

Investigating Foreign Language Teaching Strategies through Phenomenological Interviews and Deep Approach

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Abstract

Over the years, the teacher as the researcher has noticed one interesting phenomenon from her university students' feedback of the *Meetings in English* course: most students liked the exercise of "class discussion." The study attempted to analyze 108 copies of students' feedback, collected respectively in 2011 and 2013 through applying narrative inquiry as qualitative analysis. This study proposes an exploratory view of applying a *phenomenological interviewing skill* as a foreign language teaching method to conduct class discussion similar to the question and answer session of an interview. By doing so, it could further elicit students' using *deep approach* as effective learning strategy. The study has first found that the important features of deep approach as learning strategy coincides with the contemporary components of foreign language acquisition. Next, through analyzing these students' learning feedback, it was confirmed that the students had used some steps of deep approach and responded positively on a series of open and in-depth class discussion. By applying phenomenological interviewing and deep approach as the conceptual foundation of foreign language pedagogy and further analyzing the actual classroom dialogue text, the result showed the substantial interrelations of applying a phenomenological interviewing skill as a teaching method to some degree could successfully elicit students' use of deep approach as an effective learning strategy.

Keywords: deep approach, foreign language pedagogy, higher education, phenomenological interviewing skill

現象學訪談和深層學習為外語教學策略之個案探究

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摘要

多年來，研究者在專業課程「會議英語」的學生期末回饋裡，注意到學生對「課堂討論」(class discussion)反應特別良好。本研究旨在分析 2011 年和 2013 年，應用英語系大四專業課程「會議英文」共 108 份之期末學生課程回饋，期望透質性研究方法「敘述探究」，進行自然文本英語教與學質化分析。本文試圖探究應用「現象學訪談技巧」(phenomenological interviewing skill)為外語教學法，其師生「課堂討論」之對話內容和形式，猶如訪談中之研究者和受訪者，可有效引導大學生使用「深層學習」(deep approach)策略，進而提升外語能力。本文首先探討高等教育中「深層學習」策略之應用性，並發現其策略對外語學習有實質意義。接下來，透過分析學生對「課堂討論」之學習回饋，本研究發現學生應用了「深層學習」策略步驟，並對「一系列開放且具深度的對話」反應良好。而透過本文建議之「現象學訪談技巧」為高階外語教學法，再次分析文本，呼應此現象學訪談技巧之理論架構，可有效引導大學生使用「深層學習」策略，進而達到高階外語學習目標。

關鍵詞：深層學習策略，外語教學法，高等教育，現象學訪談技巧

I. Introduction

In the past few decades, higher education is no longer an elite system for a superior minority. More resources are present and more studies have been researched in higher education. The reason “behind this trend lies, of course, in the rise of the so-called ‘knowledge society,’ technological development, globalization, and increasing international competition” (Tight, 2012, p. 3). From 2000 to 2010, most of the internationally renowned journals of higher education published more than twice the number of articles on the subject of higher education. Obviously, topics on higher education are contemporary and continually drawing more academic and research attention. Among the most important international journals on higher education in 2010 (Tight, 2012), eight of the most published research themes or issues are categorized. The top two most researched topics are course design and student experience. The following four are academic work, system policy, institutional management, and quality. The last two are teaching and learning, and knowledge and research.

In addition to the overview of international research themes on higher education, this study places major attention on higher education research phenomena in Taiwan. This study analyzes the distribution of the researched themes from three major domestic research databases in Taiwan: Airiti Library, Taiwan Periodical Literature, and National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD). Until 2013, in Airiti Library, while the keywords were placed on “higher education” and “university”, all were conducted within the last decade. The most researched theme was on system policy. The remainders were on internationalization, teaching and learning, economic concerns, and institutional management. In Taiwan Periodical Literature, most articles were also published within the past ten years. The first half of the article themes was on system policy, and then institutional management. The remaining half of the articles themes consisted of economic concerns, evaluation, course design, teaching and learning, internationalization, and research. In terms of NDLTD, most were studied within the last ten years. The major research themes were on institutional management and economic concerns. The other half was on evaluation and internationalization. The remaining few articles were on teaching and learning. Among these frequently researched themes and issues, three different themes from the international trend are newly recognized: internationalization, economic concerns, and evaluation. These special concerns of higher education in Taiwan can be taken into consideration for future research.

Although the most researched topics in Taiwan are different from the international ones in which the focus is more on course design and student experience, while Taiwanese research centers on system policy, institutional management, and economic concerns, the research trend to a certain degree reveals two similarities. First, most of the studies in higher education have been conducted within the past decade. This research trend on higher education appears to be contemporary, common, and internationalized. Second, with a further exploration on a

variety of themes in higher education, coincidentally, not as much international as well as domestic research attention explores the themes and issues on teaching and learning from a higher educational perspective. Even though teaching and learning are well-researched in many other educational domains, such as curriculum and instruction, yet the particular research view from higher education toward teaching and learning, internationally and domestically, both deserves more explorations. Therefore, this study fits the era need of continually conducting more research on higher education and furthermore exploring the phenomena of teaching and learning at a university level of classroom.

The trigger point of drawing the researcher to conduct this study was that one of her professional courses, Meeting in English, over 10 years of teaching, the overall course evaluation has always outperformed the others. Besides, the researcher has noticed that from the students' class feedback, most students particularly responded positively on one classroom exercise - class discussion. Hence, this study aims at a university level of advanced English language teaching and learning activity with an explorative proposal of applying a *phenomenological interviewing skill* (Schuman, 1982) as an advanced foreign language teaching method to assist students in using *deep approach* (Marton & Säljö, 1976) as effective learning strategy to enhance advanced foreign language ability. The following literature will first elaborate how deep approach plays an effective learning strategy in higher education, and its application on foreign language learning. Then, the research methodology, narrative inquiry, will be thoroughly explained with the position of the teacher as both the researcher and the narrator. After that, the course case introduction, data collection, and data analysis are displayed respectively.

II. Deep Approach in Foreign Language Learning

In the latest discussion on higher education, an important learning channel (Tight, 2012), the deep versus surface approach, has gained enormous visibility which links to the Swedish researcher Marton, as well as those who have been collaborating with him (Biggs, 1987; Marton & Säljö, 1976; Marton, 1986; Marton & Booth, 1997; Marton, *et al.*, 2005; Marton & Säljö, 2005). This notion of deep versus surface approach has been a foundation stone in higher education for over 30 years that much of the research, theory, and practice have been based on (Webb, 1997). On top of that, many studies have concluded that deep approaches for learning is relevant for higher quality learning outcomes (Baeten *et al.*, 2010; Donnison & Penn-Edwards, 2012; Howie & Bagnall, 2015; Marton & Säljö, 1997; Prosser & Millar, 1989; Ramsden, 1992; Trigwell & Prosser, 1991; Van Rossum & Schenk, 1984; Wang, 2013).

A deep approach indicates that a learner strives to understand and construct meaning from a learning activity in an encouraging environment (McCune & Entwistle, 2000), while a surface approach reveals learners only receive and memorize the text. Deep approach learners actively use brainpower “to find and systematize forms of thought in terms of which people

interpret aspects of reality” (Marton, 1981, p.180). In other words, digging deep into the thinking world to understand the learning process and construct a meaning closely related to their life is weighty in a deep approach learners’ life. The important elements of deep approach have long been researched, recognized, and concluded as the followings (Biggs, 1987, 1993; Entwistle, 1995, 1997; Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Entwistle *et al.*, 2000; Marton, 1976; Marton & Säljö, 1976, 1997; McCune & Entwistle, 2000; Tait & Entwistle, 1996): the intention to understand, creating active interest and personal engagement, relating ideas, questioning and using evidence critically, seeking the main point, creating outlines and structures, seeing the purpose of a task or viewing it in a wider context, gaining an overview, and drawing conclusions. These learning steps center on subjective learning experience of meaning searching, reconstructing, systematizing, and concluding. In relation to foreign language pedagogy, let’s first recap the schools of thought in second language acquisition (Brown, 2007) and disclose more on the current thought which simultaneously echoes the core value of applying deep approach as an effective foreign language learning strategy.

The focus of second language teaching and learning has been gradually shifting. From the early 1900s to the 1950s, it centered on structural linguistics and behavioral psychology of observable performance, reinforcement, surface structure, empiricism, etc. From the 1960s to the 1980s, the focus was on generative linguistics and cognitive psychology of acquisition, innateness, universal grammar, competence, etc. From the 1980s to the recent decade, constructivism plays a significant role, such as interactive discourse, discovery learning, construction of meaning, cooperative learning, and sociocultural variables, etc. Foreign language learning, especially in advanced levels in higher education, no longer limits itself in simply developing four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It serves as a tool rather than a purpose to explore more of a subject’s meaning construction through cooperative learning with teachers and classmates. Through this literature review and analysis, the study first discovered that the latest focus of foreign language teaching and learning to a certain degree coincides with the value of deep approach as effective learning strategy, such as using questions to relate ideas and seek main points as interactive discourse, creating outlines and structures for discovery learning, and gaining an overview and drawing conclusions as construction of meanings. These also serve as one of the conceptual foundations for data analysis of the study. Therefore, if foreign language professionals successfully elicit students’ using deep approach as learning strategy, the effectiveness of foreign language learning is instant.

Besides considering deep approach as an effective alternative foreign language learning strategy, this study further examines under which possible teaching condition could deep approach be successfully elicited as the learning strategy? One of the researcher’s course feedback, the course *Meetings in English*, has particularly shown positively on one exercise – class discussion that induced her to further explore the intriguing teaching and learning

phenomena in between. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) suggested to employ narrative inquiry to examine what have been taken granted in our daily life “with an eye to identifying new possibilities within that experience” (p. 55). The following section "Methodology" will lay out why this study employs narrative inquiry as the qualitative research method, why the position of the teacher as the researcher and the narrator is also a phenomenological one, as well as the course case introduction, data collection, and the important conceptual framework for data analysis.

III. Methodology

1. Narrative Inquiry: Teacher as both the Narrator and the Researcher

Many researchers argue that “what teachers know about teaching is largely socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which teachers have come” (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p. 1) and “how teachers actually use their knowledge in classrooms is highly interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work” (Richards, 2002, p. 1-2). Afterwards, through many research channels, such as the reflective teaching movement (Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), the action research (McNiff, 1993; Somekh, 1993), and the teacher research movement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Freeman, 1998), teachers are more actively encouraged to conduct their own classroom research and gradually legitimize their teaching experiences since questions oftentimes arise from those experiences, and should be studied in their classrooms. As Stenhouse (1983) clearly stated that teachers should test their own curriculum designs as hypothesis in their classrooms, rather than by university- generated research-types of curriculum. This is the same as the prominent educator in Taiwan Tsai’s comment (Tsai, 2008) on the definition of curriculum, in which teachers can approach curriculum from a professional development aspect. Through a form of research, teachers examine the designed teaching hypothesis, improve the curriculum gradually based on implementation conditions, and create new knowledge in a reciprocal relationship with students.

By the same token, this current study enters into the research paradigm of narrative inquiry in which the teacher is at the same time the narrator and the researcher. To truly reflect the value of narrative inquiry, it “lies in its capacity to capture and describe experiences as they occur in the midst of other lived experiences, to look inward, outward, backward, and forward.” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 3). Narrative Inquiry is more likely to generate a “new sense of meaning and significance” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42) out of teachers’ experiences. In other words, in this study, on the one hand, the teacher as a narrator describes and reflects on the special teaching practice occurred in her own university classroom; on the other hand as a researcher she confronts the unknown and makes sense out of her teaching experiences, as well as students’ learning ones to significantly echo Dewey’s concept of

continuity of experience (1938) indicating that this type of “inquiry into experience is educative which propels us not only to question the immediate context but also to draw connections among experiences” (Richards, 2002, p. 4). To some extent, the teacher tends to be a practitioner making sense out of her teaching method and the students’ learning feedback, as well as a theorist suggesting innovative teaching method and alternative advanced foreign language learning strategy. On top of that, educational researchers’ positions, roles, and identities are always complicated inserted in the research process and outcomes (Chapman, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Stanley, 2007). In this case, since the teacher herself has conducted several studies centered on *phenomenological* explorations (Yan, 2003, 2004, 2010, 2011, 2012), this hidden research orientation can certainly affect her professional teaching philosophy. Therefore, in this study, she is naturally a *phenomenological* one, leading university students to explore a series of *phenomenological* questions in foreign language learning. In the later section, the phenomenological features will be explained more with the class materials.

Overall, the current study applies narrative inquiry as a research methodology for the following reasons: First, narrative inquiry centers on life experience as described by those who live it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The life experience in the current study involves the teacher as the researcher’s teaching experience in real-time and the students’ learning experience over the years at the university classroom. Second, narrative inquiry attempts to create meaning from the life experience as “a way of understanding one’s own or others’ actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 421). Over the years, the teacher as the researcher noticed an interesting phenomenon from the students’ class feedback, further explored the possible meaningful connections and the consequences of all actions and events over time by suggesting that one view them from alternative teaching and learning perspectives: *phenomenological interviewing skill* as teaching method and *deep approach* as learning strategy. This alternative way of perceiving teaching and learning reflects what Calandinin and Rosiek’s (2007) earlier statement shown in this article which applies narrative inquiry to identify new possibilities of meaning from life experiences. The value also echoes one of the important curriculum ideologies, cognitive pluralism (Eisner, 2002), which encourages the multitude of ways of understanding ourselves and the world we live in (Flinders, 2012). After all, where are our regular teaching and learning should be the beginning and the end of the inquiry (Ladson-Billings, 2000).

2. The Course Case – *Meetings in English*

Let’s have a course overview first. *Meetings in English* is an academic year course covering a two-semester curriculum. Normally, the teacher as the researcher’s university evaluates teaching performance each academic year with a multiple-choice electronic format.

This course, *Meetings in English*, over the years the overall teaching evaluation from the university evaluation system has always outperformed the teacher as the researcher's other teaching courses. Even though the university runs its teaching performance evaluation yearly, the teacher as the researcher conducts her own teaching evaluation each semester in order to flexibly adjust the class curriculum to better fit the updated teaching and learning needs. The course activities include: class discussion, role play, various themed-presentations, quizzes, field observation, and additional activities. At the end of each semester, students will reflect and comment on each class exercise in open questions in order for the teacher as the researcher to collect the information regarding what and how they have learned from these exercises. This is required in order to make the necessary adjustments for the other half of the curriculum design next semester or the coming new academic year course. The general evaluation questions are: 1) what activities are the most useful for you and why? 2) Which activity is the least useful for you and why? 3) Please provide overall comments on the entire class as well as some brief comments for the teacher. This written feedback is suggested anonymously unless students decide to reveal identities. Surprisingly, most of the students chose to reveal their names. Among all the class feedback, one specific classroom exercise was frequently mentioned and positively responded – class discussion that induced the teacher as the researcher to further explore the interesting teaching and learning phenomena. As Dewey (1933) stated that the ultimate assessment of academic subject teaching should be based on how much students have appreciated the course.

3. Data Collection

Narrative data is normally collected and investigated from in-depth interviewing data (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). This study approaches the interviewing format from an innovative perspective which views the teaching act in the classroom as interviews: the class discussion between the teacher's questioning and the students' replying as interviewers' asking and the interviewees' reflecting. All the class materials, such as class discussion and students' feedback are identical to interview data. These naturally occurring empirical material is suitable for content analysis (Silverman, 2001) in narrative inquiry. In other words, "if the researcher is interested in, say, strategies used by journalists in interviewing politicians (Clayman & Heritage, 2002), it might be advisable to tape-record broadcast interviews rather than to ask journalists to tell about their work" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 529). The new tendency encourages more on the natural production of narratives in their immediate setting (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009).

Over the years, the students' comments about "class discussion" particularly drew attention. All the class feedback was naturally occurring materials in the real college classroom settings collected over 10 years originally for teaching use. This study selected the feedback in the academic years 2011 and 2013. The 2012 and 2014 classes were not chosen

was because the teacher as the researcher was on parental leave. Among these two years of students' feedback, 48 copies in 2011 and 60 in 2013 were collected and analyzed. 40 exemplary quotes (see Table 1 & 2) out of the 108 were particularly selected for analysis based on purposeful theme sampling on phenomenological teaching and deep learning approach. Most of the feedback was written in Chinese and translated into English for the current study. Additionally, some of the class discussions in 2011 and in 2013 were audio recorded originally for teaching use and now are valuable for this research analysis. Overall, besides the major data – the students' class written feedback, there are real-time class teaching and learning recorded audio materials, teacher's teaching notes from her participant observations, the students' reports, and the relevant class teaching and learning documents supporting the research analysis.

4. Data Analysis

In the earlier statement in Literature Review, the study explains the conformity of core values between deep approach as learning strategy in higher education and the contemporary foreign language teaching and learning focus. These values as the followings from deep approach and foreign language acquisition serve as the first conceptual framework for analyzing the students' class feedback: using questions to relate ideas and seek main points (deep approach) as interactive discourse (foreign language pedagogy), creating outlines and structures (deep approach) for discovery learning (foreign language pedagogy), and gaining an overview and drawing conclusions (deep approach) as construction of meanings (foreign language pedagogy).

Besides, the researcher has proposed a phenomenological interviewing skill as an advanced English language teaching method. This phenomenological interviewing approach serves as the other conceptual framework for analyzing research text. This section first briefly introduces the important steps and later they will be explained more along with data analysis. Practically speaking, a phenomenological interviewing approach (Schuman, 1982) involves three critical steps. First, it is important to establish the context of life experiences. After collecting the first-hand data of experiences, reconstructing the details of the experiences becomes critical in order to continually proceed the next step of reflecting the meanings of all. Next section, the study will, through examining the students' class feedback, analyze the intriguing connections among deep approach, phenomenological interviewing, the teacher's teaching, and the students' learning.

Table 1 Exemplary quotes from students' written feedback in the 2011 classes

1. Teacher always invited every student to address his or her opinions and responded nicely whether she accepted the idea or not.
2. Teacher always asked us many questions and encouraged us to express our own opinions. This helped me develop more ideas.
3. Teacher always encouraged us.
4. When the teacher taught some concepts, she immediately raised the relevant questions and requested that we get into group discussion. It was very useful to push us to think right away. We could grasp the whole idea more easily.
5. The interaction in class, asking opinions which made us "think" (The original written in English. No translation needed.)
6. Teacher designed a variety of activities to encourage us to think and talk.
7. Teacher carried the class by way of discussion. It always kept us brainstorming. It was very beneficial to our learning.
8. Teacher listened to the students' opinions.
9. The teaching skill closely related to life experience. It highly motivated me to learn.
10. Students were always brainstorming. It provided plenty of opportunities to think widely and deeply. Viewing a variety of replies from the classmates helped me to learn multiple perspectives and to grow a lot from it. Even after the class, I was still in deep reflection for a long while.
11. This class nurtured students to think, develop, and express various ideas and perspectives.
12. I have realized so many different ideas that I have never thought of before.
13. Teacher trained us to think and view things from different perspectives... the teacher would pay attention to our emotions, encouraged us with a tender attitude, and this reduced our stress about answering questions in class.
14. I like the class discussion. It always made me think "Wow! We can approach this from a very different way."
15. In the class discussion, the teacher always led us to think by asking more questions.
(continued)
16. Teacher would lead us to think first and helped us to use our own methods of presenting our own opinions.
17. The teaching was very energetic. It closely related to life and highly motivated me to learn.
18. The teaching was interesting and vivid. Class discussion actively involved every student in learning. In terms of problem solving, we learned how to communicate, compromise, and discuss many possibilities on issues.

19. The brainstorming time for the topic was exciting... The first time, I saw my classmates debating on the topic and developing more ideas.
 20. In the discussion, we learned how to discuss, compromise, invite, and listen to others - especially with the less opinionated classmates. There was no pressure for discussion and respecting others was shown.
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Table 2 Exemplary quotes from students' written feedback in the 2013 classes

21. Every time after the class, I always felt hungry (physically) because I had to keep thinking about how to answer.
22. This was a very exciting way to learn, and it inspired me to think.
23. Teacher's questions always made me nervous on the one hand, and on the other hand they freed me to think and express my thoughts. Anyway, it was challenging but interesting.
24. At the end of the class, the teacher invited students to share what they have learned in this class. It was very helpful to review what we as individual had learned in the class right away.
25. Always brainstorming helped me to connect closer to the lesson.
26. Teacher's questions and classmates' opinions enriched my views. I had learned a lot from it.
27. There were many open questions. This trained us in English and thinking ability.
28. I like the class discussion. I could learn so many different opinions from the discussions.
29. This teaching method could increase students' participation and helped us to be more willing to express ideas.
30. I like the teacher's instruction because it's kind of half-leading and half-forcing us to think and talk... what I learned the most was to be brave enough to express my ideas regardless if they were right or wrong.
31. What I learned the most was Q&A – skills on how to ask and answer. We also needed to ask questions regarding the classmates' ideas and presentations. It was a very good design. It trained us how to ask questions.
32. The class I liked the most was class/group discussion because it made me think. It trained us in our thinking and observing abilities, and we could learn many different ideas from one another.
33. Q & A aroused our learning potential and even competitive nature. I always wanted to answer as early as possible... I was always thinking because probably later the teacher will ask questions again... the class always kept me busy on thinking.
34. From class discussions, I did learn a lot from my classmates' different perspectives. Active and positive discussions in class increased the pleasure of interaction.
35. I like class discussions. It trained us to think, and we could learn new ideas from other classmates as well... the discussion was very energetic and most of us enthusiastically expressed our ideas. Being able to express my opinion in class or in the group helped me to grow

the most.

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36. Teacher always gave us plenty of time to discuss and asked us more questions. Before, I wasn't good at expressing myself. But now I can do that. Meanwhile, I can learn a lot from other classmates' ideas and then reach common ground with my teammates.
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37. We didn't have to listen to the teacher's lecture because we needed to be thinking as well, and expressing our own ideas. So, time flew.
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38. At the beginning, I was so afraid I couldn't keep up because I was never sure what my opinion is. But the atmosphere in class released me from that. Even after class, I was still in a happy mood... I learned to think a lot from the class, and also from my classmates.
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39. I like spontaneous class/group discussions and Q&A... At the end of the semester, grades were not so important to me. I enjoyed the learning process.
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40. The class trained us in thinking and observing abilities. Sometimes, the teacher asked follow-up questions and requested our spontaneous responses with more open questions. Actually, after two hours of non-stop thinking, I felt dizzy but very impressive. The class did more than just provide English training.
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IV. Discussion

1. Deep approach *suits* foreign language learning

As said earlier, the study claimed that to a certain degree the important features of deep approach as learning strategy matches the current focus of foreign language learning, such as using questions to relate ideas and seek main points as interactive discourse, creating outlines and structures for discovery learning, and gaining an overview and drawing conclusions as construction of meanings. Besides this conceptual link, the teacher as the researcher has strived to analyze the explicable connection between this conceptual link and the students' class feedback. Please see the analysis on Table 3 in details.

Table 3 The relevance between students' exemplary quotes and deep approach

Features of deep approach	Exemplary quotes from students' class feedback
intention to understand	Quote 9: The teaching skill closely related to life experience. It highly motivated me to learn.
active interest and personal engagement	Quote 10: Students were always brainstorming. It provided plenty of opportunities to think widely and deeply. Viewing a variety of replies from the classmates helped me to learn multiple perspectives and to grow a lot from it. Even after the class, I was still in deep reflection for a long while.
relating ideas	Quote 4: When the teacher taught some concepts, she immediately raised the relevant questions and requested that we get into group discussion. It was very useful to push us to think right away. We could grasp the whole idea more easily.
gaining an overview	Quote 24: At the end of the class, the teacher invited students to share what they have learned in this class. It was very helpful to review what we as individual had learned in the class right away.
creating outlines and structures	Quote 20: In the discussion, we learned how to discuss, compromise, invite, and listen to others - especially with the less opinionated classmates. There was no pressure for discussion and respecting others was shown.
questioning and using evidence critically	Quote 31: What I learned the most was in the question and answer section – skills on how to ask and answer. We also needed to ask questions regarding the classmates' ideas and presentations. It was a very good design. It trained us how to ask

	questions.
seeking the main point	Quote 18: The teaching was interesting and vivid. Class discussion actively involved every student in learning. In terms of problem solving, we learned how to communicate, compromise, and discuss many possibilities on issues.
drawing conclusions	Quote 36: Teacher always gave us plenty of time to discuss and asked us more questions. Before, I wasn't good at expressing myself. But now I can do that. Meanwhile, I can learn a lot from other classmates' ideas and then reach common ground with my teammates.
seeing the purpose of a task or seeing it in its wider context	Quote 35: I like class discussions. It trained us to think, and we could learn new ideas from other classmates as well... the discussion was very energetic and most of us enthusiastically expressed our ideas. Being able to express my opinion in class or in the group helped me to grow the most.

From the Table 3 analysis, it is apparent that these students to some degree had applied deep approach which have been recognized as higher quality learning outcomes (Baeten, *et al.*, 2010; Donnison & Penn-Edwards, 2012; Howie & Bagnall, 2015; Wang, 2013). By the same token, as Quote11 expressed: “class nurtured students to think, develop, and express various ideas and perspectives,” it reveals that the students applied deep approach by showing great interest in understanding and constructing meaning through mass use of brain power “to find and systematize forms of thought in terms of which people interpret aspects of reality” (Marton, 1981, p.180). With a massive amount of thinking and reconstructing meanings of learning, it is important to provide an encouraging environment (McCune & Entwistle, 2000) for deep approach learners as expressed from Quote 1 “Teacher always invited every student to address his or her opinions and responded nicely whether she accepted the idea or not” and Quote 13, “the teacher would pay attention to our emotions, encouraged us with a tender attitude, and this reduced our stress about answering questions in class.”

From another point of view, how could deep approach as learning strategy be successfully elicited and used as learning strategy in the classroom activity? Effective learning reflects on and leads to what teaching should be developing and improving (Kreber, *et al.*, 2005; Postareff, *et al.*, 2008; Trigwell, *et al.*, 2005). The United States National Research Council (NRC) has also stated (2010), “Indeed, of all the factors that education

leaders can control, the quality of teaching has perhaps the greatest potential effect” (p. 9). Therefore, what teaching stimulates students’ applying deep approach as effective learning strategy? As mentioned earlier in the research paradigm of narrative inquiry, because researchers’ multiple positions, roles, and identities are always intricately affecting the research process and outcomes (Chapman, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Stanley, 2007), the study connects this line of the teacher as the researcher’s research orientation on *phenomenological* explorations with her application of phenomenological interviewing skill as advanced foreign language pedagogy. The following will connect this phenomenological interviewing skill framework with an analysis with the students’ exemplary quotes in a further relation to deep approach as learning strategy.

2. Proposing Phenomenological Interviewing as Foreign Language Pedagogy – *Open and In-Depth* Questions Matter

Most positive comments from the students’ feedback were about class discussion. With a further exploration, most were *open and in-depth* questions which actively led students’ thinking and English speaking. For example,

Quote 2: “Teacher always asked us many *questions* and encouraged us to *express* our own opinions. This helped me develop more ideas,”

Quote 4: “When the teacher taught some concepts, she immediately raised the relevant *questions* and requested that we get into group discussion. It was very useful to push us to *think* right away. We could grasp the whole idea more easily.”

Quote 15: “In the class discussion, the teacher always led us to *think* by asking more *questions*.”

Quote 23: “Teacher’s *questions* always made me nervous on the one hand, and on the other hand they freed me to *think and express* my thoughts. Anyway, it was challenging but interesting.”

Quote 33: “*Q & A* aroused our learning potential and even competitive nature. I always wanted to answer as early as possible... I was always *thinking* because probably later the teacher will ask *questions* again... the class always kept me busy on *thinking*.”

A phenomenological interviewing approach (Schuman, 1982) includes three important steps: to establish the context of the interviewee's life experiences; to reconstruct the details of the experiences; to reflect the meanings of all. This type of interviewing skill features a series of *open* and yet *in-depth* asking and reflecting process. An interview between researchers' asking and participants' reflecting is proposed by this study like a classroom interaction between teachers' asking and students' replying, back and forth with a series of questions to discover more of collaboratively constructive meanings of teaching and learning. Through the narrative analysis line, this study suggests approaching foreign language pedagogy from a phenomenological interviewing perspective due to the teacher as the researcher's long habitual research orientation on phenomenological exploration and students' positive response to class discussion with a series of questions between the teacher and the students.

The class discussion was initiated by the teacher as the researcher with a series of *open* questions in eliciting the students' sharing personal experiences. It corresponded to the first feature of phenomenological interviewing skill of establishing the context of the students' experiences. For instance,

Quote 9: "The teaching skill closely related to life experience. It highly motivated me to learn."

Quote 40: "The class trained us in thinking and observing abilities. Sometimes, the teacher asked follow-up questions and requested our spontaneous responses with more open questions."

Then, a series of *open and in-depth* questions was to encourage the university students to establish more of their individual life contexts in order to make sure that the follow-up discussion was also closely related to individual personal contexts and providing enough discussion space for reconstructing their own learning meanings.

Another naturally occurring class discussion was audio-recorded in 2011. The topic of this class discussion was to brainstorm about what it meant to have an efficient meeting. The study has strived to analyze the intriguing interconnections between the teacher as the researcher's questions in the use of the phenomenological interviewing skill features, and the students' replies in the application of deep approach learning strategy (see Table 4).

Table 4 A class discussion with the analysis of using phenomenological interviewing skill as teaching pedagogy and deep approach as learning strategy

Class discussion		Analysis
Teacher:	How can a meeting be efficient and successful?	Open questions to gather the context of students' experiences (teacher's applying first step of phenomenological interviewing skill)
All students:	(thinking)	intention to understand, create active interest and personal engagement (students' using deep learning approach)
Student A:	To have a starting time and an ending time.	Relating to one's life experience (student's using deep learning approach)
Teacher:	Good. Why does this make the meeting efficient and successful?	More open and in-depth questions to reconstruct the details of the experiences (teacher's applying second step of phenomenological interviewing skill)
All students:	(Thinking)	seek the main point (student's using deep learning approach)
Student B:	In case a meeting would take up too much time.	Use evidence and relate to ideas based on individual experience (student's using deep learning approach)
Teacher:	Ok! But why is it so wrong for a meeting to take up too much time?	More open and in-depth questions to gather details of the experiences, and reflect on and further explore new meanings (teacher's applying third step of phenomenological interviewing skill)
All students:	(Thinking)	Students' using deep learning approach e.g., personal engagement, relating ideas, seeking the main points, viewing it in a wider context

Phenomenological interviewing focuses on exploring individual first-hand experiences. “It emphasizes explaining the meaning of things through an individual’s perspective and self-experiences” (Selvi, 2008, p.39). While this notion applies to a teaching act, it should all start from an *open* question in the purpose of establishing the context of students’ experiences. Then, through a series of *open and in-depth* questions, it inspires students to relate their individual life experiences to explore the deeper connection or even learn a new meaning of their learning experiences. From this class discussion, the students had striven to answer and explain the concept of the topic, “an efficient meeting,” based on their own experiences and perspectives through back-and-forth reflective discussions by massively using their brainpower to systematize their thoughts (Marton, 1981). Hence, it is critical to invite deep approach learners to interpret the theme topic from their own perspectives instead of giving them standard answers, either from the textbook or from teachers’ professional knowledge. On top of that, all the in-depth discussions were proceeded in English that effectively trained the students’ English advanced ability in a more meaningful context. Overall, the purpose of the class discussion was to assist students in developing their advanced English ability by relating to their individual life experiences, constructing the details of the discussion context, and reflecting and further discovering more of collaboratively constructive meanings with the teacher, their classmates, and most importantly themselves.

In summary, this study earlier explicated the conformity of core values between deep approach as learning strategy in higher education and the current foreign language teaching and learning focus. Through analyzing the students’ class learning feedback, it’s confirmed that the students had used some steps of deep approach as foreign language learning strategy. These deep approach learners particularly enjoyed the learning process of class discussion under an encouraging environment while involving life experiences, active thinking process, viewpoints expansion, question skills, etc. as many quotes were expressed. The analysis has substantially verified the learning effectiveness connecting deep approach to foreign language learning. The study further analyzed the students’ feedback along with a proposal of applying a phenomenological interviewing skill as a teaching method viewing interviewers’ asking and interviewees’ reflecting as teachers’ questioning and students’ replying. It has found that a series of phenomenological interviewing question and answer section with open and in-depth questions could successfully elicit students’ use of deep approach as the effective learning strategy. In a word, deep approach suits foreign language learning and the phenomenological interviewing skill with a series of open and in-depth question and answer section as the teaching practice connect them all.

V. Conclusion

The study fits the contemporary research need of higher education to compensate for the scarcity of research in the field of teaching and learning in Taiwan. Besides, three research themes of higher education different from the international trend are newly recognized: internationalization, economic concerns, and evaluation, which provide valuable information for future relevant research and studies in Taiwan. Next, the study found the important connection between the features of deep approach and the current components of foreign language pedagogy such as using questions to relate ideas and seek main points (deep approach) as interactive discourse (foreign language pedagogy), creating outlines and structures (deep approach) for discovery learning (foreign language pedagogy), and gaining an overview and drawing conclusions (deep approach) as construction of meanings (foreign language pedagogy). This conformity of core values in between was further confirmed and explained in the analysis of the students' class feedback. The study concludes that if foreign language professionals encourage students' using deep approach as learning strategy, the effectiveness of foreign language learning is immediate.

By the same token, it is found that the students responded positively on one particular class exercise, class discussion with a series of open and in-depth questions and answer exercise. In order to encourage students to use deep approach in foreign language learning, an alternative teaching approach on foreign language pedagogy is proposed: applying a phenomenological interviewing skill with a series of open and in-depth questions as foreign language pedagogy. After thoroughly analyzing one audio class discussion, the study has disclosed that the phenomenological interviewing skill could successfully elicit student's use of deep approach as foreign language learning strategy. In the end, it is suggested that, in the university advanced foreign language teaching and learning classroom, phenomenological interviewing skills as the teaching practice be taken into consideration as one of the alternative approach on account of its meaningful connection with student's individual life experiences of contextual learning and exercising deep approach as the effective foreign language learning strategy.

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