arpeggiation helps students with absolute pitch to improve hearing function and quality of chords in harmonic dictation.

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