

Thank you for the Music – or not?!

Jasmin Pfeifer

Phonetics Laboratory, Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication, University of
Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Institute for Language and Information, Heinrich-Heine University, Düsseldorf, Germany

Congenital Amusia is an innate perception disorder that has a negative influence music and language perception. It is not caused by insufficient exposure to music, a hearing deficiency or brain damage and it is estimated that about 4 % of the population are affected by it.

Congenital amusics face lifelong impairments in the musical domain. They can have problems with pitch discrimination, rhythm discrimination or both. Many amusics have difficulties with:

- Recognizing familiar melodies without lyrics
- Recognizing out of tune singing
- Differentiating notes of different pitches
- Reproducing a tone or melody correctly
- Discriminating or reproducing a rhythmic pattern

Some amusics are simply indifferent towards music, while in extreme cases, their symptoms can be so severe that music sounds like ‘banging’ to them. Congenital amusia also influences speech perception, as we also utilize pitch in language, i.e. for intonation.

In this presentation, I will explain what congenital amusia is, what the symptoms are and how it is diagnosed. The influence of amusia on music and speech perception will be explained as well. In addition, current studies that are conducted in Amsterdam and Düsseldorf will be presented.

About the speaker:

Jasmin Pfeifer is a PhD-researcher at the Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication and at the Heinrich-Heine-University in Germany. She completed her Bachelors and Masters degree in general linguistics in Düsseldorf focusing phonetics, phonology, psycho- and neurolinguistics.

Her research is about congenital amusia, a neuro-developmental disorder that negatively affects music and language perception.