

**ENGLISH STUDY PROCESS BETWEEN TAIWANESE ARTS UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT: “CONTEXT” MATTERS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The aim of the study was to investigate the approaches to learning English between Taiwanese arts undergraduate and graduate students and further to examine its relationship with their English language ability. The study tested two hypotheses: that undergraduate students tended to become increasingly surface and decreasingly deep in their approaches to learning English, and that Asian students preferred the surface approach to learning as indicated by numerous studies. A total of 102 participants joined the study, comprising 58 undergraduate and 44 graduate students. An online English proficiency test and a revised two-factor Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F) were adopted. The results show that both undergraduate and graduate students applied more strategies within deep approach rather than surface approach when studying English. A significant difference was found in DS (deep strategy) in comparison between undergraduate and graduate students. Also, the higher the score students received in online English proficiency tests, the less they used surface approach. DM (deep motive) and DS were significant predictors on students' English proficiency levels. The study depicted that the approaches to learning English for Asian students were changing and context did matter in different academic fields.*

**KEYWORDS:** Approaches to learning, Deep Approach, Surface Approach, Learning English

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Students use a variety of learning strategies and approaches when engaging in learning English, which requires special effort in using cognitive strategies and approaches to learning (Hayes & Hayes, 1981; Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007). “Approaches to learning” originates from Marton and Saljo’s study in the 1970s, and it was later revised into a new version consisting of deep and surface approaches to learning (Kember, Biggs, & Leung, 2004). Deep approach means “the approach wherein the students actively and mentally engage with the study material. Furthermore, deep approach is supposed to be the result of intrinsic motivation. It is also the intention to extract meaning, produces active learning processes, and monitor the development of one’s own understanding” (Magno, 2009a, p.2 ). On the other hand, surface approach

involves memorization of material that does not require comprehension, such as memorizing vocabulary or grammatical rules. Magno (2009b) explains that surface approach is the product of specific situation demands for learning tasks that bring great pressure to students. Surface approach is therefore often responsible for student anxiety as their heavy workloads are largely comprised of this approach. Entwistle, McCune, and Walker (2001) point out that the intention of surface approach is to complete tasks. No intrinsic motivation is seen from the participants. Surface approach is therefore purely memorization and usually requires no high level of comprehension.

In 1999, Baumgart and Halse investigated the approaches to learning across cultures and they stated that deep approach favors western learners because they attribute success with ability and effort. They were interested in both learning the task and in learning it well. However, surface approach dominates Asian education systems. It is said that Asian students prefer rote memorization. Even though they are perceived as being the products of a rote memorization-driven education system, they still manage to be successful and they think success is the result of effort one puts into something, not innate ability (Baumgart and Halse, 1999). Magno also found that Asian students see surface approach to be functional in the learning process because it begins by offering positive consequences for them. Aside from comparing the differences between western and eastern learners, Case and Marshall (2009) point out that “context” is fundamentally critical in the examination of approaches to learning. Furthermore, it is paramount to bear in mind that there is no such thing as a deep learner. “All one can identify is a student who is using an approach to learning in a particular context” (p. 15). Arts students spend most of their time practicing their profession. So we must ask: is there a difference of approaches to learning when they study English? Is there a difference in the English study process between undergraduate and postgraduate students?

The research questions are formulated: First, is there a significant difference between deep approach and surface approach for arts students between undergraduate and graduate programs? It is predicted that undergraduate students tend to use surface approach, whereas the postgraduate students are expected to apply a deep approach to learning English. The assumption is based on several studies (Biggs, 1987, 1990; Gow & Kember, 1990; Watkins & Hattie, 1985) which show that most undergraduate students become increasingly surface and decreasingly deep in their learning approach. Although there are some exceptions, the study tests the assumption that undergraduate arts students prefer to use deep approach and if graduate students side with deep approach when they are learning English. Second, is there a significant correlation between deep approach and surface approach for arts students with different English proficiency levels? We speculate that students with high English proficiency levels use deep approach but the ones with low English proficiency level utilize surface

approach. Third, among DM (deep motive), DS (deep strategy), SM (surface motive), and SS (surface strategy), which one best predicts students' English language ability?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the late 1960s, educational psychologists were interested in developing questionnaires which tried to discover the factors that could predict students' academic performance. Personality and motivation were the main focal points of their investigation, but at the same time the interaction between students and their environments began to gain increasing interests (Case & Marshall, 2009). Concurrently, researchers in Sweden (Marton & Saljo, 1976) worked on a new direction and qualitatively investigated students' responses to a real classroom task. In their experiment, they gave students an academic text to read and asked students to answer questions on that text. This type of research was different from the typical dominant methodologies at that time for two main reasons. First, they used a naturalistic setting to resemble a real educational situation. Second, they tried to understand students' perspectives of the situation and for the perspective of an objective outside observer. In their research, they were able to identify two different approaches. The students were divided into two groups. The first group adopted an approach in which they tried to understand the whole picture of the text, and comprehended and understood the academic works. They were identified as using deep approach. The second group of students was asked to remember facts contained within the text, pointing out and focusing on what they thought they would be asked later. They demonstrated their knowledge by using a surface approach.

Entwistle in the UK follows and continues Marton and Saljo's study. He and his colleagues (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983; Marton, Hounsell and Entwistle, 1984, 1997) put the focus on the "natural setting" of university classroom and they conducted numerous interviews with students asking them about their study habits. From these studies, they were able to identify deep and surface approaches, but they also added one new presence—the strategic approach. Strategic approach is characterized by students with top achievement who use both the deep and surface approach when the situation calls for it..

At roughly the same time in Australia, Biggs (1978) constructed the Study Processes Questionnaire (SPQ) and analyzed students' responses. Biggs explained approaches to learning consisting of a motive and related strategy (1987). His definition of surface motive was "extrinsic to the real purposes of the task whereas the deep motive was "to engage the task properly, .... founded on an intrinsic interest in that task" (Biggs, 1993, pp.6-7). Kember, Biggs and Leung (2001) point out four subscales under deep approach. The first one is intrinsic interest. This is the interest that is shown by students to a particular subject area such as love for dancing or painting. The second subscale is commitment to work. It refers to how students

prepare to work (or engage with) on their studies. This is similar to the result of intrinsic interest. The third one is relating ideas. This approach seeks to link the ideas that students learn from the subject areas by adding previous knowledge from past subjects that are related to the material being learnt. The fourth subscale is understanding. Subscale explores the difference between surface and deep approach. Simply stated, deep approach means the critical analysis of new ideas linking them to already known knowledge and concepts, and leads to understanding and long-term retention of concepts so that they can be used for problem-solving in unfamiliar contexts.

On the other hand, Kember, Biggs and Leung (2001) also point out four subscales under surface approach. The first one is “fear of failure”. Failure refers to the fear of not being able to complete the test or being afraid of the humiliation for failing afterwards. The second one is “aim for qualification”. It refers to extrinsic motivation, for example, to win a prize to add value to a resumé or further education. The third branch is minimizing the scope of the study. This refers to select learning, cut down all unnecessary details and go disadvantage. The fourth subscale is memorization. It is the lowest form of thinking, purely recall and no understanding at all. Surface approach can be summarized as the tactic acceptance of information and memorization as isolated and unlinked facts. In contrast to deep approach, surface approach leads to superficial retention of material for examinations and does not promote understanding or long-term retention of knowledge and information. One critical point to remember is that students should not be identified with a fixed approach to learning, but it is the design of learning opportunity that encourages our students to adopt a particular approach.

Deep and surface approaches are not a dichotomy. Numerous researchers raise the notion of dissonance and emphasize the importance of context when studying approaches to learning. Dissonance was first identified by Meyer and his colleagues (Meyer, Parsons and Dunne, 1990) and they found illogical relationships between approaches to learning and perceptions of context by their students from their responses of inventory. After that, research on dissonance has sprung up like mushrooms. Richardson (2004) and Setlogelo (2008) speculate that it is because of the limitations of inventory-generated data and the fact that students nowadays are from diverse linguistic backgrounds that the worded inventory items are difficult to interpret. Therefore, Case and Marshall (2009) state the importance of context. The studies of approaches to learning are implemented in different disciplines, such as on medical students (Newble & Jaeger, 1983; Eizenberg, 1988; Sandover, Jonas-Dwyer, Marr, 2015), chemical engineering students (Case & Gunstone (2002), and information engineering (Cope & Staehr (2005). Therefore, it is manifest that approaches to learning are different in various academic fields, and it is consistent with dependency of these approaches (Ramsden, 1984).

Numerous studies show that deep approach positively correlated with academic tasks (Chun-

Keung & French, 1997; Guthrie, Wigfield & VonSecker, 2000). Kember (2000) verified the misconceptions about the learning approaches, motivation, and study practices of Asian students. He broke the stereotypes that Asian students depend on rote learning and preferred passive forms of learning. The data was collected from 90 action research projects. The results showed that memorization could occur in conjunction with the intention to understand and disapproved the concept that Asian students liked rote learning and resisted teaching innovations. In 2007, Lee, Johnson, and Tsai explored Taiwanese high school students' conceptions and approaches to learning science through a structural equation modeling analysis. Two questionnaires were used: The Conceptions of Learning Sciences (COLS) questionnaire and the Approaches to Learning Science (ALS). A structural equation model was adopted to process the data. The results demonstrated that students with constructivist concepts of learning science tended to use deep approaches to learn science. "Testing" and "calculate & practice," two essential concepts of learning science, were proved to place effects the surface approaches whereas "applying" and "understanding and seeing in a new way" had obvious effects on deep approaches to learn science. Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven, and Dochy (2010) used student-centered learning environments to stimulate deep approaches to learning and they found the factors encouraging or discouraging their effectiveness. The findings show that students in different disciplines differed in the approach to learning they adopt. Generally, students in human sciences demonstrated the deepest approach. If teachers were involved with and oriented towards students and changing their conceptions, students tended to use a deep approach. It was also found that students who were satisfied with the course quality use a deep approach. Older students and students who are open to experience, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and emotional stability were inclined to use deep approach as well. At last, students with intrinsic motivation, high self-confidence and self-efficacy and with preference to teaching methods that support understanding sided with deep approach. In 2014, McLaughlin, Durrant, and Lawson, investigated the interaction of student learning approaches and course design in the United Arab Emirates. The participants were mostly male students attending an English-for-academic purposes program. They found the courses support a deep approach for most of their students, but the courses' prescriptive and structured approach may not have been ideal for high achievers. The present study includes Taiwanese students majoring in the arts universities. A different pattern in the consequence of deep and surface approach is found among Taiwanese students.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

A total of 102 participants joined the study. The participants were 58 undergraduate and 44 graduate students. They were from different types of academic arts departments (See Table 1). Fourteen students were from Chinese Music, and Radio and Television respectively. Ten students were from Multimedia and Animation Arts, Motion Picture, and Drama individually. There were ten students from other various disciplines. The undergraduate students took General English as a required course but graduate students took English Class as an elective course. Their language proficiency levels ranged from intermediate to high intermediate, based on the General English Proficiency Test. The GEPT was developed by the Language Training and Testing Center at National Taiwan University. It is divided into five levels: Elementary, Intermediate, High-Intermediate, Advanced and Superior. The GEPT is commonly recognized by various government institutions, companies, and schools in Taiwan.

**Table 1: The Distribution of Student Population**

Majors	Numbers	Percentage	Accumulated percentage
Craft Design	6	5.9	5.9
Architecture Art Conservation	2	2.0	7.8
Multimedia and Animation Arts	10	9.8	17.6
Print Making	4	3.9	21.6
Performing Arts	3	2.9	24.5
Fine Arts	2	2.0	26.5
Music	3	2.9	29.4
Chinese Painting and Calligraphy	2	2.0	31.4
Chinese Music	14	13.7	45.1
Plastic Arts	1	1.0	46.1
Visual Communication Arts	6	5.9	52.0
Motion Picture	10	9.8	61.8
Graphic Communication Arts	8	7.8	69.6
Dance	6	5.9	75.5
Radio and Television	14	13.7	89.2
Sculpture	1	1.0	90.2
Drama	10	9.8	100.0
Total	102	100.0	

## **MATERIALS**

### **Online GEPT-style Test**

In the online GEPT-style test, the articles and questions were constructed from an online testing company. Every participant who was registered as a full-time student and received the test for free. After reading articles and answering the questions, participants' answers were sent to a database and the students obtained their scores immediately. The scores were used to examine the relationship between students' English study process and their English proficiency levels.

### **Questionnaires**

The questionnaires consisted of two parts. The first part was the basic information of arts students, and 20 questions were constructed for the second part regarding students' English study process.

#### **Part I Demographic information**

There were four questions in this section, covering English class, gender, age, and major. The purpose of this section was to provide information about whether or not the questionnaires were distributed to a sufficiently large sample to represent the study population.

#### **Part II The English Learning Process Questionnaire**

The Revised Learning Process Questionnaire was originally designed by Biggs (1987) in the 1970s. Due to changes in the educational environment, Biggs, together with Kember and Leung, revised the questionnaire in 2001. The original study process questionnaire was divided into three dimensions: surface, deep, and achieving, but the revised version consisted of two major parts: deep and surface approaches. As Biggs states, the revised work was used to ensure that the deep and surface approach items were consistent with the clearer description. Also, in this study, the context of the question items was changed into learning English. For example, the original first question was "I find that at times studying gives me a feeling of deep personal satisfaction". In this study, it was changed into "I find that at times studying gives me a feeling of deep personal satisfaction in the English class."

The questionnaire consisted of 20 items. There were 10 items for the deep approach and 10 for the surface approach. A 5-point Likert Scale was used where A = "Never or only rarely true of me," B = "sometimes true of me," C = "half the time," D = "frequently true of me," and E = "Always or almost always true of me." The deep approach included deep motive (DM), and deep strategy (DS), whereas the surface approach covered surface motive (SM), and surface strategy (SS). To obtain the main scale scores, the formula was as follows:

$$DA = Q1 + Q2 + Q5 + Q6 + Q9 + Q10 + Q13 + Q14 + Q17 + Q18$$

$$SA = Q3 + Q4 + Q7 + Q8 + Q11 + Q12 + Q15 + Q16 + Q19 + Q20$$

The subscale scores are calculated as below:

$$DM = Q1 + Q5 + Q9 + Q13 + Q17$$

$$DS = Q2 + Q6 + Q10 + Q14 + Q18$$

$$SM = Q3 + Q7 + Q11 + Q15 + Q19$$

$$SS = Q4 + Q8 + Q12 + Q16 + Q20$$

The questionnaire questions in Part II and Part III, originally written in English, were translated by the author into Chinese. Two procedures were taken to guarantee the accuracy of translation. First, the source version of the questionnaires was translated into Chinese by the author and then the Chinese version was translated back into English by a language specialist from a comprehensive university who was familiar with English and Chinese. The back translation was for two purposes: to ensure that the actual meaning of the source questionnaire was maintained, and to make a comparison between the English and Chinese versions. Also, the 20 questions were processed using a reliability test. The Cronbach's alpha was .65, as Ramburuth and McCormick (2001) indicated that the cronbach's alpha of SPQ scales range from .57 to .76. The reliability of this questionnaire was consistent with other studies.

### **Procedure**

Before the experiment, students were told that their identities, scores, and responses would be kept confidential. Only the researchers had access to process these data and information. In the English class, the questionnaires were distributed for students to fill out. Upon the completion of the questionnaires, the data were analyzed using an SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), 17.0 Program for Windows and Microsoft XP, Excel.

### **RESULTS**

A total of 102 participants joined the study and their English proficiency levels were shown in Table 2. The average score was 160.75 (S.D. = 37.36). The highest score was 210 and the lowest one was 73. The median score was 170 and it was used to divide the students into two groups: high proficiency learners (H.P.L.) and low proficiency learners (L.P.L.).



**Table 2: Summary of Statistical Analysis of the GEPT-style Test Scores for Participants**

Summary of Statistical Analysis	Results
Number of Participants ( <i>N</i> )	102
Mean ( <i>M</i> )	160.75
Standard Deviation ( <i>SD</i> )	37.36
Median ( <i>Mdn</i> )	171
Lowest score	73
Highest score	210
Total score	240

The GEPT-style test consisted of two parts: ‘Listening Comprehension’ Section and ‘Reading Comprehension’ Section. The total score of “Listening Comprehension” was 120 and it was 120 for “Reading Comprehension” section too. To pass each section, participants had to score over 80. According to Table 3, the mean score of listening and reading comprehension sections of the HPL group was 191.51 (S.D. = 10.95) and for the LPL group, it was 130.00 (S.D. = 27.76). The mean score in the “Listening Comprehension” section for HPL was 91.67 (S.D. = 8.41), and it was 98.88 (S.D. = 8.08) in the “Reading Comprehension” section. For LPL, the mean score in the “Listening Comprehension” section was 63.20 (S.D. = 15.19), and 66.61 (S.D. = 15.17) in the “Reading Comprehension” section. A *t*-test was used to compare the two groups. The result shows that there was a significant difference. The results suggested that learners in the HPL group obtained a significantly higher score than the ones in the LPL group. If there had been no significant difference, it would have signaled that there was no difference between the total scores of learners from the HPL group and the LPL group. Therefore, the HPL group scored significantly higher than the LPL group in the GEPT-style test.

**Table 3: The Results of t-test of the GEPT-style Test Scores for the HPL and LPL Group**

	Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P-value</i>
GEPT Total Score	HPL Group	51	191.51	10.95	.000***
	LPL Group	51	130.00	27.76	
Listening	HPL Group	51	91.67	8.41	.000***
	LPL Group	51	63.20	15.19	
Reading	HPL Group	51	98.88	8.08	.000***
	LPL Group	51	66.61	15.17	

*Note.* HPL = High Proficiency Learners, LPL = Low Proficiency Learners.

\*\*\*  $p < .005$ .

To find out whether or not there is a significant difference between deep approach and surface approach for arts students between undergraduate and graduate program, the prediction was that undergraduate students tended to use more surface approach because the courses they took involved numerous practices. On the other hand, the graduate students applied a more deep approach of learning English not only because they had to do countless practices, but to graduate from school they had to write thesis involving sufficient theoretical work. The results were shown in Table 4. Regarding undergraduate students, the mean score of DA was 29.37 and 19.41 for SA. For graduate students, the mean score of DA was 30.91 and 19.18 for SA. When studying English, both undergraduate and graduate students applied more deep approach than they used surface approach. A significant difference was found in comparing the use of DA and SA. For undergraduate students, the mean scores of DM and DS were higher than SM and SS. The prediction was correct for graduate students, but not for undergraduate students.

**Table 4: t-test of DA and SA for Undergraduate and Graduate students**

Groups	Approaches	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Undergraduate students	DA	29.38	5.39	.000***
	SA	19.41	2.24	
	Subscales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
	DM	15.31	3.22	
	DS	14.07	2.73	
Graduate students	SM	9.72	2.78	.000***
	SS	9.69	2.81	
	Subscales	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
	DM	15.66	3.22	
	DS	15.55	3.16	
	SM	9.25	2.50	
	SS	9.93	2.94	

*Note.* \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . DA= Deep Approach, SA= Surface Approach, DM = Deep Motive, DS= Deep Strategy, SM = Surface Motive, SS=Surface Motive

Comparing the perspectives of DA, SA, DM, DS, SM, and SS between undergraduate and graduate students, a paired sample t-test was implemented (See Table 5). A significant difference was found in DS. No significant differences were found among DA, SA, DM, SM, and SS.

**Table 5: The Results of t-test of DA, SA, DM, DS, SM, and SS**

	Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P-value</i>
DA	Undergraduate	58	29.98	5.39	.176
	Graduate	44	30.91	5.89	
SA	Undergraduate	58	19.41	5.24	.819
	Graduate	44	19.18	4.83	
Subscales	Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>P-value</i>
DM	Undergraduate	58	15.31	3.22	.589
	Graduate	44	15.66	3.22	
DS	Undergraduate	58	14.07	2.73	.046*
	Graduate	44	15.25	3.16	
SM	Undergraduate	58	9.72	2.78	.376
	Graduate	44	9.25	2.51	
SS	Undergraduate	58	9.69	2.81	.673
	Graduate	44	9.93	2.93	

Note. \*  $p < .05$ .

To examine whether or not there is a significant correlation between deep approach and surface approach for arts students with different English proficiency levels, it was speculated that students with high English proficiency level used deep approach but the ones with low English proficiency level utilized surface approach. A Pearson cross product correlation was used to examine the relationship between approaches to study and English proficiency levels, the result was shown in Table 6. Significant correlations were found in SA, SM, and SS with GEPT scores for high proficiency learners, but no significant correlation was found for low English proficiency learners.

**Table 6: Correlations among Subscale of Approaches to Study and English Achievement**

	HPL(High Proficiency Learners)		LPL(Low Proficiency Learners)	
	<i>r</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
DA	.165	.463	.179	.209
SA	-.372	.007**	.001	.994
Subscales	<i>r</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
DM	.264	.061	.234	.098
DS	-.105	.462	.098	.494
SM	-3.79	.006**	.019	.894
SS	-.316	.024*	-.015	.915

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Among DM, DS, SM, and SS, which one best predicted students' English proficiency level? A regression analysis was used to delve into the factors. The result was shown in Table 7. Only DS was entered ( $F_{4, 97} = 3.527$ ,  $p = .010 < .05$ ) and explained 12% of variance in English achievement. Deep strategy was associated with students' English ability

**Table 7: Regression Analysis for DM, DS, SM, and SS**

Subscales	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
DM	-.037	.359	-.235	-1.722	.080
DS	.052	.021	.305	2.361	.020*
SM	-.046	.022	-.245	-1.862	.066
SS	.044	.025	.252	1.911	.059

Note. \*  $p < .05$ .

## DISCUSSION

To answer the first research question, "is there a significant difference between deep approach and surface approach for arts students between undergraduate and postgraduate program?," both undergraduate and graduate students apply more strategies within deep approach than surface approach. The prediction is as expected for graduate students, but not for undergraduate students. The mean score of GEPT for undergraduate students are higher than graduate students. Although undergraduate students spend considerable time practicing their professions, their

English proficiency levels are higher than graduate students, for a significant difference is found. The passing score of listening and reading are 80. The mean scores for the two sections are above 80. This means that the English proficiency levels of undergraduate students range from Intermediate to Upper Intermediate levels. As Case and Marshall (2009) point out the importance of context, the arts students can be viewed as a unique group of students. Most of them have learnt their professions such as music, dance, or painting, since they were children. For them, academic subjects such as Chinese, math and English are often neglected. Before they enter university, they are forced to study English because it is one of the required subjects of the College Entrance Exam. However, after they enter university, English does not seem to be imperative compared with their profession.

There are other interpretations of why undergraduate students outperformed graduate students on the GEPT test, including listening and readings sections. First, in an arts university, students are required to take a General English class in the first year, for two hours per week. After that, there is no more required English classes, though some elective English courses are provided. Therefore, unless students are willing to study English on their own or they set a plan to go aboard to study, they do not study English anymore. Second, English-taught classes are scarce. Most of the lectures are taught in Chinese. Although school provides extra pay for teachers who are willing to teach lectures in English, not so many teachers or professors are willing to try. There are several possible reasons, such as the pressure of explaining terminology and excessive preparation time. However, the most crucial reason is that students do not fully understand the English lectures. When students do not comprehend what the professors say, they begin to feel bored, lose their attention, and they usually give a bad course evaluation. The bad course evaluation to teachers will result in a negative influence on teaching performances, which will threaten a teachers' job security. Third, the textbooks teachers use are written in Chinese. Students are not required to read any English textbooks for the rest of their career. Fourth, students carry the perception that art can speak itself; words are unnecessary to express their performances or artwork. Their artwork is an expression from the heart. Therefore, they do not learn to speak English because words are needless. This becomes the ultimate excuse for them not to study English. Deprived from any English medium, arts students are not required to study English anymore. That explains why the English proficiency levels of graduate students are lower than undergraduate students.

To answer research question two, "is there a significant correlation between deep approach and surface approach for arts students with different English proficiency levels?," no significant correlation is found between the GEPT scores of HPL and deep approach, but a negative correlation is found between the scores and surface approach, meaning when students receive higher scores on GEPT, they use less surface approach. Unlike Gow, Kember, and Chow's

(1991) study in which they found that English language ability has a positive correlation with the deep motive scale and a non-significant positive correlation with deep strategy, this study proves that arts students use less surface approach when studying English. This research adds to the evidence that learning styles of Asian students are changing and it breaks the stereotype they are passive students who prefer rote learning. Also, the study found that DS is a significant predictor for students' English language ability. DS is a positive predictor which means that students with high language ability read widely or try to connect with previous relevant knowledge (Gow, Kember, & Chow, 1991). The findings show that Taiwanese students with high English proficiency levels have intrinsic motivation for learning English, they are aware of the importance of English, and they spend time studying English. They would spend extra hours or use their free time finding interesting topics in English or looking at the suggested readings that go with the lectures in English class.

## CONCLUSION

The study has demonstrated the English study process for Taiwanese arts students and its relationship with English proficiency levels. It was found that the higher a score students receive in English proficiency test, the less they use surface approach. Also, DS is the only significant predictor on students' English proficiency levels. The limitation of the study was that no foreign or western learners were used for a comparison for the topic is learning English. Native-speaking students are not appropriate. An alternative method was to use students from western countries but who nonetheless study English as a foreign language. As internationalization and globalization are prevalent in Taiwan, the ways in which students study English is changing and they are not so-called passive learners anymore. Nevertheless, the study is supporting Case and Marshalls' conclusion that it is the teachers' responsibility to create learning environments involving deep approaches to learning English.

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