Development of an English-for-specific-academic-purposes Course for Music Students

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Abstract

As a part of the new 4-year tertiary curriculum in Hong Kong, the Centre for Applied English Studies at the University of Hong Kong will provide the Department of Music with an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course which aims to complement one of the core subject courses. This course will focus on the English registers and genres used in the field of music and the language that students will need as music majors. Developing this course has been challenging, especially due to a lack of previous research into the language needs of music students who have English as a second or additional language. Another consideration has been that this course needs to be differentiated from the General English for Academic Purposes (EGAP) course while at the same time being careful not to ‘cross over’ into teaching music content. In order to inform this course, consultation and collaboration with disciplinary teachers was sought, research was done into writing about music, pilots of teaching units were run and student essays from the core subject course were collected and analysed. This paper will focus on the process of trying to create a space for this course between the EGAP course and the content course.

Keywords: English for specific academic purposes (ESAP); Academic English for Music; needs analysis; course design; metaphor

Introduction

There has long been a debate in the teaching of writing at university about whether to focus on general transferrable academic literacy skills or to specifically teach language and genres that are directly relevant to students’ disciplines (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). This debate is being applied in practice at a university in Hong Kong where students will take a compulsory general academic literacy course in their first year of study and then take another compulsory specific academic literacy course in their later years. The challenge for English-for-academic-purposes (EAP) teachers in this situation is to design courses which do not repeat, but build on, the general concepts about academic literacy that were introduced in the first year and apply them to the academic and professional genres in the students’ disciplines. Another difficulty is getting access to these discourses through collaboration with subject specialists who often have ambivalent attitudes towards discipline-specific English language writing instruction, in particular, concerns that English teachers may be in fact teaching the subject or that they may not know enough content to teach writing in the subject. This paper will share the experience of writing an English-for-specific-academic-purposes (ESAP) course called ‘Academic English for Music Students’ and the challenges of identifying and teaching subject-specific language features. The design of the course
follows an ESAP model and takes a needs analysis approach to course development.

**English for Specific Academic Purposes**

The field of EAP can be divided into two sub-branches: English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). EGAP refers to core study skills (such as listening to lectures, note taking, referencing, academic discussion and presentation skills) as well as language conventions (such as general academic register and accuracy), whereas ESAP refers to English for a specific discipline (Jordan, 1997). This specificity in ESAP includes technical or specialist vocabulary, varying uses of academic grammar such as passive voice and nominalisation, and particular professional and academic genres which are produced by the discipline (Jordan, 1997). This divide links into the distinction from English for Specific Purposes (ESP) between wide-angled and narrow-angled courses, the former being premised on the idea that generic language and skills can be transferred across many contexts, and the latter being premised on the idea that students can benefit and be motivated more from language and content that are specific to their needs (Basturkman, 2003). In support of specificity, Hyland (2002) points to the needs of students to be introduced to the linguistic cultures of their disciplines, rejecting generic approaches that claim that basic skills and language conventions exist across disciplines. More recently, Paltridge (2009) shows a shift in the acceptance of specificity in the field of EAP and reviews how the use of corpora and genre analysis has changed earlier views towards teaching ESAP by revealing greater complexity than was previously acknowledged.

However, there has been some resistance to the idea of ESAP both from within the field of EAP and from subject specialists. Within the field, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) did not see any need for subject-specific language instruction since they did not equate different frequencies of technical vocabulary or particular grammatical structures with greater need or difficulty in learning them. Likewise, Spack (1998) is concerned that EAP teachers are not capable of teaching discipline-specific writing since they are not knowledgeable enough about the subject matter. Instead she advocates a process approach with exploratory writing tasks in a humanities setting. Resistance from subject specialists also exists and usually comes in the form of misunderstandings about the role of the ESAP teacher and from different academic perspectives and practices. Part of this problem is that it has often been assumed that EAP practitioners ‘work for rather than with subject specialists’ (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p. 3). For example, Barron (2003) describes a situation where collaboration between an EAP teacher and a university science teacher was unsuccessful due to their differences in teaching methodology, ontology and epistemology. Jordan (1997) also refers to other anecdotes from EAP teachers that suggest that getting too close to content can cause friction with subject specialists. Nevertheless, evidence from needs analysis points towards teaching language which is relevant to students’ content courses. For example, Shing, Sim and Bahrani (2013) have used a needs analysis approach with pre-undergraduates and lecturers from various disciplines in Malaysia and found that ESAP courses aligned better with students’ actual learning needs than did EGAP courses. They also argue that needs analysis is an essential component of ESAP course design which should not be overlooked.
A Needs Analysis Approach

Needs analysis has been a central course development tool for ESP and all its sub-branches, since these courses aim to target the language and communication skills students need for a particular situation (Basturkman, 2010). Prior to ESP and a needs analysis approach, teachers tended to rely on their intuition about student’s needs and just focussed closely on individual language points (Hyland, 2006). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) first outlined principles of needs analysis from a learning-centered tradition. In this model, target needs are divided into ‘necessities’ which are what a learner needs to know for the target situation, ‘lacks’ which are the gap between the necessities and the learner’s proficiency, and ‘wants’ which are the learner’s perception of their own needs. Their principles are an attempt to introduce more subjective perspectives from the students themselves as a reaction to previous needs analysis methods which tended to value objectivity and thus may have missed out on valuable information.

Building on Hutchinson and Waters’ principles, Dudley-Evans and St John distinguish between present situation analysis and target situation analysis (1998, as cited in Hyland, 2006), the former referring to the learners’ current proficiency, perceptions and ambitions, and the latter referring to the language and communication skills required by the students in their future roles. Basturkman (2010) considers needs analysis as an ongoing course development process with steps including target situation analysis, discourse analysis, present situation analysis, learner factor analysis and teaching context analysis, which are constantly used to inform and refine courses.

Some EAP specialists have also tried to apply concepts from other contexts to needs analysis. For example, Tajino, James and Kijima (2005) suggest a soft systems methodology, originally developed in management, in EAP needs analysis, which would allow for inclusion of a diversity of views and perspectives in a systematic way. They found that the application of this methodology in a university in Japan resulted in greater mutual understanding between stakeholders. Meanwhile, needs analysis applied to development of ESAP courses can use diverse methodology. For example, Sager (2002) used questionnaires with students, discussions with subject lecturers and observations of lectures to inform development of a small scale pilot tutoring program for sociology students. Atai and Shoja (2011) also used larger-scale questionnaires with students, content instructors and ESAP instructors, as well as a general English proficiency test, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of an ESAP course for computer engineering students.

Methodology

The development of the course ‘Academic English for Music Students’ took a needs analysis approach to course development, which included four consultations with subject specialists from the Department of Music, research into writing about music, a collaborative teaching project and analysis of 17 music students’ texts. However, as pointed out by Jordan (1997) and Hyland (2006), course developers are often forced to write courses with information that is missing due to a lack of time and resources. This inquiry took place over a period of two years interspersed with the course developers’ regular teaching duties and a teaching development grant which provided the course developers with limited opportunity to devote to course
development. As a result, this needs analysis tended to focus more on target situation analysis with only limited collection of information about the present situation, and therefore it yielded information that was mostly objective. In retrospect, the course developers could have followed a stage of enquiry that was more closely based on the needs analysis theory from the literature, in particular asking additional questions in relation to learner factors and subjective perceived needs. However, if needs analysis is conceptualised as an ongoing course design process (Basturkman, 2010), then missing information can be included in the next phase of course evaluation and refinement.

**Analysis of Music Students’ Needs**

*Consultations with Subject Specialists*

*Teaching Context and Learners’ Background*

‘Academic English for Music Students’ will be compulsory for students who wish to declare Music as their major as part of their Bachelor of Arts degree. The majority of students will be ‘English as a Second Language’ (ESL) students with Cantonese as their first language, but there may be students from other ESL backgrounds or even native English speakers. Some other students will have gained special entry to the university through the Music Specialist’s Scheme, which means that they may have lower English examination scores than is a requirement for typical Arts students. The English proficiency of the students will therefore vary according to their previous experiences of medium of instruction at school and their various international and extra-curricular exposure to English.

Despite the small number of majors in music at the university, it was decided that music should have its own academic English course as opposed to combining with other students from the Faculty of Arts. This was due to the perception by subject specialists of the uniqueness of music as an academic and technical discipline with highly specialised language that was also at the same time practical.

*Present Situation—Subject Specialists’ Perception of Students’ Needs*

Initial consultations with the subject specialists from the Department of Music about the music students’ English proficiency and academic literacy in the field of music were conducted, revealing many perceived problems that could be classed as general academic literacy problems. These included difficulty organising a text, trouble evaluating sources, evidence of plagiarism and basic grammatical errors. However there were also responses pointing towards more discipline-specific issues. For example, it was acknowledged that the ability to describe and interpret music as a non-verbal means of expression in words was difficult. It was also mentioned that students’ level of technical musical background knowledge tended to affect their ability to use technical musical terms and that those with less technical background tended to write in metaphors. However, when probed, the subject specialists pointed out that this was not necessarily a problem and could be considered to be acceptable, especially for non-music majors. There were also comments such as ‘students are afraid to express their own thoughts’ and ‘lack confidence and independent thinking’, indicating that originality is valued in the discipline. In summary, the consultations
revealed that not only did the music discipline require that students use general academic conventions but it also expected description and interpretation of music, preferably with correct use of technical terminology, yet with an expectation of individual and unique interpretation.

**Target Situation—Subject Specialists’ Perception of Target Language Genres and Features**

In addition, the subject specialists shared with the ESAP course developers the typical genres that students should be able to produce including essays, critical reviews, program notes, CD/film reviews, cultural criticisms and research proposals. They also mentioned that the citation style used in music varies according to the musical sub-discipline. This suggests that the writing conventions of musical sub-disciplines such as music history, ethnomusicology and cognitive musicology may also be influenced by their co-disciplines in other ways, making it difficult to make generalisations about writing in the discipline of music which at first glance appears to be very specific. The subject specialists were not able to articulate descriptions of the target language very specifically and tended to focus on the students’ ‘lacks’ with emphasis on fixing poor grammar. This pointed the course developers towards the need for research into writing about music and discourse analysis of good writing in the field of music.

**Research into Writing about Music and Writing Instruction in Music**

Music is a particularly small discipline at the university in terms of the number of students who major in it, and this is probably true of most tertiary institutions worldwide. As a result of this trend, limited research has been done into writing instruction in music.

**Learner Features—ESL Music Students**

Not much research has been done into the needs of ESL music students. To the author’s knowledge, Wolfe (2006) is the only EAP practitioner who specifically addresses the issues surrounding an ESL student in the learning of writing about music in English. She argues that ‘far from being a universally technical language, much of the language of music is complex, metaphorical and culturally embedded’ (p. 18). She has observed that ESL students entering a university in Australia from overseas to study music have not been prepared by IELTS or general EAP courses for the nature and complexity of the musical discourse they encounter and are expected to produce.
Texts designed for native English speaking music students exist (Bellman, 2007; Wingell, 2009) but much of the advice about writing can be categorised as general academic register in a musical context. That is, the advice could be applied to many disciplines and the instructions tend to focus on the process of writing an academic essay. However, these texts do mention some discipline-specific language, including most significantly, discussion about the use of musical terminology and metaphorical language. Although the use of metaphorical language appears to be valued, it seems that it should be used judiciously. For example, Bellman (2007) cautions that overly literary writing about music is not true musical analysis, although it may have some value as being ‘evocative’ (p. 23). Likewise, Wingell (2009) warns students against being overly ‘precious’, ‘fanciful’, ‘sentimental’ or ‘picturesque’ (pp. 3–4) when describing music. Conversely, although the use of musical terminology is highly valued, it seems that it alone is not enough to say something meaningful about music. For example, Bellman (2007) emphasizes that accurate use of technical terminology is essential but detailed and technical ‘play-by-play’ (p. 44) is not true analysis. Likewise, Wingell (2009) discourages ‘listing musical events’, in an attempt to be ‘neutral, objective and scientific’ (p. 5). Both authors discourage an overuse or inappropriate use of figurative language as well as overly technical use of musical terminology. The message to students seems to be that there is a need to strike a tasteful balance between technical and literary styles while also being aware of the audience’s level of technical knowledge.

**Target Language Features—Use of Metaphor in Music**

There has been much research supporting the use of metaphor in music education and in particular the teacher’s use of metaphor in musical instruction. Flowers (1983) found that instruction in musical vocabulary improved undergraduate non-musicians’ technical descriptions of music and in particular description of changes in musical events. In a subsequent study, Flowers (2000) also investigated the effect of instruction in figurative language, musical elements and temporal language on children’s writing about music but found that there was no significant difference between children who had received instruction and those who had not, except that more musical elements were mentioned by those who had received instruction. Barten (1998) argues that in terms of instructing students in musical expression, the use of figurative language can be more effective than terminology and notes a high use of motor-affective metaphors in musical instruction, for example ‘late, out-going, growing, sweeping, tense, jaunty, calm, or dallying’ (p. 90). Sheldon (2004) also advocates the use of figurative language as a tool to provide more nuanced meanings to musical instruction and interpretation, although she found that the use of metaphor as opposed to terminology in musical instruction resulted in more ambiguity in the participant’s perception of a musical passage. Similarly, Schippers (2006), while giving instances where the use of metaphor was unsuccessful because the metaphor did not exist in the schemata of a listener, showed many examples of music teachers and conductors using metaphor to convey more subtle meanings and elicit better performances from musicians.

Other researchers coming from linguistics have used the idea of conceptual metaphors (as coined by Lakoff & Johnston 1980) and applied them to discourse
about music. Zbikowski (1998) argues that metaphor is central to our conceptualization of music. For example, in English pitch is conceptualized as a relationship in vertical space resulting in pitch being described as high or low, whereas in other languages, it is conceptualized as a relationship in size or in age. Johnson and Larson (2003) examine conceptual metaphors of motion which are commonly used in musical description and argue that our experience of musical motion depends on conceptual metaphors based on physical motion. Zangwill (2007) also argues that descriptions of music as emotions are actually metaphorical descriptions of the aesthetic properties of music and rejects literalist interpretations of musical description.

Teaching Context and Methodology—Teaching of Metaphor in Non-music EAP Contexts

A number of EAP practitioners have applied the idea of conceptual metaphors to EAP teaching. Cameron and Low (1999) argue that metaphor plays an important role in the technical language of many disciplines and provide a review of research into metaphorical language in for example, economics, politics, management, history, psychology, geology, biology and mathematics. Boers (2000) found that it was useful to raise ESL economics students’ awareness of the origin of economics metaphors because it could help them to organize literal metaphors according to their source conceptual metaphors, retain unfamiliar figurative expressions and become more critical readers and users of metaphors. Charteris-Black (2000) also applied the idea of conceptual metaphors to economics, and argues that the teaching of vocabulary should also include awareness of metaphorical basis to help students distinguish between literal and metaphorical uses of words in specialised discourse. Caballero (2003) used corpora to study the use of metaphor in building reviews and found conceptual and image metaphors. He incorporated these findings into the teaching of EAP to architecture students and found that raising awareness of metaphor from a genre perspective can illustrate to them how and when to use metaphors as an enculturation into the discipline.

Collaborative Teaching Project

As a part of the teaching development grant, writing instruction collaboration was carried out between the EAP course developers and the subject specialists. Essays from the music history course were given feedback from music teachers at the outline/proposal stage and feedback from the English teachers at the first draft stage. An EAP course developer also gave a guest lecture on academic essay writing in the music history course.

Student’s Present Situation—Analysis of Students’ Essays

Seventeen student essays were analysed by the EAP teacher in terms of four core academic literacy features: argument, organisation, register and reference to sources. In addition, they were analysed for their use of discipline-specific language, namely, musical terminology and figurative language. It should be noted that the students in the music history course were in their second year of study and had already taken a general academic writing course offered by EAP specialists in their first year of study. The general academic literacy features outlined above were chosen
because they were the focus of the Academic English for Arts Students course and
were used for assessing students’ essays. The ESAP teacher wanted to investigate
how these academic language features were used in the discipline of music, through
observation and also discussion with the subject specialists.

After the analysis of the first drafts, it was found that a significant number of
students had problems with the following features, with the first four in the realm of
general academic literacy, and the fifth one concerning the disciplinary language
skills:

*Argument*

- a topic that was too descriptive (example a)
- a topic that was not set up to appear worthy of investigation
- no signaling of the thesis statement to the reader (example b)
- an argument in which the stance was unclear
- providing the argument too late in the essay

Examples:

a. ‘Claude-Achille Debussy is considered as one of the greatest 20th century
composers, among many whom were influenced by him, Olivier Messiaen is also a
widely acclaimed composer of the century. Both French composers, there are a lot
of similarities between them.’ (It appears that this essay is simply going to
describe similarities between two composers.)

b. *The style of New Tango was more welcomed in Europe, however, we need to think
about the question that ‘What makes Piazzolla’s music special and to be
welcomed?’ Perhaps you may have already popped up the same answer as the
author’s - the ‘tango’ elements. Yet what would be the reason of making the fusion
of ‘tango’ and classical music so fabulous, and leading the way Piazzolla so
‘Argentine’?* (This thesis statement does not have a clear argument or any
outlining of evidence to answer the questions that are set up.)

*Organisation*

- lack of outline provided in the introduction
- outline given but not followed
- use of sub-headings instead of topic sentences
- lack of cohesive paragraphs containing a single topic/theme (examples a
and b)

Examples:

a. ‘In the same decade, Elvis Presley, the King of Rock & Roll with his
personification of it, with his sultry eyed stares and his gyrating hips helped
solidify the picture of R&R as a genre that glorified the power of sex. But then, he
was drafted into the military and there was a void in his absence.’ (This is a single
paragraph that starts with an example but lacks a topic sentence.)
b. ‘Debussy’s employment and pursue in representing beyond the visible object, and into the world of mysteriousness, of spirituality again direct his audiences to ponder upon the vastness and enchanting quality of nature.’ (This is a single paragraph that starts a topic but does not have evidence or examples.)

**Register**

- subjective tone (examples a and c)
- informal words and phrases (some students seem to have been particularly influenced by popular music journalism) (examples b and c)

**Examples:**

a. ‘That was the initial reason why I chose this topic. Personally I am a big fun of rock music.’ (Active voice, personal pronouns)

b. ‘Those who had up until then experienced the segregation of the white and the black population found rock & roll difficult to swallow.’ (Idiom, informal word choice, active voice, personal pronouns)

c. ‘The Rite of Spring did break through the cliché traditional Russian nationalist music. It is deeply rooted in the folklore Russian tradition; there is no doubt about it. However, about the ‘modernistic nationalism’ point, I still have a raise a few points. I reckon the piece as comprises both modernistic and nationalistic but the proportion of either is cannot easily be recognized.’ (Idiom, informal word choice, active voice, personal pronouns)

**Reference to Sources**

- lack of engagement with sources
- lack of citation verbs
- insufficient citations
- source of information/opinion not clear
- overuse of quotations
- reporting of thoughts and feelings of historical figures (i.e., composers) in a factual way without hedging, evidence or sources (examples a and b)

**Examples:**

a. ‘The only thing that Schoenberg cared about would be composing and performing his music. He believed that one day, the mass would accept his music like how they accept the music of Beethoven, Mozart and Wagner.’ (The claims about the thoughts of this composer are very strong and there is no evidence for them.)

b. ‘He just felt the beauty of music without any other thoughts in his mind. (just come to the piano and played and composed) Hence, he did not care much about any other things like expression, emotion, etc. This would be quite abstract but this is what exactly Stravinsky wanted.’ (Again, the claims about the thoughts of this composer are very strong and there is no evidence for them.)
Musical Terminology and Figurative Language

Surprisingly there was not much musical terminology or figurative language in the student’s writing, notably because students did not describe or analyse much music. One reason for this may be that the essays are music history essays and therefore focus mostly on the social and historical context or on the biography of a particular composer. However the music tutor commented on three of the papers suggesting that music analysis should be included, implying that this kind of writing is valued. Any musical analysis that was included came from other sources and was written by somebody besides the student. Therefore, another possible reason is that the students do not know how to or feel confident in writing musical analysis.

Students’ Needs and Target Language and Genres as Perceived by Subject Specialists—Interview with Teaching Project Collaborator

Among the five subject specialists, one involved in the teaching project was also interviewed and made the following comments about students’ writing problems and instruction needs:

Argument

The subject specialist noted that students seemed to find argument particularly difficult in music history courses but easier in music psychology courses, though the reason behind was unclear. Meanwhile, she confirmed that argument, including challenging accepted views and showing different perspectives, was important in music essays, and excellent students must have a good research question and an original argument and that writing should not be just descriptive.

Organisation

The subject specialist acknowledged the ESAP course developers’ observation that writing in musical journals tended to be quite unstructured and contained many footnotes. She pointed out that it is a tradition in certain sub-fields of musicology that has continued to the present day. However, she clarified that this seemingly lack of cohesion was not encouraged in students’ writing and students should use sub-headings for better organisation.

Register

Although many students’ essays showed non-academic register, the subject specialist expressed that she tended to be quite forgiving about this since some students were less experienced in academic writing than others. She opined that personal pronouns did not necessarily have to be avoided in writing about music, and that writing could allow for agency of the writer.

Reference to Sources

The subject specialist confirmed that reference to other authors through explicit citations and the use of citation verbs was also very important, especially in highlighting the differences in the writers’ argument from the arguments of previous
researchers. However, she did not perceive that referring to the thoughts and feelings of historical figures in a factual way was a problem, and pointed out that students were allowed to interpret their thoughts on composers.

Musical Terminology and Figurative Language in Musical Description

The subject specialist pointed out that students learned how to describe particular pieces of music using proper musical terminology and how these pieces conformed to and uniquely deviated from standard musical composition in a particular musical style in their musical analysis courses.

Meanwhile, she did not agree that a linguistic analysis of musical description should be included and encouraged in the ESAP course since there is disagreement about the use of figurative language in the field. She elaborated that while some music scholars were against the use of figurative language because they favour a more ‘objective’ and positivistic approach, some other music scholars valued a subjective interpretation. She further pointed out that figurative language was not one of the main differences between academic writing in music and in other disciplines. Instead, she argued that this kind of language was a sub-disciplinary feature. For example, writing in music criticism may contain figurative language but writing in music theory would contain more technical language.

The specialist also responded to the ESAP’s observation about the lack of musical description in students’ writing. She explained that students were not required to include musical analysis in a paper on music history. They could include any analysis if it was relevant to the point they were trying to make. What is more, any use of musical analysis or scores should be contextualised and integrated with a reason into the paper.

Key Observations from the Needs Analysis

Based on the needs analysis and the collaborative teaching project, the following observations were made:

Lack of Transfer of Academic Writing Concepts

A significant finding from the analysis was the lack of transfer of academic writing concepts/skills that were taught in a first-year general academic writing course for arts students into the writing that students did for their music research paper. What could be classed as general academic writing problems were found from initial consultation sessions with the subject specialists from the Department of Music as well as from the analysis of the students’ writing. This has raised the question of why many students were not applying what they had learnt to their subject courses. One possible reason is that the subject specialists gave different writing instructions from the EAP teachers; for example in the collaborative teaching project the EAP teachers discouraged the use of headings in students’ drafts and asked students to write topic sentences instead, only to find out that the subject specialist had asked them to use headings because she perceived them to be easier to write and read. What is more, the subject specialist’s tolerance of poor organization and non-academic register in the students’ writing has indicated that some subject specialists may not reinforce the
writing concepts that students have learnt about in the EGAP course. As a result, students may perceive that the subject specialists have different requirements for the research paper from the ESAP teachers.

From a pedagogical view, what is more important here is how to transfer the concepts that are introduced in the EGAP course into the ESAP course, and ideally and ultimately, into all students’ academic writing. Results from the analysis of the students’ essays showed that this did not happen automatically. Students would probably need to see examples of how academic language features are used in their own disciplines.

**Issues Surrounding the Teaching of Discipline-specific Language**

Another significant finding was related to the highly technical and abstract nature of writing about music and the careful balancing of technicality and figurative language in a good piece of writing about music. However these two features of writing about music were lacking in the students writing. This finding raised a debate between the ESAP teacher and the subject specialist about whether figurative language could be and should be ‘taught’ as a part of the ‘English for music students’ course.

For the ESAP teacher, these two interesting and unique features of writing about music were the ‘specific’ part of the ESAP course because musical analysis, i.e., description of music, is where the figurative language takes place. However, for the subject specialist, discussion of figurative and metaphorical language is a problematic topic which raises ontological questions about the very nature of musical analysis as a positivistic or impressionistic pursuit. An unaware ESAP teacher might give students the wrong idea about expectations from the Department and about the debate about the nature of musical analysis. She also shared her concern that any texts about music that would be used in the ESAP course would be out of context because they would be separated from the music itself. For the EAP teacher, these are valid concerns, but the fact that this type of language exists so prevalently in academic writing about music is too great to be ignored. Even if students are not encouraged to use figurative language they are still going to encounter it in both academic and non-academic texts and therefore need to be able to understand and engage with it. A critical teaching approach to the use of metaphorical language was proposed but the issue is yet to be resolved.

**Outcome of the Needs Analysis**

As a result of this needs analysis, a course has been developed that focuses on the English registers and genres used in the field of music and the language that students will need as music majors. It aims to help them to communicate effectively about music in English through a variety of written and spoken formats. Learning activities will include guided genre and discourse analysis of various academic and non-academic musical texts (written and spoken), practicing the process of writing through drafting and redrafting as well as independent learning activities. Having taken this course, students will be able to:
1. Write about musical topics and issues using an academic style, adequate and appropriate musical language and citation and referencing style(s) used in the discipline of music;
2. Write program notes for concerts and/or their own performances;
3. Write critical reviews of musical performances or recordings with appropriate audience and genre awareness;
4. Give academic presentations on musical topics and issues using adequate, appropriate musical language and relevant audio and/or visual aids.

Limitations

Small-scale Research—Interviews and Student Writing

In total, only 17 student essays were available to be analysed and one subject specialist was interviewed in depth (although five subject specialists were consulted in the initial needs analysis consultations). Therefore, there is a lack of generalisable data and the above findings have to be interpreted with caution.

Needs Analysis—Student Consultation

This needs analysis has so far mostly used objective sources to gather information about the music students (e.g., consultation with the subject specialists) but the students themselves were not asked about their perceived needs. This does not correspond to recent recommendations in the literature about needs analysis as outlined above and some important issues that the students are facing may have been ignored. Therefore student consultation would be beneficial for future course (re-)development in order to gain a more balanced picture of student needs.

Conclusion

The development of this ESAP course ‘English for music students’ involved a needs analysis that included consultations with subject specialists from the Department of Music, research into writing about music, a collaborative teaching project and analysis of students’ writing. It was found that reinforcement of the ideas introduced in EGAP courses is necessary in an ESAP course but that there must be inclusion of the unique language features and genres of the discipline in order to make the writing instruction specific. However, the specific language needs of a discipline can be the most challenging part for the EAP practitioner and requires cooperative collaboration with subject specialists. This research has also highlighted that figurative language in academic disciplines is an area of research that needs more investigation.

References


