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1 **Simultaneous suppression of tone burst-evoked otoacoustic emissions: two and three-**
2 **tone burst combinations**

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12

13 **ABSTRACT**

14

15 Previous investigations have shown that components of a tone burst-evoked otoacoustic
16 emission (TBOAE) evoked by a 1 kHz tone burst (TB₁) can be suppressed by the
17 simultaneous presence of a 2 kHz tone burst (TB₂) or a pair of tone bursts at 2 and 3 kHz
18 (TB₂ and TB₃ respectively). No previous study has measured this “simultaneous suppression
19 of TBOAEs” for *both* TB₂ alone *and* TB₂ and TB₃ from the same ears, so that the effect of
20 the additional presence of TB₃ on suppression caused by TB₂ is not known. In simple terms,
21 three outcomes are possible; suppression increases, suppression is reduced or suppression is
22 not affected. Comparison of previously reported simultaneous suppression data suggests TB₃
23 causes a reduction in suppression, though it is not clear if this is a genuine effect or simply
24 reflects methodological and ear differences between studies. This issue has implications for
25 previously proposed mechanisms of simultaneous suppression of TBOAEs and the
26 interpretation of clinical data, and is clarified by the present study. Simultaneous suppression
27 of TBOAEs was measured for TB₁ and TB₂ as well as TB₁, TB₂ and TB₃ at 50, 60 and 70 dB
28 p.e. SPL from nine normal human ears. Results showed no significant difference between
29 mean suppression obtained for the two and three-tone burst combinations, indicating the
30 reduction of suppression inferred from comparison of previous data is likely a result of
31 methodological and ear differences rather than a genuine effect.

32

33 **Keywords:** Tone burst-evoked otoacoustic emissions, suppression, tone bursts

34

35 Abbreviations: Basilar membrane, BM; Fast Fourier transform, FFT; Peak-equivalent sound
36 pressure level, p.e. SPL; Tone burst, TB; Tone burst-evoked otoacoustic emission, TBOAE;
37 Transient-evoked otoacoustic emission, TEOAE.

38

Accepted proof

39 1. Introduction

40

41 Transient-evoked otoacoustic emissions (TEOAEs) are complex multi-component signals
42 emitted from the healthy cochlea and recorded in the ear canal in response to short duration
43 acoustic stimuli (e.g. Probst et al., 1991; Shera, 2004; Withnell et al., 2008). Because their
44 presence is reliant on the normal functioning of the physiological processes that enhance
45 hearing sensitivity and selectivity, TEOAEs are widely used in the clinical setting as a non-
46 invasive assessment of cochlear function (e.g. Robinette and Glatke, 2007). Clicks are
47 commonly used as the evoking stimulus, producing click-evoked otoacoustic emissions, but
48 tone bursts can also be used, producing tone burst-evoked otoacoustic emissions (TBOAEs).

49

50 A common clinical interpretation is that TEOAEs exhibit place-specificity. The presence of a
51 response component (i.e. a component with amplitude clear of the noise floor) at frequency f
52 is held to indicate normal physiological functioning at the basilar membrane (BM) place
53 tuned to f . Where response component f is absent (i.e. when its amplitude is less than the
54 noise floor) abnormal function at BM place f is assumed. This interpretation is likely
55 incorrect for two reasons. First, at short latencies the TEOAE response at f is thought to arise
56 from BM places basal to f (e.g. Withnell and Yates, 1999; Withnell et al., 2008; Moleti et al.,
57 2013). Second, previous authors have demonstrated nonlinear interactions amongst TEOAE
58 frequency components vitiate the principle of linear superposition. Specifically, the
59 amplitude of a TBOAE recorded in response to a 1 kHz tone burst (TB_1) is reduced
60 (suppressed) by the simultaneous presence of a single additional (equal level and phase) tone
61 burst with centre frequencies at 1.5, 2 or 3 kHz (TB_2) (Yoshikawa et al., 2000; Killan et al.,
62 2012, 2015) or a pair of additional tone bursts at 2 and 3 kHz (TB_2 and TB_3) (Xu et al., 1994;

63 Killan and Kapadia, 2006). If the violation of linear superposition is significant, the
64 conventional clinical interpretation of TEOAE place-specificity is not supported. Therefore,
65 investigation of this simultaneous suppression phenomenon is important.

66

67 Collectively, findings from previous studies address a range of issues relating to simultaneous
68 suppression of TBOAEs, including the effect of the frequency separation between TB₁ and
69 TB₂ (referred to as Δf) (Yoshikawa et al., 2000; Killan et al., 2012; Killan et al., 2015), tone
70 burst level (Xu et al., 1994; Killan and Kapadia, 2006; Killan et al., 2015) and averaging
71 techniques (Killan and Kapadia, 2006). None of these studies have measured suppression for
72 both a single additional tone burst (e.g. TB₂ at 2 kHz)¹ and a pair of additional tone bursts
73 (e.g. TB₂ and TB₃ at 2 and 3 kHz respectively) from the same ears. Consequently, the extent
74 to which the additional presence of TB₃ affects suppression caused by TB₂ alone is not
75 known. In principle, there are three possibilities. First, comparison of data from two similar
76 studies that separately tested simultaneous suppression caused by TB₂ alone (Killan et al.,
77 2015) and TB₂ and TB₃ (Killan and Kapadia, 2006) suggests TB₃ causes a *reduction* in the
78 amount of suppression caused by TB₂. Such behaviour is similar to the “release from
79 masking” phenomenon described for the peripheral auditory system (e.g. Rutten and Kuper,
80 1982; Henry, 1987), however, it is unclear whether this is a genuine reduction, or simply
81 reflects differences between the ears and methodologies used across studies. A reduction in
82 suppression is also inconsistent with previously proposed mechanisms for simultaneous
83 suppression of TBOAEs. These predict a second possible outcome where the additional

¹ The convention for numbering tone bursts (i.e. TB₁ and TB₂) was used by Killan et al. (2012). It is used here for simplicity when describing the present and previous studies, and is extended to include TB₃. In the present use, the subscript number also refers to the centre frequency (in kHz) of the tone bursts.

84 presence of TB₃ causes an *increase* in suppression as a result of nonlinear interactions
85 between response components generated at their characteristic BM place, or interference with
86 the generation of short latency basal-source components (Yates and Withnell, 1999; Killan et
87 al., 2012, 2015; Lewis and Goodman, 2015). Finally, the third possibility is that TB₃ has no
88 effect on suppression.

89

90 To contribute to our understanding of simultaneous suppression of TBOAEs, the primary aim
91 of this small-scale study was to explore the effect of TB₃ on the amount of suppression
92 caused by TB₂ alone. To do this, TBOAEs were recorded from normal human ears in
93 response to TB₁ presented in combination with TB₂, as well as TB₁ with TB₂ *and* TB₃, at a
94 range of tone burst levels. In addition, observation of the effect of TB₃ is useful in defining
95 the distance over which basal-source components in response to a 1 kHz tone burst arise. If
96 TB₃ is shown to have no effect it can be argued that the BM region tuned to 3 kHz is not
97 involved in the generation of components at 1 kHz (at least for the recording conditions
98 described in this paper). Finally, the results presented within this paper could be used by
99 future investigators to test predictions from their cochlear models.

100

101 **2. Methods**

102

103 *2.1. Subjects*

104 TBOAEs were recorded from a single ear (5 right, 4 left) from nine normally hearing adults
105 (6 female, 3 male) aged between 18 and 33 years (median = 25 years). All ears tested had
106 normal middle ear function as confirmed by tympanometry, repeatable TBOAEs at 50 dB p.e.
107 SPL, i.e. the lowest tone burst level used in this study and did not exhibit synchronised
108 spontaneous otoacoustic emissions as measured using the Otodynamics ILO 292 system
109 (London, UK). Prior to testing, subjects gave informed consent in accordance with the
110 requirements of the School of Healthcare Research Ethics Committee.

111

112 *2.2. Instrumentation and stimuli*

113 All TBOAE recordings were made using a custom-built system previously described by
114 Killan et al. (2012). The synchronised input and output of a personal computer soundcard
115 were controlled by purpose-written software. Stimuli were delivered to the ear canal via a
116 custom-built amplifier and the earphone of an Otodynamics (London, UK) probe sealed into
117 the ear canal with a soft plastic tip. The signal measured by the probe microphone was input
118 to the soundcard (via a second amplifier) and was high-pass filtered (cut-off at 500 Hz with
119 roll-off slope > 12 dB/octave). The input signal was sampled at a rate of 24 kHz and time-
120 averaged within two separate buffers. This resulted in a pair of replicate recordings, each
121 formed from 250 averages, which were stored on disk and analysed off-line.

122

123 Tone bursts (TB₁, TB₂ and TB₃) were cosine-windowed sinusoids (rise-fall = 2.5 ms; plateau
124 = 0 ms) with centre frequencies 1, 2 and 3 kHz respectively, identical to those used by Killan
125 and Kapadia (2006). Tone bursts were presented sequentially and simultaneously in two
126 combinations: (i) TB₁ and TB₂; and (ii) TB₁, TB₂ and TB₃, which were the same
127 combinations used separately by previous investigators. Simultaneous presentation was
128 achieved via a complex stimulus resulting from the digital addition of the individual tone
129 bursts. All tone bursts were presented using linear averaging at 50, 60 and 70 dB p.e. SPL (as
130 calibrated within a passive 2 cm³ cavity) and a rate of 50/s. Linear averaging was preferred
131 to nonlinear averaging as it preserves linear and nonlinear components of the individual and
132 complex responses. Preliminary testing indicated that stimuli at 50, 60 and 70 dB p.e. SPL
133 corresponded to approximately 35, 45 and 55 dB sensation level respectively, and as such the
134 response characteristic of the cochlea is assumed to be nonlinear (e.g. Kim et al., 1980;
135 Nuttall and Dolan, 1996; Patuzzi, 1996; Rhode and Recio, 2000; Ren, 2002; Gorga et al.,
136 2007).

137

138 2.3. Procedure

139 For each subject, TBOAE recordings were made during a single recording session lasting
140 approximately one hour. Subjects were comfortably seated in a sound-attenuated room, and
141 instructed to remain quiet and still throughout recordings. The probe was sealed in the ear
142 canal with a soft plastic tip and was taped in position for the duration of testing. In order to
143 minimise potential order effects, the presentation order of individual and complex tone bursts
144 was randomised across tone burst level.

145

146 2.4. Analysis

147 At each tone burst level, a mean response waveform was calculated for all individual tone
148 bursts and the two complex stimuli. Two “composite” response waveforms were then
149 generated by summing the mean response waveforms of TB₁ and TB₂ and the mean
150 waveforms of TB₁, TB₂ and TB₃. Thus, for each subject and at each tone burst level, there
151 was a two-tone burst and a three-tone burst composite (i.e. the predicted linear response) and
152 complex (i.e. the simultaneous response) waveform. In order to minimise the influence of
153 linearly scaling stimulus ringing components the first 8 ms (post-stimulus onset) of each
154 composite and complex waveform was discarded from subsequent analysis. Removal of such
155 a substantial portion of the waveform is not unusual when recording TBOAEs (e.g. Rutten,
156 1980; Prieve et al., 1996; Killan and Kapadia, 2006), but is done at the cost of TBOAE
157 response components with latencies shorter than 8 ms. As the focus was on suppression of 1
158 kHz components, and both long and short-latency response components at 1 kHz have
159 latencies longer than 8 ms (e.g. Notaro et al., 2007; Goodman et al., 2009), the loss of this
160 portion of the waveform was not considered material. TBOAE frequency spectra (in dB
161 SPL/Hz) of the composite and complex waveforms and noise spectra from the complex
162 waveforms² were then calculated using a 512-point fast Fourier transform (FFT). These
163 noise spectra were used as estimates of the noise floor. Any values in the composite and
164 complex spectra below the noise floor were replaced by the value of the noise spectrum at
165 that frequency. This ensured any differences subsequently observed between the composite
166 and complex TBOAE spectra arose from points clear of the noise floor. A ‘difference
167 spectrum’ was then calculated by subtracting the complex spectrum from the corresponding

² The complex noise spectrum was used to calculate the estimate of the noise floor for both the composite and complex spectra because results of pilot testing had shown that at all three tone burst levels, the greatest noise levels were contained within the complex response.

168 composite spectrum. Within these difference spectra, suppression is represented by regions
169 of positive values.

170

171 Suppression was estimated along the high frequency slope of the response to TB₁ only. To
172 do this a dominant peak within the region of 1 kHz was identified within the composite
173 spectra. Suppression (in dB) was then estimated as the mean difference in spectral level
174 (composite – complex) within an arbitrary 0.5 kHz-wide frequency band above the frequency
175 of the dominant peak. This approach allowed for the predicted between-subject variation in
176 the frequencies at which suppression occurred (e.g. Probst et al., 1986; Xu et al., 1994;
177 Yoshikawa et al., 2000; Killan and Kapadia, 2006). Paired *t*-tests were used to test any
178 differences in suppression obtained for TB₁ and TB₂ (S_{TB2}) and suppression obtained for TB₁,
179 TB₂ and TB₃ (S_{TB2+3}) for statistical significance using a Bonferroni-corrected significance
180 level of $p < 0.01$.

181

182 3. Results

183

184 The left hand panels of Fig. 1 show the composite (bold) and complex (fine line) response
185 spectra for the combination of TB₁ and TB₂ at 50, 60 and 70 dB p.e. SPL measured from an
186 individual ear. Simultaneous suppression is evident at all three levels as a reduction in
187 amplitude of the complex response relative to the composite spectra, notably along the high
188 frequency side of the response peak at 1.3 kHz. The right hand panel of Fig. 1 shows the
189 resultant difference spectrum (composite – complex). The main feature of these difference
190 spectra is the region of suppression around 1.5 kHz, most notable at 60 and 70 dB p.e. SPL.
191 The left hand panels of Fig. 2 show the spectra obtained for TB₁, TB₂ and TB₃ for the same
192 ear as shown in Fig. 1. Again, suppression is evident along the high frequency side of the
193 dominant peak at 1.3 kHz. This is confirmed by the corresponding difference spectra shown
194 in the right hand panels. Visual inspection of these reveals a tendency for peak suppression
195 to increase as a function of increasing tone burst level.

196

197 Figs 3 and 4 show the mean results ($n = 9$) for TB₁ and TB₂ and TB₁, TB₂ and TB₃
198 respectively. Similar patterns of suppression to those seen for the individual ear are apparent.
199 In Fig. 3 suppression is present in the region of 1.5 kHz. Mean suppression increases from
200 1.5 to 2.6 dB as tone burst level increases from 50 to 60 dB p.e. SPL, with a further increase
201 to 70 dB p.e. SPL resulting in a small reduction in suppression to 2.5 dB. Again, mean
202 suppression of the 1 kHz response peak increased as tone burst level increased from 50 to 60
203 dB p.e. SPL (1.9 to 3.3 dB), with a reduction to 2.2 dB seen for a further increase to 70 dB
204 p.e. SPL. A region of suppression, corresponding to the 2 kHz response peak, is also evident
205 in Fig. 4.

206

207 Fig. 5 allows comparison of suppression obtained for TB₁ with TB₂ (S_{TB2}) versus suppression
208 obtained for TB₁, TB₂ and TB₃ (S_{TB2+3}) at 50, 60 and 70 dB p.e. SPL for all nine subjects
209 (open circles). The diagonal dashed line is the line of equality, i.e. the line along which a
210 data-point would lie if S_{TB2} and S_{TB2+3} were equal. A data-point to the left of this line
211 indicates S_{TB2+3} was greater than S_{TB2} whilst a data-point to the right shows S_{TB2} was greater.
212 At each of the three tone burst levels, ears that exhibited larger S_{TB2} tended to also exhibit
213 larger values of S_{TB2+3} . At 50 dB p.e. SPL, S_{TB2+3} was greater than S_{TB2} in seven out of nine
214 subjects. The data-point representing mean suppression (filled circle) was also located to the
215 left of the line of equality. However, the mean paired difference between S_{TB2} and S_{TB2+3}
216 (0.40 dB) was shown not to be significant ($t = 1.07, p = 0.32$). Similar results were seen at 60
217 dB p.e. SPL, with six ears yielding larger values of S_{TB2+3} . Mean suppression again indicated
218 greater S_{TB2+3} , though the mean difference (0.67 dB) did not reach significance ($t = 1.7, p =$
219 0.16). At 70 dB p.e. SPL four out of nine ears exhibited greater S_{TB2+3} , with mean
220 suppression located to the right of the line of equality, indicating S_{TB2} tended to be greater
221 than S_{TB2+3} . This small difference (0.24 dB) was not significant ($t = -0.66, p = 0.53$). Finally,
222 visual inspection of mean results at 50 and 60 dB p.e. SPL confirms the increase of mean
223 suppression with increasing tone burst level. However, a further increase to 70 dB p.e. SPL
224 resulted in a reduction in mean suppression. This likely reflects a contamination of the
225 TBOAE responses by extended stimulus ringing. Because stimulus ringing is essentially
226 linearly scaling it would not exhibit suppression.

227

228 4. Discussion

229

230 Simultaneous suppression of TBOAEs has been the subject of a number of studies, with
231 suppression of the response to a 1 kHz tone burst (TB₁) described separately for a single
232 additional higher frequency tone burst (TB₂) (Yoshikawa et al., 2000; Killan et al., 2012;
233 Killan et al., 2015) and a pair of additional higher frequency tone bursts (TB₂ and TB₃) (Xu et
234 al., 1994; Killan and Kapadia, 2006). No previous study has measured suppression for both
235 these conditions from the same ears, so that a question that remains unanswered is what effect
236 does the additional presence of TB₃ have on suppression caused by TB₂ alone? A
237 comparison of data from two separate studies of simultaneous suppression of TBOAEs
238 (Killan and Kapadia, 2006; Killan et al., 2015) lends support to suppression being reduced;
239 however, it is not clear whether this simply represents differences between the methodologies
240 and ears used by the two studies. In simple terms, two alternative possibilities exist: TB₃
241 causes an increase in suppression or TB₃ has no effect on suppression. The results of the
242 present study demonstrate that whilst the additional presence of TB₃ caused both an increase
243 and reduction in suppression in individual ears, it had no significant effect on mean
244 suppression caused by TB₂ at all three tone burst levels. It is therefore considered likely that
245 the apparent reduction in suppression reported for two and three-tone burst combinations by
246 Killan et al. (2015) and Killan and Kapadia (2006) simply reflects methodological and ear
247 differences.

248

249 The present study used the same tone burst combinations as previous investigators (i.e. 1 and
250 2 kHz and 1, 2 and 3 kHz). This allowed the specific question relating to the comparison of
251 data reported by Killan and Kapadia (2006) and Killan et al. (2015) to be addressed.

252 However, this choice of frequencies was likely to limit the outcomes possible within the
253 present study. For example, for an increase in suppression to occur it can be argued that TB₃
254 alone has to be capable of producing suppression of either the 1 kHz response component that
255 originates from its tonotopic place (e.g. Kemp and Chum, 1980; Tavartkiladze et al., 1994;
256 Killan et al., 2012; Moleti et al., 2013) or the short-latency basal-source component (e.g.
257 Yates and Withnell, 1999; Withnell et al., 2008; Moleti et al., 2013; Lewis and Goodman,
258 2015). Contrary to this, previous simultaneous suppression of TBOAEs data show a 3 kHz
259 tone burst caused little or no suppression of response components at 1 kHz (Yoshikawa et al.,
260 2000; Killan et al., 2012; Killan et al., 2015). The current data are also consistent with recent
261 research that has shown the basal-source response component originates from a BM region
262 located approximately 3/5-octave basal to its tonotopic place (Lewis and Goodman, 2015). A
263 3 kHz tone burst is too remote to cause suppression of those basal-source 1 kHz components
264 that were preserved by the time-window used in this and previous studies. In this regard, it
265 can be argued that the present data are compatible with previously proposed mechanisms for
266 simultaneous suppression of TBOAEs (e.g. Yates and Withnell, 1999; Killan et al., 2012,
267 2015).

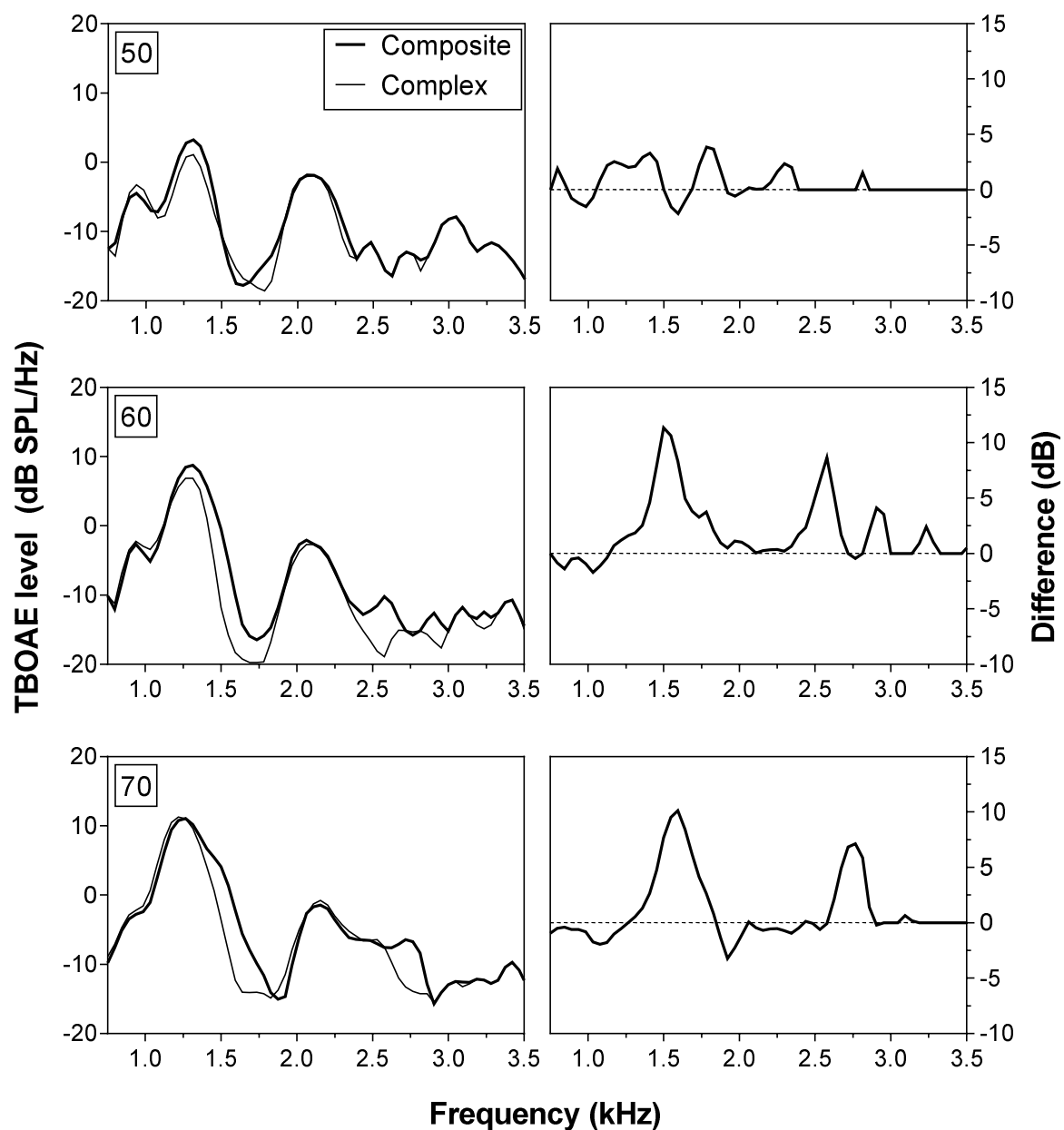
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269 To better understand this suppression behaviour, further investigation is warranted using tone
270 bursts with different frequencies that are more likely to cause interactions necessary for
271 significant suppression to occur. Further investigation could also address whether the results
272 from this small-scale study hold for large numbers of subjects, or whether there are sub-
273 groups that exhibit one of the different suppression behaviours outlined above. Recording
274 techniques that preserve the short-latency basal-source component (e.g. Keefe, 1998;
275 Withnell et al., 2008) and analysis techniques that decompose the TBOAE in the time and
276 frequency domain (e.g. Jędrzejczak et al., 2004; Moleti et al., 2012) should be also be utilised.

277 However, the present results provide data against which the predictions of cochlear models
278 can be compared.

279

Accepted proof

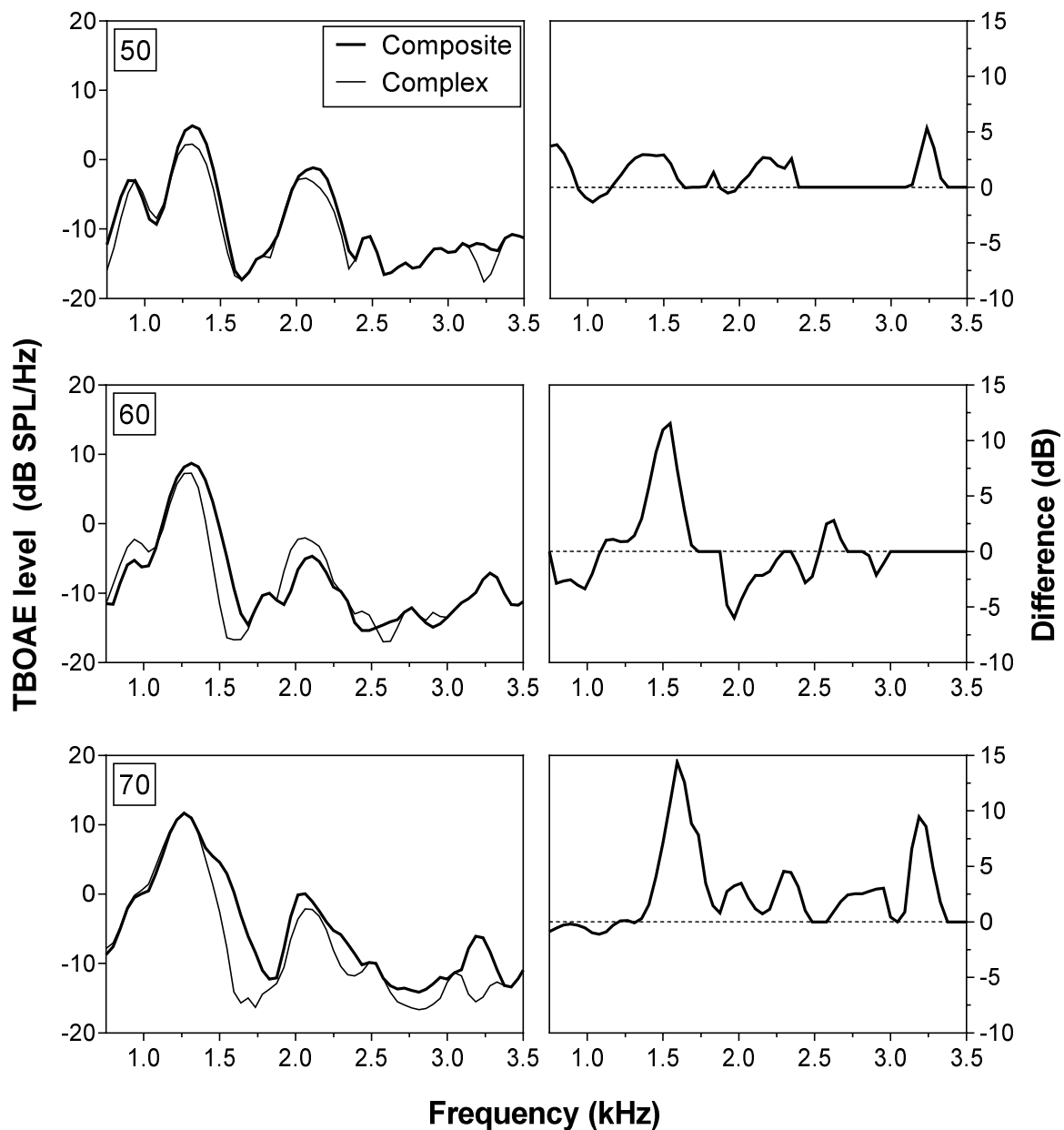


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281

282 **Fig. 1. Composite (bold line) and complex (fine line) spectra and the corresponding**
 283 **difference spectra for TB₁ and TB₂ at 50, 60 and 70 dB p.e. SPL obtained from an**
 284 **individual ear.**

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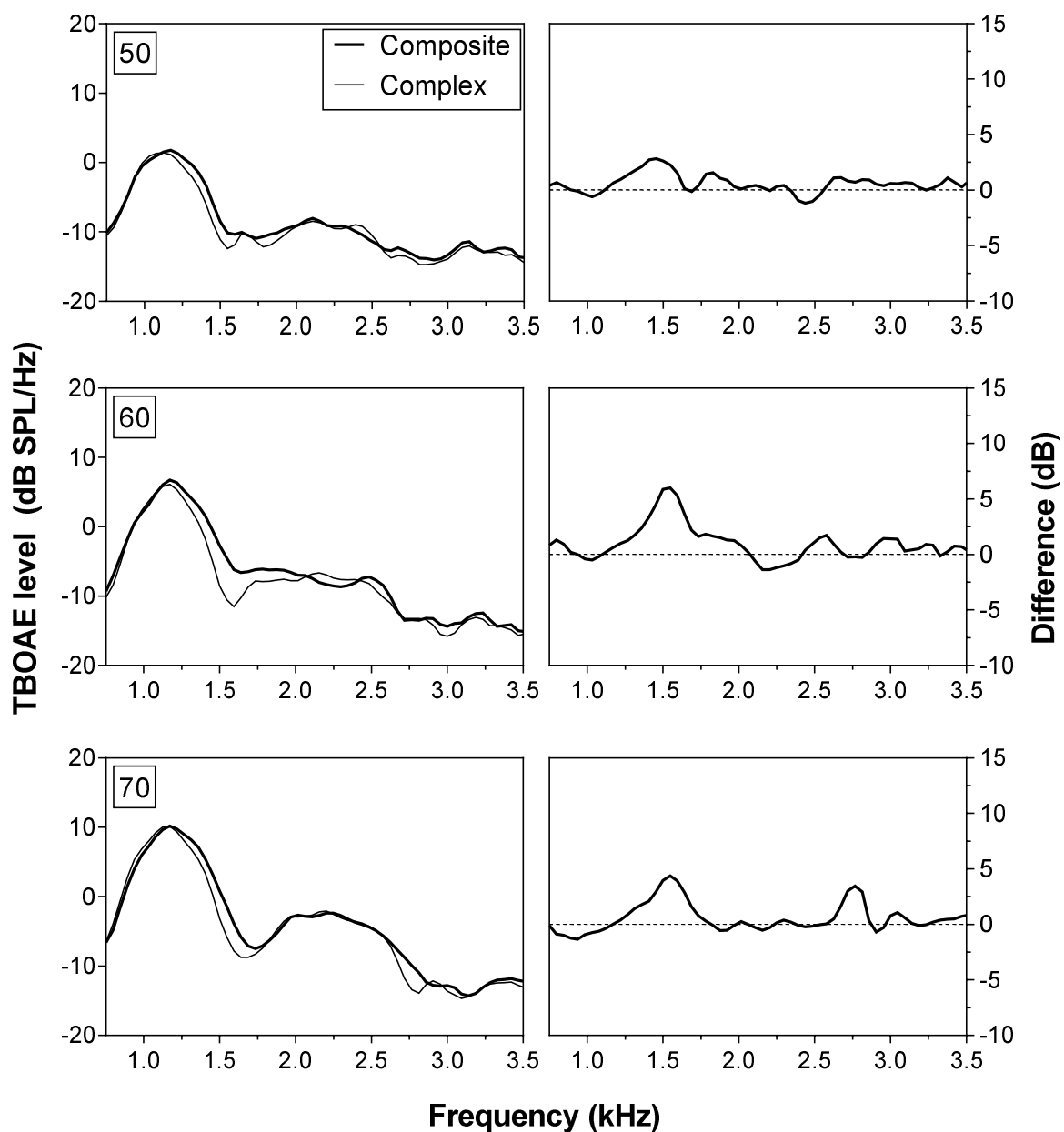


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289 **Fig. 2. Composite (bold line) and complex (fine line) spectra and the corresponding**
 290 **difference spectra for TB₁, TB₂ and TB₃ at 50, 60 and 70 dB p.e. SPL from the same**
 291 **individual ear shown in Fig. 1.**

292

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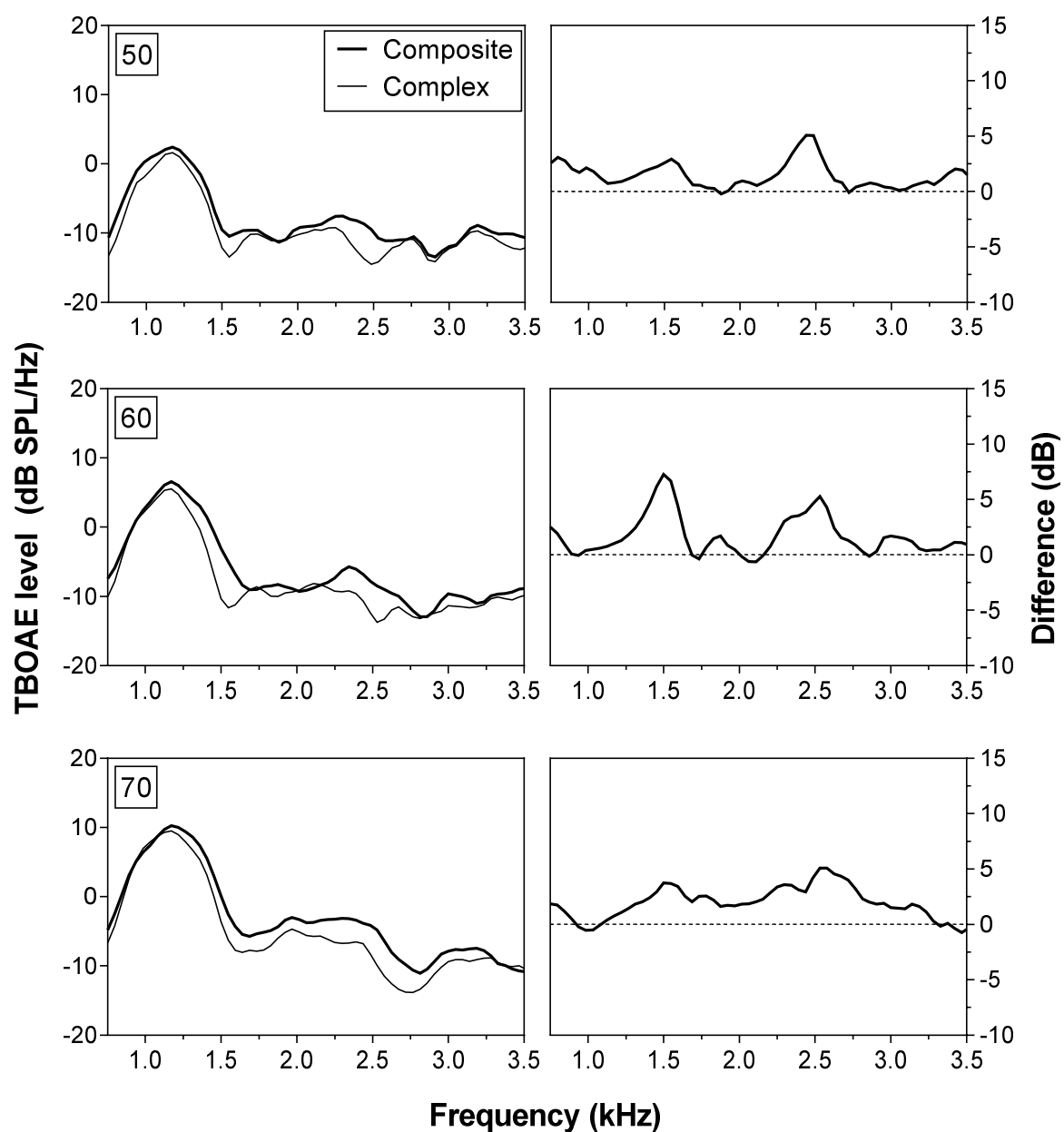
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296 **Fig. 3. Mean composite (bold line) and complex (fine line) spectra and the**
297 **corresponding difference spectra for TB₁ and TB₂ at 50, 60 and 70 dB p.e. SPL.**

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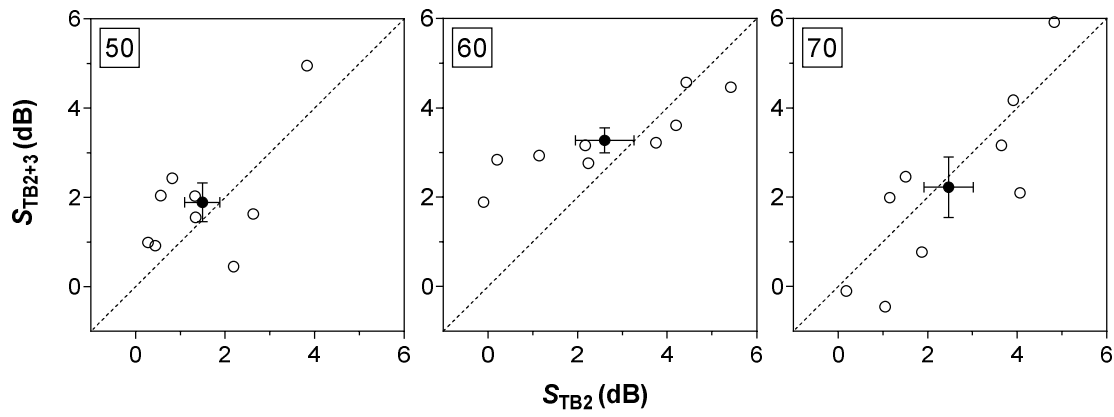
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303 **Fig. 4. Mean composite (bold line) and complex (fine line) spectra and the**
304 **corresponding difference spectra for TB₁, TB₂ and TB₃ at 50, 60 and 70 dB p.e. SPL.**

305

306

307



308

309

310 **Fig. 5. Scatter plots of S_{TB2} and S_{TB2+3} for individual ear (open circles) at 50, 60 and 70**
 311 **dB p.e. SPL. Mean values (± 1 standard error) is also shown (filled circles). The dashed**
 312 **diagonal line is the line of equality.**

313

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