Semantic Conversion between Musical Terms and Common Terms

JingfangWu
School of Foreign Languages and Cultures
Nanjing Normal University
Nanjing, China

Shaojun Wang
School of Humanities, Hunan City University
Yiyang, China

Abstract

Like other terms for special use, musical terms is a language symbol in the professional field with its distinctive meaning. But some of them actually come from common words. On the other hand, with the progress of society and the improvement of cultural communication, musical terms have also come into the common use. This interconversion features the semantic change between common terms and musical terms, including lexical transfer, lexical derivation, lexical narrowing, metaphor and adding denotation orattitude. The semantic change may result from the need for social change, people's language usage and cognitive habits.

Key Words: musical terms; common terms; conversion; semantic change; reasons

1. Introduction

Musical terms, like other professional terms, have specific semantic characteristics and serve as precise expressions in musical communication. Musical terms cover concepts such as musical elements, instruments, techniques, and forms that help musicians communicate their intentions accurately. Some musical terms derive from common terms that are widely used in everyday life. These common terms are given specific musical meanings and interpretations in the music field and become part of the musical terms. As society changes and cultural exchange intensifies, some musical terms have gradually entered our daily life and people begin to use some of them in daily communication.

Our aim in this article is to explore the characteristics of the semantic changes between the conversion of musical terms and common terms, and to investigate the reasons for these changes. By delving into the process of conversion between music terms and common terms, we have found the features of semantic changes including lexical derivation, lexical expansion, lexical narrowing and addition of lexical color meaning, metaphor and simile. The reason for the conversion may go to the psychological and social factors.

2. Conversion Between Musical Terms and Common Terms

2.1 Musical Terms from Common Terms

The development of musical term has a long history of being specialized terms used in specific fields to facilitate the understanding, creation, education, and performance of music. Some of them are rooted in people's daily life and experience. These terms have come to the fields of musicology, music education, and music theory so as to become a very important tool and linguistic unit to help people understand the connotation of music concept.
(1) The *orchestra* contrived to produce some of its best playing for years[1].

"Orchestra" is a term for music genres. Originally, it referred to an area in front of the semicircular stage in ancient Greek theaters used for performances and choral singing. In ancient Greek theater, the actors and chorus usually performed on this area while the audience sat at the back of the stage. Over time, the meaning of the word "orchestra"extended to the field of music, from the stage to a musical group consisting of multiple instruments or a musical organization consisting of a group of instrumentalists including string players.

Here are more similar examples, *country, folk, Rock, Pop, trance, electro, cycle, suite, march, vocal etc.*

(2) The saxophonist took a breathtaking *break*, showcasing his improvisation skills.
"Break" is a term for music elements, referring to "interrupt or separate", which can be the breaking of an object or the suspension of an activity, as in "*break* a glass" or "take a *break*". In (2), "break" is a musical term that is derived from the meaning of a short break and refers to a breakthrough or a striking part of a piece of music. It is usually a solo or a prominent melodic passage in a piece that draws the listeners' attention.

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[1]All the examples in this article are from the Internet.

Here are more similar examples, *accent, beat, refrain, bridge, hook, exposition, trill, fill, scale, speed etc.*

(3) For each piece the orchestra will perform, a single member is elected as concert*master*.

"Concertmaster" is a term for musical singing and performance. Both in English and Chinese, "master" is used as a common term meaning a person with the best position and the highest status, and then "master" was transferred to the field of music, in the form of "concertmaster", referring to the chief violinist in the orchestra, who is the violinist with the higher technical level and musicianship in the orchestra.

More examples are *ponticello, guomen[2], koufeng[3], retrograde, covered* etc.

(4) The composer incorporated *imitation* in the symphony, where the melodic motif was echoed and repeated by different instruments throughout the piece.

"Imitation" is a term for musical composition, which originally means an act of copying the way a person talks and behaves. In (4), "imitation" is used as a musical technique term, referring to the reappearance of a motif or its fragment in a different voice in a piece of music. We can see that the common meaning of "imitation" has been transposed into musical terminology to describe the repeat of musical passages.

Here are more examples, *repetition, bar, motive, climax, imitation, development* etc.

When common terms are converted to musical terms, they take on distinct characteristics. Especially, music is intangible, so these converted terms become more abstract, representing specific musical expressions or concepts in a conceptual manner. This abstractness results in a broader interpretation within the musical context.

2.2 Musical Terms intoCommonTerms

With the rapid development of society and the advancement of technology, music culture is becoming more and more popular, and music-related terms have also given rise to new meanings in the process of discourse. The use of terms have been extended to other non-musical fields, gradually generating new meanings, applicable to a wider range of linguistic contexts, and displaying a strong vitality. This phenomenon of linguistic conversion can be called the "generalization of terms". Many of the musical terms have entered people's daily life and obtain some new meaning.

(5) Mr Jenkins' arguments for stability struck a *chord*with Europe's two most powerful politicians.

When "chord" is used as a musical term, it means the harmonic structure formed by the simultaneous sounding of multiple notes. In (5), the musical term "chord" is used as a common term with similar meaning, indicating that a statement or viewpoint resonates or is shared by two politicians.

(6) It had come to a kind of *crescendo* with voter registration drives and the Voting Rights Act of 1964.

The musical term "crescendo" refers to the way in which the music is played with a gradual increase in volume or intensity. In our daily life, "crescendo" metaphorically refers to a gradual increase or buildup of intensity, momentum, or activity. Here, "crescendo" implies that the efforts and actions related to voter registration and the *Voting Rights Act* reached a peak or turning point in terms of their impact and significance. The following are more examples.

(7) We will discuss the *consonance* in the meeting.

(8) There may be evolutionary forces behind cognitive *dissonance* reduction.

(9) The book contrasts modern civilization with the ideal of the noble savage who lived in *harmony* with nature.

(10) Different cultural features of ethnic groups are in tune with one another and work out a *melody*.

(11) In our modern life, we have lost the *rhythm* between action and rest.

(12) He concluded that it was no higher salaries or better research facilities alone, but also the quicker *tempo* that lure them.

(13) His voice had a deep *timbre*.

(14) There is no body language or voice *tonality* to convey nuances and emotions.

(15) The international community is ready to work in *unison* against him.

(16) Languages were never my *forte*.

(17) He spoke in Arabic, a short *staccato* burst.

The music terms, such as *consonance, dissonance, harmony, melody, rhythm, tempo, timbre, tonality, unison, forte, staccato* are so familiar to people in music appreciation that they naturally melt themselves into people's daily life and discourse.

(18) The final two months were a miserable *coda*to the President's first period in office.

(19) He was so obstinate in his resolution, that Heathcliff deemed it expedient to compel from my lips a *recapitulation* of what had taken place;

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[2]Chinese music term, whichrefers to"the prelude, interlude and coda played by the accompanying instruments in Chinese opera and operatic art".

[3]Chinese music term, which refers to the air flow exhaled through the damper, that is, the air flow formed by the coordination of breath and mouth.

In (18), the musical term "coda" indicates the end of a musical movement. In daily life itmetaphorically refers to the end stage of a development, mappingthe last two months of a president's first term onto an unnecessary end of music, or even an unpleasant ending.In (19), "recapitulation", as a musical term, indicates that the musical material reappears in the piece, meaning that other musical material is interspersed between the two statements. In people's daily life, "recapitulation" is used as a generic term, referring to retelling what has already happened.

The following are more examples.

(20) The wine makes a good *accompaniment* to fish dishes.
(21) But *improvisation* can also lead to disasters like the Libya vote.
(22) The government is defending its economic policies against a growing *chorus* of criticism.
(23) She is licensed to fly *solo*.
(24) Vibert has always been the odd one out among that *trio*.
(25) In 1958, the *quartet* embarked on a tour of Europe and Asia.
(26) Don't *chant* things like "loser" or taunt them when they lose.
(27) This was seen as a way of restricting women's *articulation* of grievances.
(28) *Cadence* means the rise and fall of the voice in reading with rhythm.

Musical terms converted tocommon terms typically havethree characteristics. Firstly, they exhibit commonness, being widely used and familiar, making them highly prevalent in common terms. Secondly, these terms often demonstrate polysemy, as their conversion results in a loss of terminological limitations, allowing for multiple meanings based on specific contexts. Thirdly, there is a notable emotional color associated with these converted terms, as people frequently express their emotions, feelings, or attitudes through their usage.

3. Semantic Changes in the Conversion Between Musical Terms and Common Terms

3.1 Semantic Changes in the Conversion of Common Terms into Musical Terms

Broadly speaking, we can classify the types of transformed meanings of common terms to musical terms into the following categories:

3.1.1 Lexical Narrowing

When a common term is borrowed as a term, the meaning of the term is often narrowed, or the original meaning is lost, and the connotation of the concept expressed by the term increases, the extension narrows, and the original meaning has a large scope, while the new meaning has a smaller scope, thus becoming a term that expresses a musical concept.

Symphony: "Symphony" was originally used to describe the harmonious combination of different musical elements, such as sound, melody and rhythm. During the Renaissance, the term began to be used to describe a form of music in which multiple instruments or voices played in harmony. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the word "symphony" came to be used to describe a form of orchestral music, usually consisting of four movements. These movements usually include a variety of instruments such as strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion.

Concertmaster:"Concertmaster" means the highest seat, the highest status. In music it is reduced to refer to the chief violinist in an orchestra. So the meaning is lexically narrowed.

3.1.2 Lexical Derivation

Broadway: "Broadway" is a street on Manhattan Island in New York City and the most famous theater district in the United States, where many musicals, plays and performing arts events are staged. Over time, the vocabulary of Broadway has evolved, from initially referring to the street name of the area to now generally referring to the musicals and plays performed there.

Country: The word "country" is originally derived from the French word "contrée", meaning "region" or "country". In English, the word "country" first appeared in the late 14th century to describe a specific region or country. In the early 20th century in the field of music, the word country was most often used to describe a style of music from the American South, which often used instruments such as guitars, strings and brass instruments, and singers with deep The lyrics are often about life, love, family and rural life. This style of music is known as "country music".

Folk: The word "folk" originally came from Old English, meaning "people, community or nation", and began to be used in Middle English to describe the culture, language and traditions of the people. Later in the field of music, the word was most often used to describe traditional music, especially British folk music, such as English ballads and dance music. This music is often passed down orally, and the stories, history and culture of the traditions are often present throughout, hence the term "oral music". Today, the word folk has become a widely used word to describe music, culture and lifestyle.

Rock: The word rock originally meant "rock" and is derived from the Old English word "roccian". In the late Middle Ages, the word came to be used to describe a strong vibration or jolting action. In the 1950s, with the birth of a new style of music, the word "rock" evolved to become synonymous with this style of music.

3.1.3 Metaphor

Climax: "Climax" refers to the highest position where the water rises during one cycle of the ebb and flow of the tide. In music metaphorically refers to the most intense part of a musical work, distinctly revealing the musical performance of an extremely The moment of performance that reveals the extreme emotion of the musical performance.

Guomen: The Chinese music term *Guomen* originally means "going through doors". After being borrowed into music, it metaphorically refers to the prelude, interlude and coda played by the accompanying instruments in Chinese opera and operatic art, which play the role of carrying forward and starting back.

3.1.4 Lexical Transfer

Pitch: The lexical development of the word "pitch" dates back to Old English, where it originally meant "to pierce" or "to poke". During the Renaissance, the word began to be used to describe the pitch of a sound, in the sense of tone. Since then, the word "pitch" has been widely used to describe pitch in music, sound, and language.

Koufeng: The original meaning of Chinese music term *koufeng* refers to the meaning that comes through in the talking. In music, it refers to the tone, rhythm, and technique of a flute player.

Motive: Motive originally refers to the idea that drives a person to engage in a certain behavior. In music, a motive is a short form of sound that runs through a work or a section of it, and is the smallest unit in the structure of a piece.

The main types of meaning transformation from common to musical terms are lexical narrowing, lexical derivation, metaphor and lexical transfer. From the above examples, we can also see that common words are the constituent corpus of technical terms, which is also a good reflection of the fact that people's understanding of things generally starts from a preliminary qualitative understanding and gradually moves towards a quantitative and precise understanding. People use words commonly used in daily life to describe new things and concepts on the basis of existing meanings, making the words produce new meanings. This new meaning is related to the old one, which is derived from the narrowing of the meaning of the common words and the derivation of this meaning.

3.2 Semantic Changesin the Conversion of Musical Terms into Common Terms

With the development of society and the evolution of culture, musical term as a professional language tool began to gradually integrate into the generic context, which led to a change in its semantics.

Common term is a kind of language for people's daily communication and understanding, with a broader audience and a wider range of application scenarios. In this process of transformation, the meaning of musical terms gradually becomes abstracted and generalized from their original professionalism and concreteness, and a broader range of meanings and semantic ambiguities may emerge. The vast majority of music appeals to retain the original meanings while their lexical meanings are extended beyond their original meanings, and the objects referred to become abstract and generalized and broad, from real to imaginary, from specific and precise to general and sometimes adding colorful meanings, etc.

Therefore, the semantic change in the conversion of musical terms into common terms is important for us to better understand the evolution and impact of musical terms, as well as to promote the effectiveness of musical communication and cultural transmission.

3.2.1Adding Denotation

The original meaning of the word is the fundamental basis and starting point for the derivation of the meaning of the word, and the characteristics of the original meaning determine the basic direction of the derivation of the meaning of the word. The added meanings are directly derived from the terminological meaning, and to some extent are directly related to the terminological meaning.

Consonance: The word "consonance" originally originated from the Latin word "consonantia", which indicates the harmony or unity of sound. In English, the word was first used to describe the effect of harmony between different notes in music. Later, the term was introduced as a rhetorical device in poetry or prose. As language and literature developed, the meaning of the word "consonance" gradually expanded. In addition to its musical and poetic applications, it is also used to describe the harmony or agreement between people's ideas or positions, such as "consonance with the truth" and "consonance with one's principles", etc.

Harmony: The word "harmony" is derived from the Greek word "harmonia", which means "harmony, coordination". In the field of music, it was first used to describe the beautiful effect produced by the simultaneous occurrence of sounds of different pitches.
Over time, the word came to be used to describe the harmony between different elements, such as the harmony between people and nation, between people and society, and between different countries.

Rhythm: The word "rhythm" originally originated from the ancient Greek word "rhythmos", which denotes the regularity of flow, movement or melody. In ancient Greek culture, the word "rhythm" was often used to describe

the rhythm and rhyme in art such as music, poetry and dance. Over time, the term evolved to include a broader meaning, such as the periodicity or regularity of a thing or event, such as the regularity of a heartbeat, the rhythm of work and life, the rhythm of literature, etc.

3.2.2 Metaphor

Lexical derivation refers to the comparison of a word with other things in order to add new metaphorical meanings and expand the scope of use and expressiveness of words. The thing referred to by the metaphorical meaning is similar to the thing referred to by the original meaning in some characteristics and traits, and people can extend the term meaning to other aspects by metaphorically describing other things. This process of adding metaphorical meanings is achieved by metaphorical thinking, mainly by association and analogy. Musical terms also use metaphors in the process of generalization to produce new meanings. In short, adding metaphorical meanings not only enriches the expressiveness of the vocabulary, but also allows us to express our feelings and emotions more accurately.

Coda: Originally used in music, "coda" refers to the end of a piece of music, usually a separate movement to end the whole piece. In daily life, coda is also often metaphorically used to describe the end of an event or action.

Encore: "Encore" means "to do it again" and is often used in concert or theater performances to request a repeat performance. In daily life, "encore" is also used as a metaphor for the reappearance of something or the chance of something reappearing.

Prelude: "Prelude" is a word of French origin, referring to a short piece of music, especially an introduction to a longer piece. In daily life, "prelude" is often used as a metaphor for the prelude or beginning of an event or action, foreshadowing what is about to happen or the direction of the future.

Trumpeter: "Trumpeter" originally referred to a musician who played the trumpet or horn. In common parlance, "trumpeter" is used as a metaphor for a person or leader in a field or industry.

3.2.3 Adding Attitude

Derivation of vocabulary refers to the development of some new meanings or usage based on the original one, which increases the richness and flexibility of the vocabulary. Among them, adding color meaning is a common way of derivation, that is, adding more sensual and emotional colors to the original vocabulary to make it more vivid and richer in communication. When people use professional terms to refer to things or phenomena in daily life, they often add certain rhetorical colors, such as emotional, stylistic and figurative colors.

Requiem: In the field of music, "requiem" is generally used to describe a song, symphony or choral piece whose theme is related to death and mourning. In everyday life, the word "requiem" can also be used to describe the demise or end of a thing or industry, with a sad emotional tone, emphasizing the grief and sorrow of the end.

3.2.4 Lexical Transfer

Lexical transfer refers to a shift in lexical extension, i.e. from referring to the dynamics or characteristics of musical term to those of common term.

Anthem: The word anthem was originally used to describe the alternate chanting of songs in religious ceremonies. Over time, the meaning has shifted to other areas, and now anthem usually refers to a grand, spectacular, uplifting song, often associated with celebration, remembrance, or national emotion as in "the national anthem".

Consequently, it can be found that the transformation of musical terms into common terms is mainly achieved by expanding the meaning of words. The types of such expanded lexical meanings mainly include adding derivation and metaphorical meanings. Since music is a kind of thing perceived through hearing, the original meaning of music terms is figurative in nature, which can activate people's thinking stereotypes and make them understand and know things more easily and vividly. Therefore, expanding the generality of musical terms is usually achieved by direct derivation and adding metaphorical meanings. The figurative nature of musical terms is precisely their advantage and basis as metaphors.

In general, there are several different cases of semantic change in the conversion between musical terms and common terms. When the common term come into the musical term, semantic changes contain lexical narrowing, lexical derivation, metaphor and lexical transfer. And when musical terms turn into common terms, semantic changes contain adding denotation, metaphor, adding attitude and lexical transfer, as shown in the following table.

Conversion	Semantic Changes	Example
Common term → Musical term	LexicalNarrowing	*Concertmaster*
	Lexical Derivation	*Country*
	Metaphor	*Climax*
	Lexical Transfer	*Pitch*
Musical term → Common term	Adding denotation	*Consonance*
	Metaphor	*Coda*
	Adding Attitude	*Requiem*
	Lexical Transfer	*Anthem*

4. Reasons for the Conversion Between Musical Terms and Common Terms

The following focuses on the psychological and social reasons for the interconversion of musical terms and common terms to further explore the impact of this linguistic exchange on musical experience and social interaction. From a psychological perspective, music has the ability to elicit strong emotional responses, and people often use musical terms and common terms to describe their emotional experiences when enjoying music. In addition, music also requires some cognitive processing to be appreciated and understood, and musical terms and common terms can be used to describe technical and emotional aspects of music. From a sociological perspective, music can also be a source of socialization and identity, and people can express their musical interests, identity, and connections with people from different backgrounds through the use of musical terms and common terms.

4.1 Social Reasons

First, the phenomenon of cultural transfer. Many musical terms have been inherited from Western classical music, such as *"harmony", "melody" and "rhythm"*. Due to the widespread influence of Western classical music, these terms have been widely accepted and used. However, in everyday life, people do not always use these terms to describe their experiences, so some terms may be reinterpreted or redefined.

Second, the popularization of music culture. With the popularization of popular music, some musical terms have started to appear in commonterms. For example, people may use *"beat"* to describe the rhythm of a song, or use *"harmony"* to describe two voices harmonizing together. This cross-use helps to popularize music culture more widely, making it easier for people to understand and appreciate music.

Third, the influence of education and media. Education and media also have an impact on the cross-use of musical terms and common terms. In music education, teachers may link musical terms with common terms to help students better understand concepts. Similarly, in television and film, musical terms may be used to help viewers better understand and appreciate the music in the scene.

Fourth, the influence of social media. With the rise of social media, people are starting to use more musical terms in their daily conversations. This may be because people want to express their love for music or want to express their feelings about a particular song. With the help of social media, people can easily share their music preferences and experiences with others, which may lead to more musical terms appearing in common terms.

4.2 Psychological Reasons

First, the emotional expression. Music has the ability to evoke strong emotions in people. When people listen to music, they may use musical terms to describe their emotional responses, such as "*uplifting*,""*heart-wrenching*", or "*catchy*". Similarly, people may use common terms to describe the emotions they feel when listening to music, such as "happy", "sad", or "nostalgic". This interchange of language helps people express their emotional responses to music more accurately and effectively.

Second, the cognitive processing. Music requires a certain level of cognitive processing to be appreciated and understood. Musical terms such as "*tempo*", "*timbre*", and "*dynamics*" may be used to describe the technical aspects of music, while common terms may be used to describe the subjective experience of listening to music. This interchange of language helps people better understand and appreciate the technical and emotional aspects of music

Third, the social bonding. Music can also be a source of social bonding. People may use musical terms to communicate with others who share their musical interests, while common terms may be used to bond with those who may not be familiar with musical terms. This interchange of language helps to bring people with different musical backgrounds and experiences together.

Fourth, the identity formation. People's musical preferences and tastes can play a role in their sense of identity. Musical terms and common terms can be used to express one's identity and musical preferences, as well as to signal

membership in a particular musical community. This interchange of language helps people express their musical identity more effectively.

5. Conclusion

The frequent conversion between musical terms and common terms reflects the development and application of language. The converting process between musical terms and common terms is often accompanied by semantic changes. Usually, musical terms have clear professional meanings, but after being transformed into common terms, their meanings may be expanded, blurred or new derivations may arise. This is due to the fact that users of common terms have different levels of musical knowledge and needs, and they may interpret and use these terms according to their own understanding and experience. Similarly, common terms that originally have common meanings in everyday life may be given specific musical meanings or derivations in the music domain. This conversion may be the result of the need for an easily understood and shared linguistic approach to the expression and description of music, as well as the influence and integration of musical culture into everyday life.

In addition, there are various reasons for the semantic changes. Sociocultural changes, the psychological needs and attitudes of language users, and factors can all influence the semantic changes between musical terms and common terms.

Overall, the conversion of musical terms and common terms builds bridges between the music experts and music lovers. This conversion facilitates the dissemination and understanding of musical knowledge and enables a wider range of people to participate in musical culture. At the same time, it also enriches the expressions of common terms, providing more rich and diverse music-related words and expressions.

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