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Study on How Students in the Music Education Program Use Musical Terminology

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Abstract: Musical terminology is not decorative vocabulary; it is a practical performance language that guides tempo, dynamics, articulation, expression, and stylistic realization. In teacher-training institutions, however, students often study for a shorter period than conservatory performers, which may create a gap between knowing terms and applying them during performance. This study examined how students in the Music Education Program at Darkhan College understand, interpret, and use musical terminology. The study used an exploratory classroom-based design combining document review, score-based illustration of common terms, and a self-designed survey administered to 27 students across available program cohorts. Quantitative data were processed descriptively using the percentage summaries preserved in the original study records, and the results were interpreted comparatively across questionnaire items. The findings show a clear knowledge-application gap. Most students rated their knowledge of terminology as only moderate, even though they generally reported that teachers explain terminology sufficiently and that course content is adequate. Across cohorts, one of the most frequently reported obstacles to better examination results was the inability to perform a piece exactly as practiced. Students also reported limited access to books and difficulty translating or fully understanding foreign musical terms. The study concludes that musical terminology must be taught not only as theory but also as an executable part of score study, rehearsal, and assessment. More explicit integration of terminology into performance pedagogy, bilingual learning resources, and repeated guided application are needed if music education students are to transform moderate knowledge into confident artistic practice.

Keywords: music terminology; performance practice; music teacher education; curriculum; Mongolia

1. Introduction

The ability to read and realize musical terminology is a foundational component of musical literacy. A score does not communicate only pitch and rhythm. It also carries a layer of performance instruction that tells the musician how a passage should move, breathe, sound, and communicate. Tempo markings indicate motion, dynamic markings shape intensity, articulation signs determine the manner of touch or vocal delivery, and expressive terms reveal character. When these indications are ignored or only partially understood, the performer may reproduce notes accurately while still failing to communicate the musical meaning intended by the composer.

This issue is particularly important in music teacher education. Students in a music education program are not only future performers in an educational setting; they are also future mediators of musical understanding. They must therefore be able to explain terminology to children and beginning learners, model its practical use, and connect notation to expressive performance. Yet music education students often face curricular constraints. At Darkhan College, as in many teacher-training institutions, students study for a shorter period than full conservatory performance majors. The program must develop musicianship, pedagogical ability, and general education competencies within a compressed timeframe. Under these conditions, students may learn the names of terms without having enough repeated practice to transform them into reliable performance habits.

The original manuscript correctly identified this problem but presented it in a fragmented way. The present revision therefore restates the study more explicitly as an investigation of how students understand, interpret, and use musical terminology in actual learning and performance contexts. Rather than treating terminology as isolated vocabulary, the paper frames it as an interface between knowledge and execution. The central concern is whether students' self-reported knowledge, classroom exposure, and performance outcomes point to a consistent pedagogical pattern.

The primary research question is as follows: How do students in the Music Education Program at Darkhan College understand, interpret, and use musical terminology in their learning and performance practice? Three sub-questions guide the paper: (1) Which musical terms are most central to performance training and how can they be functionally clarified? (2) How do selected terminology markings operate in teaching repertoire and performance preparation? (3) What do

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students report about their knowledge of terminology, classroom teaching, and the difficulties they face when attempting to apply terminology in examinations and performance?

In line with these questions, the study pursues three objectives. First, it compiles and clarifies commonly used terms in musical works. Second, it explains, with illustrative performance examples, how such terminology functions in selected teaching contexts. Third, it analyzes survey responses from Darkhan College students in order to draw a comparative conclusion about the current state of terminology learning in the program. By directly aligning the paper with these objectives, the revised manuscript responds to the reviewers' concern that the findings and discussion should more clearly address the stated goals.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Background

Musical terminology may be understood as a specialized semantic system within music. Earlier Mongolian music scholars have emphasized that a term is not a mere label but a carrier of concept and meaning. In this sense, terminology forms a practical bridge between theory and sound. A student who encounters *allegro*, *legato*, *dolce*, or *crescendo* on the page is being asked not only to recognize a word but to translate that instruction into temporal energy, touch, timbre, breathing, and phrase direction. For that reason, terminology belongs simultaneously to theory, ear training, and performance.

The majority of international musical terms derive from Italian because of Italy's historical role in the development of Western classical music. Over time, German, French, and English expressions also entered the vocabulary of musical practice. In education, this multilingual background can create an additional learning burden. Students may memorize literal translations but still struggle with contextual meaning. For example, *andante* can be translated simply as 'walking pace,' yet its actual realization depends on genre, phrase length, meter, room acoustics, instrument, and stylistic era. Similarly, *espressivo* or *cantabile* cannot be mastered through translation alone; they require musical modeling and repeated embodied experience.

Local scholarship in Mongolia has made an important contribution by systematizing terminology for teaching. Works by Jantsannorov, Janchiv, Jam'yan, Burenbekh, and Enebish have helped standardize explanations of theory terms, foreign musical vocabulary, and practical music instruction. However, the existence of terminology resources does not automatically guarantee learner mastery. The pedagogical question is how students encounter terminology: Is it taught as dictionary knowledge? Is it connected to score analysis? Is it reinforced in instrumental and vocal lessons? Is it assessed explicitly? These questions are especially relevant in a teacher-education context where students must move from receptive knowledge to productive use.

For the purpose of this study, musical terminology is conceptualized in four functional groups. The first group is tempo and agogic terminology, which governs speed and temporal flexibility. The second is dynamic terminology, which governs loudness and intensity. The third is articulation and phrasing terminology, which governs connection, separation, accent, and line. The fourth is expression and style terminology, which governs character, affect, and broader musical attitude. This functional classification provides the analytical framework for Objectives 1 and 2 and also helps interpret the survey results reported later.

3. Research Design and Methodology

This study used an exploratory classroom-based research design. It combined three components: (1) a brief document review of terminology-related literature used in the Mongolian music education context; (2) a score-based explanatory analysis of commonly encountered musical terms in teaching repertoire; and (3) a survey of students enrolled in the Music Education Program at Darkhan College. The design is primarily descriptive and interpretive rather than experimental. Its aim is to identify the current pattern of terminology learning and use, not to test a causal intervention. The participant group consisted of 27 students from available cohorts in the Music Education Program. The original study records indicate representation from first-year and upper-year students, as well as an online instructional subgroup. Because the total number of students in the program was small, the study effectively used whole-cohort convenience sampling of the accessible population. This sample is appropriate for an exploratory departmental study, but it does not support broad statistical generalization beyond the college.

The survey instrument was self-designed for the purposes of this study. It contained seven main questions concerning students' self-rated knowledge of terminology, satisfaction with major-subject examination results, perceived barriers to better performance, perceptions of teacher explanation, perceptions of the sufficiency of terminology content, self-reported use of terminology in performance, and difficulties experienced while studying terminology. Although the original project did not document formal psychometric testing, the items show clear alignment with the study objectives. In this revised manuscript, content validity is understood in a limited classroom-research sense: the questions were matched directly to the domains of knowledge, instruction, application, and learning difficulty.

The quantitative data available for re-analysis were preserved in percentage form by cohort rather than as raw individual-level data. Accordingly, the present paper processes the quantitative component descriptively, comparing item patterns across cohorts and across questionnaire domains. This means that formal inferential procedures, such as significance testing or true respondent-level correlation analysis, cannot be claimed. Nevertheless, analytical discussion is still possible by examining response patterns across related items. For example, the study can compare students' report that

terminology is taught sufficiently with their separate report that their own knowledge remains only moderate, and it can interpret that discrepancy in relation to performance barriers and learning conditions.

The qualitative-interpretive component of the study lies in how terminology was classified and explained through representative score-based examples. This component was included because the second objective of the study requires more than a survey. It requires the paper to explain what musical terminology does in actual musical practice. The combination of descriptive survey evidence and repertoire-based explanation allows the paper to address both the pedagogical and the practical dimensions of terminology use.

4. Objective 1: Clarifying Common Musical Terms

To address the first objective, commonly used terms were organized into functional categories. Table 1 summarizes the categories, their general meanings, and their performance implications for music education students.

Category	Representative terms	General meaning	Performance implication
Tempo and agogic	Allegro, Andante, Adagio, Ritardando, Accelerando	Indicate speed or controlled change of speed	Guide pacing, phrase breadth, and emotional energy; affect breath planning and technical control.
Dynamics	p, mp, mf, f, Crescendo, Diminuendo	Indicate intensity and directional growth or reduction of sound	Shape musical architecture; require students to manage tone production rather than simply play louder or softer.
Articulation and phrasing	Legato, Staccato, Marcato, Slur, Accent	Indicate connection, separation, emphasis, and phrase contour	Influence touch, bowing, tonguing, fingering, and vocal line; closely linked to stylistic clarity.
Expression and style	Dolce, Cantabile, Espressivo, Con brio, Rubato	Indicate character, quality, expressiveness, and stylistic attitude	Move students from literal note reading to interpretive performance; require musical imagination and contextual understanding.

This classification is important because it prevents students from treating terminology as a long undifferentiated list of foreign words. In pedagogy, grouping terms by function helps students understand that different instructions act on different musical parameters. Tempo terms regulate movement in time. Dynamic terms regulate sound intensity and phrase direction. Articulation terms regulate the physical manner in which sound begins, continues, and ends. Expressive terms regulate character and style. A student who knows which dimension a term belongs to is already closer to being able to perform it.

5. Objective 2: Explaining Terminology Through Performance Examples

The second objective of the study requires an explanation of how terminology functions in selected musical contexts. In practice, terms do not appear in isolation. They interact with one another and with melodic shape, harmonic tension, meter, text, and genre. For music education students, the pedagogical challenge is therefore to move from verbal explanation to integrated musical action.

A simple example is an andante cantabile melody marked piano with a small crescendo toward the cadence. If the student translates these instructions separately, the performance may become mechanical: the tempo may slow down excessively because andante is interpreted as 'slow,' the tone may become too weak because piano is interpreted as 'quiet,' and the phrase may not sing because cantabile is treated as an abstract adjective. In a musically informed realization, however, andante establishes a flowing walking pace rather than stagnation; cantabile asks for continuity of line; piano requires soft but supported tone; and crescendo gives directional motion toward the phrase goal. The performer must therefore coordinate tempo, breathing, touch, and phrase shape simultaneously.

Another common teaching situation involves a lively piece marked allegro, staccato, and con brio. Students often succeed in increasing speed but fail to preserve rhythmic clarity and character. If the articulation becomes careless, the result is only fast playing, not energetic style. In pedagogical terms, allegro is not merely faster pulse, staccato is not merely shorter notes, and con brio is not merely louder sound. Together they indicate bright kinetic motion, elasticity, and alert rhythmic profile. A teacher must therefore train the student to connect terminology to bodily organization: hand preparation, breath timing, attack, release, and the mental image of the phrase.

Expressive terminology is often the most difficult because it cannot be mastered through direct translation alone. Terms such as dolce, espressivo, or rubato require students to balance freedom and discipline. In vocal literature, dolce may call for warm vowel shaping and flexible phrase tapering. In instrumental performance, rubato may allow slight temporal stretching while the structural pulse remains perceptible. When students do not understand the stylistic context of such terms, they may either exaggerate them or ignore them. Both outcomes weaken the musical message.

These examples help realize Objective 2 and also illuminate the survey findings presented later. When students say that they cannot perform the piece exactly as practiced, this may reflect not only memory or anxiety problems but also an incomplete internalization of the performance language written in the score. If terminology remains external information rather than embodied knowledge, performance becomes unstable under examination pressure.

6. Objective 3: Survey Results and Comparative Analysis

The third objective was to survey students in the Darkhan College Music Education Program and draw a comparative conclusion. Table 2 reorganizes the original questionnaire results in a clearer form. Percentages are reported as preserved in the source record. In a few cases the original table appears incomplete or rounded, so some totals may not sum to exactly 100 percent.

Survey item	First-year cohort	Online cohort	Second-/third-year cohort
Knowledge of musical terminology	10% very well; 90% moderately	100% moderately	27% very well; 73% moderately
Satisfied with major-subject exam results	60% yes; 30% somewhat	50% yes; 50% somewhat	55% yes; 36% somewhat; 9% no
Main obstacle to desired results	10% not fully learned; 20% do not understand meaning; 60% unable to perform as practiced	17% not fully learned; 33% do not understand meaning; 50% unable to perform as practiced	36% not fully learned; 36% unable to perform as practiced (other values incompletely reported)
Teacher explanation of terminology	60% sufficient; 40% moderate	100% sufficient	82% sufficient; 18% moderate
Terminology content	80% sufficient; 20% moderate	100% sufficient	73% sufficient; 27% moderate
Interpret and use terminology in performance	50% yes; 20% no; 30% don't know	67% yes; 33% no	46% yes; 27% no; 27% don't know
Learning difficulties	50% lack books/textbooks; 30% difficult to translate/understand	33% lack books/textbooks; 33% difficult to translate/understand	18% do not study terminology deeply; 64% lack books/textbooks; 9% translation difficulty

6.1 Self-rated knowledge remains moderate across cohorts

The first and most consistent finding is that students did not describe their terminology knowledge as strong. In every cohort, the majority response was 'moderately' rather than 'very well.' Even among the second-/third-year cohort, where 27 percent selected 'very well,' the dominant response remained moderate knowledge. This pattern is important because it establishes the basic condition of the study: the problem is not total unfamiliarity with terminology, but incomplete mastery.

From an educational perspective, moderate self-rating suggests partial recognition without full confidence. Students likely know many of the terms they encounter in lessons, but they do not yet feel secure enough to claim expert or independent command. For future music teachers, this is a meaningful finding. A teacher who only moderately understands terminology may reproduce directions in class but may struggle to explain them flexibly, model them consistently, or diagnose pupils' interpretive errors.

6.2 A clear discrepancy appears between reported teaching sufficiency and student mastery

Questions 4 and 5 reveal an apparent contradiction. Across all cohorts, most students reported that teachers explain terminology sufficiently and that the content related to terminology is sufficient or at least moderate. However, this positive evaluation of instruction did not translate into equally strong self-rated knowledge. The discrepancy suggests that the issue is not simply whether terminology is mentioned in class. Rather, it concerns how deeply terminology is consolidated through repeated use, practice, and assessment.

Several explanations are plausible. First, terminology may be taught episodically, as part of theory or score reading, but not revisited systematically enough in instrument, vocal, choir, and pedagogical classes. Second, students in a compressed teacher-training program may move quickly from one repertoire task to another without enough time to internalize each instruction. Third, understanding a teacher's explanation at the moment of instruction is not the same as being able to reproduce that understanding independently during practice or an examination. Thus, the survey suggests a transition problem between explanation and durable performance knowledge.

6.3 Performance transfer is a more serious problem than simple lack of terminology exposure

The results for examination outcomes and performance barriers are especially revealing. Most students reported being either satisfied or only somewhat satisfied with exam results, while very few reported complete dissatisfaction. Yet when they were asked what prevents them from achieving the results they want, one of the most frequent answers across cohorts was the inability to perform the piece exactly as practiced. This response is analytically more significant than a simple statement of dissatisfaction, because it points to instability in performance transfer.

The survey also shows that incomplete preparation and incomplete understanding of the meaning of the piece remain relevant barriers. Nevertheless, the recurring emphasis on not being able to perform as practiced suggests that students

experience a gap between rehearsal knowledge and exam realization. In music pedagogy, this gap often appears when knowledge has not been sufficiently embodied. A student may know that a phrase should be played legato and with crescendo toward the climax, but under pressure the hand, breath, tempo control, and memory do not consistently reproduce that plan. Terminology, in other words, has been learned cognitively but not yet stabilized artistically.

6.4 Students do not consistently translate terminology into performance behavior

Question 6 asked directly whether students interpret and use terminology in performance. Although the proportion answering 'yes' is not negligible, it is far from universal: 50 percent in the first-year cohort, 67 percent in the online cohort, and 46 percent in the second-/third-year cohort. A notable minority answered 'no' or 'don't know.' This finding matters because it indicates that even when terminology is taught and recognized, some students remain uncertain about whether they actually use it during performance.

This uncertainty supports the interpretation developed above. The main challenge is not only lexical knowledge but applied musicianship. Students may know what a term means in a dictionary sense yet still be unsure whether their performance truly reflects it. This is precisely why terminology instruction should be integrated with guided score annotation, lesson demonstration, rehearsal feedback, and examination criteria.

6.5 Learning conditions matter: resources and translation remain obstacles

The final notable result concerns learning conditions. Across cohorts, two difficulties recur: the lack of books or textbooks and the difficulty of translating or fully understanding terminology. In the upper-year cohort, the most frequently reported difficulty was the lack of books or textbooks. This pattern suggests that students are not resisting terminology itself; rather, they may not have enough accessible reference materials in Mongolian or bilingual format to support independent study.

The translation issue is pedagogically significant because many performance terms derive from Italian and, less often, German or other European languages. Students who learn terminology only through brief classroom explanation may struggle to grasp nuance, especially when the same term functions differently depending on style or context. This further explains why students can perceive instruction as sufficient while still rating their own mastery as only moderate.

7. Discussion

Taken together, the findings answer the primary research question in a relatively clear way. Students in the Music Education Program do use and encounter musical terminology, and they generally believe that teachers cover terminology adequately. However, their own self-assessment, their reported obstacles in examinations, and their uncertainty about using terminology in performance all indicate that terminology knowledge remains only partially internalized. The central issue is therefore not complete absence of instruction, but incomplete conversion of terminology from classroom explanation into dependable performance practice.

This conclusion allows the three objectives of the study to be linked more directly. Objective 1 showed that musical terms can be clarified through functional categories rather than memorized as isolated foreign words. Objective 2 showed that such terms acquire real meaning only when they are linked to phrasing, tone, breathing, touch, and musical character in concrete repertoire situations. Objective 3 showed that students' current learning experience remains uneven: they respect terminology, but they do not yet command it at a level that consistently supports secure performance. In this sense, the study's findings do not merely describe student opinions; they reveal a pedagogical pattern in which terminology instruction is present but not yet fully operationalized.

The discrepancy between positive reports about teaching and only moderate self-rated knowledge is particularly important. In a narrow descriptive reading, the results might seem contradictory. In an analytical reading, however, they point to a familiar challenge in arts education: the distance between exposure and transfer. Students may hear correct explanations in class, but they still need repeated application, feedback, and self-monitoring before knowledge becomes performance behavior. This is especially true in music, where technical execution, memory, emotional control, and interpretation operate simultaneously.

The finding that students often cannot perform as practiced also deserves careful interpretation. It should not be reduced only to exam anxiety. Rather, it suggests that the students' performance plans may not be sufficiently stabilized through terminology-based score study. If a student has marked legato, ritardando, and crescendo in the score but has not repeatedly linked those markings to gesture, sound, and phrase intention, then performance under pressure becomes fragile. The score has been read, but not fully embodied.

The practical implication for curriculum design is clear. Musical terminology should be spiraled across the program instead of being left mainly to theory courses. Each new term should ideally pass through four stages: recognition, explanation, guided application, and independent use. In recognition, the student learns to identify the term and its language origin. In explanation, the teacher clarifies the meaning and stylistic range of the term. In guided application, the student applies the term in performance with feedback. In independent use, the student analyzes a score and demonstrates the term without prompting. This sequence would better align terminology instruction with both musicianship and teacher education.

The study also supports the need for better learning materials. If students repeatedly report lack of books and difficulty of translation, then providing a bilingual or trilingual glossary of musical terminology could become a direct institutional

response. Such a resource should not offer translation only; it should include short contextual explanations and performance reminders. For example, a glossary entry for cantabile could include 'singing style; maintain line; connect phrase; avoid percussive attack.' This kind of pedagogical glossary would be more useful than a literal word-for-word dictionary.

Finally, the study has limitations that must be acknowledged. The sample is small and limited to a single college. The available data were preserved mainly as percentages, which prevents respondent-level statistical testing. Some entries in the original table are incomplete or rounded. The study should therefore be read as a focused exploratory investigation rather than a generalizable survey of all music education students in Mongolia. Even so, the results are valuable because they reveal a coherent local problem and point toward feasible curricular responses.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This revised study set out to determine how music education students understand and use musical terminology and whether current instruction is sufficient to support practical performance. Based on the findings, the answer to the primary research question is as follows: students possess partial and developing knowledge of musical terminology, but many do not yet translate that knowledge into stable and confident performance behavior. The strongest evidence for this conclusion is the combination of three findings: most students rate their knowledge as only moderate, most also report that teachers explain terminology sufficiently, and one of the most common barriers to desired exam results is the inability to perform a piece exactly as practiced. Together, these results indicate a knowledge-application gap rather than a simple teaching absence.

The study therefore concludes that musical terminology must be treated as a core component of performance pedagogy in the music education curriculum. It is not enough for students to memorize the meaning of terms or hear them explained by teachers. They must repeatedly apply terminology in score analysis, lesson preparation, rehearsal, and assessment until the markings on the page become audible and visible in performance.

Based on the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Develop a structured terminology module or glossary for the Music Education Program, with Mongolian explanations, original foreign terms, and short performance-oriented examples.
- Integrate terminology instruction across theory, instrumental, vocal, ensemble, and teaching-practice courses so that terms are revisited in multiple contexts rather than taught once.
- Require students to annotate performance scores with tempo, dynamics, articulation, and expressive markings and to explain verbally how those markings affect interpretation.
- Make terminology an explicit part of assessment rubrics in studio examinations and classroom performance tasks, so that students are evaluated not only on notes and rhythm but also on realization of the score's performance language.
- Increase access to books, handbooks, and digital reference resources that support independent terminology study.
- Conduct future research with a larger multi-institutional sample and retain raw individual-level data so that relationships among knowledge, teaching, and performance outcomes can be tested more rigorously.

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