

# The Use of the Discussion Method at University: Enhancement of Teaching and Learning

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## Abstract

The current paper attempts to examine the various aspects of the discussion method of teaching at university and its role in enhancing students' linguistic and academic skills as well as its shortcomings. In Oman, research on English language teaching at universities and colleges show that a considerable number of students who move from secondary schools and join higher education institutions would confront difficulties in using the English language to meet their personal, social, academic, and career needs efficiently and appropriately. The discussion method allows establishing a rapport with students, stimulating their critical thinking and articulating ideas clearly (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006). It is relatively acceptable among university academics who use it to promote active learning and long-term retention of information (Bonwell, 2000). It could provide students with a platform to contribute to their own learning and would offer the lecturer an opportunity to check students' understanding of the material (Craven & Hogan, 2001). Critics argue that some problems may show up such as that several participants dominate the discussion sessions while other students may remain passive, and often, resentful (Brookfield & Perskill, 2005). The discussion could also include other signs of limitation such as that it may get off track or that only few students may dominate it during the whole session (Howard, 2015). Hence, the objectives of this research study are to identify students' views and opinions of the use of the discussion method in teaching English as well as its strengths and weaknesses. The findings showed that majority of respondents indicated that a good opportunity to interact is provided during the discussion and that the lecturer is not the sole authority in class. The implications of this research could be reflected on students' learning through their participation in class discussion.

**Keywords:** discussion, university, enhancement, teaching, learning

## 1. Introduction

Teaching methods according to Burden & Byrd (2010) are approaches to teaching and learning in which concepts, patterns and abstractions are taught in the context of strategies that emphasize concept learning, inquiry learning and problem-solving learning. The most popular teaching method, as Eison (2010) claims, is the lecture method. It has been used for years as a means of transmitting cognitive or factual data from a teacher to a group of students (Ganyaupfu, 2013). It presupposes that the teacher is the only expert with all the access at the teacher's disposal, and that the students need or want a large amount of this data in a short time (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006). This method is one way channel of communication of information since the emphasis is mainly on the presentation of the topic and the explanation of the content to the students (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Students' attention in a lecture appears to fall off fairly steadily after an initial rise, until the last five minutes when it briefly rises again which means that the middle of a talk is less well remembered than the beginning and end (Bligh, 2000). Lecturers' performance also declines over an hour. Lecturing may be less effective than discussion or individual work in class as there is a lack of concentration on the part of students (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Though lectures are much criticised as a teaching method, Paul (2015) reports that universities have not yet found practical alternative teaching methods for the majority of their courses.

Students in the age of global technological advancement have an extensive and instant access to information they require with a single click of a mouse, meaning that they expand the scope of their knowledge whenever and wherever they wish. The lecturer and library are no longer the limited sources of academic learning at university.

Students may attend classes with other information than is provided in a normal lecture (Novak et al., 2004) to contribute to their own learning.

The discussion method could be one of the available teaching methods utilised by university lecturers (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006) to promote learning. However, the dynamics of the discussion technique may not be realized by most of these lecturers (Forrester-Jones, 2003). Research on the efficiency of group discussion methods has shown that team learning and student-led discussions produce favorable student performance outcomes, and foster greater participation, self-confidence and leadership ability (Perkins & Saris, 2001; Yoder & Hochevar, 2005).

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 What is Discussion?*

Generally speaking, ‘discussion’ could be considered an activity which involves written or oral expression of different points of view in a given situation (Cashin, 2011). Also, Brookfield and Preskill (2005: 6) define it as ‘an alternately serious and playful effort by a group of two or more to share views and engage in mutual and reciprocal critique’. Proper discussion would assist learner participants to reach a critically informed understanding of the topic, self-awareness and capacity for self-critique, appreciation of diversity, and informed action (Applebee et al., 2003; Parker, 2003).

The discussion process is not merely controlled by one individual presentation as the case in the lecture. The lecturer as the discussion leader may try to strike a balance between controlling the group and letting students air their views with no restrictions (Anastas, 2010). Participation in a class discussion can be voluntary to avoid embarrassment of shy or introvert participants and would be achieved by creating a supportive climate (Rotenberg, (2010).

### *2.2 Discussion in the Classroom*

The nature of language according to Berns (1984: 5) would be ‘interaction as it is an interpersonal activity and has a clear relationship with society. In this light, language study has to look at the use function of language in context, both its linguistic context and its social, or situational, context’. The teaching-learning process involves mutual responses between the lecturer and students as well as amongst students themselves as all should participate and contribute to this process. Blumberg (2008) claims that interactions during this activity would encourage students to exchange ideas and experiences which run alongside with what is learnt from the lecturer.

In a university class, discussion could be among the common strategies which would be used by lecturers to stimulate active learning (Kim, 2004). If the objectives of a course are to promote long-term retention of information, to motivate students toward further learning, to allow students to apply information in new settings, or to develop students' thinking skills, then discussion, as McKeachie et al (2006) claim, is preferable to lecture.

Discussion, when used during lectures, is an effective way to facilitate learning (Nystrand, 2006). It can offer the lecturer an opportunity to check students’ understandings of the material and comprehending ideas thoroughly through expressing their own viewpoints and questions (Nystrand, 2006). Sybing (2015) reports that discussions provide students with a platform to participate in their learning process. When students are actively involved in using the relevant material, learning would be more interesting for them and students would be more motivated.

Classroom discussions are valuable for developing critical thinking when students learn how to arrange their ideas and then present them convincingly (Silverthorn, (2006) Later in life, they may find themselves in situations where they participate actively in social debates (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005). However, the authors assume that there are no clear standardised and universal principles which can be used to assess discussion leader's competence or the students' contributions.

A number of academics tend to take for granted the idea that discussion is a centrally important learning tool (Omatseye, 2007; Rasmussen, 1984). Therefore, there have been few studies conducted of the connection between discussion and learning. These studies that have been carried out support the claim that proper discussion may result in a number of pedagogical learning outcomes. (Barkley, 2010) postulates that there is an increased curiosity about the subject area, more positive perceptions about the value of the subject, extended time spent reading materials related to the subject as well as enhancing the conception of connecting to other individuals.

### *2.3 Discussion and Second Language Learning*

In ‘second language learning’ classes, students may actively participate in expressing, structuring, and explaining meaning, which could be an important element for directing them towards improving their language fluency. Therefore, opportunities for language learners to join extended interaction in a real context are necessary for the development of the second language communicative competency (Borich, 2011; Kim, 2004).

Research related to second language learning, points to the essential and educational role of the social interactions in second language development, since discussion entails an interaction between multiple speakers, usually revolving around a particular topic of contention or question on which the speakers must come to a consensus (Sybing 2015). Interactions among second language learners empower them to recognise structural forms, to practise the target language, and to reflect on the structural features (Brookfield & Perskill, 2005).

Han (2007) emphasizes that a sufficient knowledge base established prior to discussion tasks is essential to learner participation. When students gain confidence in their knowledge, then they are more motivated to participate freely in the oral discussion. Thus, the class discussions may effectively assist in the second language teaching and learning both by presenting significant, interesting topics to incorporate the students (Stanley & Porter, 2002) and by offering a wide range of opportunities for students to interact and reach a useful negotiation for meaning (Kim, 2004).

Discussion approaches are appropriate to a number of objectives which include providing the lecturer feedback about students' learning; meeting higher-order cognitive objectives, such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom et al, 1956). These approaches also help students develop their interests and values and change attitudes as well as allowing students to become more active contributors to their own learning (Gronlund, 2004; Han, 2007).

In reference to the effective teaching methods used at university for the large class environment, Carpenter (2006) claims that the discussion is the most preferred teaching method among university students. Some students refer to the main reasons for their choosing this as the most acceptable method would imply that they have a strong interest in being active learners, engaging in discussion rather than sitting passively in class and merely listening to a lecture.

#### *2.4 The Role of the Lecturer in Discussion*

A lecturer who is a good discussion leader could be equipped with some kind of general plan. As a result of the comments or questions the students may raise in class, experienced lecturers may find it appropriate to modify or change their aims during a discussion (Henning, 2005). Without a general plan at the start of a class, it may be difficult to make such prompt decisions.

In order to start a constructive class discussion, a lecturer could spend more time and effort to prepare thoroughly for a discussion than for a lecture. Although the students present the ideas, lecturers may have sufficient knowledge of the subject matter to be able to absorb the flow of ideas (Anastas, 2010). They must be aware of ideas that may lead the lecturers off on a tangent and direct the discussion away from these ideas. The lecturer may also guide the students away from irrelevant ideas and toward the desired aims without dominating the whole discussion.

It may be useful to allocate enough time for individual reflection before group discussion takes place. Individual reflection, as McKeachie et al. (2006) suggest, may increase the diversity of opinions among the group and decreased the tendency that the group takes a single track of thought in relation to the question forwarded by the lecturer.

A way to create a context is by allocating certain tasks at the beginning of each session such as study questions. These may prepare the ground for the discussion and also to focus the students' attention on the objectives of the course (Redfield, 2000). Another way is to agree on the topic for the day at the start of a discussion session and also to choose the subheadings which may be covered.

In the discussion class, a process may occur in which the lecturers could use questioning, listening, and response activities to steer the discussion toward the targeted pedagogical ends (Rotenberg, 2010). The lecturers may intervene at some times with a question or a summary. At other times, they may allow discussion to take place with minimum obvious domination on their part.

In an English teaching context, the foreign language could be a great obstacle to the success of group-discussion since the learners may not have enough language tools to express their thoughts. Henning (2005) points out that as students may not be familiar with the language of discussion e.g. summarising points, signalling agreement or disagreement and turn taking, the lecturer's assistance, therefore, may be needed to make text-discussion possible in the language classroom.

The discussion 'tool' could be acknowledged as a preferable method of teaching because of an increase in students' participations; the learning is more effective; and students do not have to rely on rote learning as this method develops creativity among students (Anastas, 2010). When class discussion is informal, it tends to be loose and that may encourage some students to talk more often. Yet, when discussion is more formal, it tends to be more productive and interesting (Howard, 2015).

### *2.5 Restraints of Discussion*

Despite the strength that discussion may possess, McCarthy and Anderson (2000) argue that it could also include some limitations, such as that only few students may dominate it during the whole session; other students may not participate at all in the discussion and that the discussion itself might get off track (Brookfield & Perskill, 2005). Redfield (2000) notes that at times, the discussion may flow well but more often it slows down and loses its magic.

The discussion method would be appropriate to selected subjects as it could be used for students who have some prior knowledge in disciplines such as social sciences or humanities (Brookfield & Perskill, 2005). The nature of class discussion could make the process very time consuming particularly when it goes off track and move entirely away from the point of discussion. While it is possible to redirect a drifting conversation back on track, valuable class time is wasted and lecturers risk losing student's focus on the subject matter (Craven, & Hogan, (2001). The lectures lose control over the students and discussion and this could lead to disturbing the flow of learning.

Lecturers at university are familiar with assessing students' written works so they may —find some difficulty in judging verbal activities in discussion. It may be unfair to reward a student who talks a lot but says little. They may also underestimate the contribution of a student who tries out new ideas that may seem badly off-track (Craven & Hogan, 2001). There is also the situation in which a student just does not want or are unable to, make any contribution to the discussion.

There may be some other obstacles to disrupt smooth discussions. Class discussion at university may become less effective with a number of students that exceeds 20 (Brookfield & Perskill, 2005). As the class size increases beyond this limit, individual participation decreases and the opportunity for the class to focus on a particular topic is reduced (Chingos, 2013). Experienced lecturers, however, may endeavor to utilize more effective class management to establish a proper class environment.

Discussion not only has positive aspects, but it also has some visibly negative ones. During discussion, it may be difficult to get the participation of all students (Brookfield & Perskill, 2005). Also, discussion could be more time consuming than lecturing, and not well suited to covering significant amount of content. Effective discussion requires more forethought than do lectures, and in discussion the lecturer has less control than in lecturing (Cashin, 2011).

In general terms, it is claimed that discussion teaching may be regarded by many lecturers as a less demanding and freer method of teaching and learning than is lecturing (Brookfield & Perskill, 2005). However, Redfield (2000) disputes this claim, and argues that some of the underlying features of the discussion teaching are problematic. Getting students to talk can be difficult sometimes as starting and maintaining effective discussion is not an easy task. Sometimes even the more experienced lecturers fail to get certain types of personalities to enter into discussion.

## **3. Method**

### *3.1 Research Design*

The research design for the current study employed quantitative data collecting techniques to collect data such as a questionnaire. The research began with a survey that aimed at exploring students' views on the discussion method in teaching English language and literature at university. The quantitative data collection technique involves conducting and administering a questionnaire.

The research allowed the researcher to gather, through the coordination with the English department in the university college, as much data as possible to assist in answering the research questions. The research design and variables are shown as follows:

Table 1. Research design and variables

Independent variable	Dependent variables
Discussion Method	a. General preferences (items 1-9)
	b. Improvement of language/ linguistic skills (items 10-18)
	c. Cognitive enhancement (items 19-24)
	d. Personal growth (items 25-30)
	Category e. Management of learning (items 31-40)

### 3.2 Data Collection

The study uses a students' questionnaire designed according to a Likert scale of five levels. The aim was to investigate students' perceptions of the value and importance of discussion, active learning and interactive activities they undertook during lectures. The questionnaire contained 40 questions and was designed so that students could complete it in 20 minutes. It was divided into four categories: a. General preferences, b. Improvement of language/linguistic skills, c. Cognitive enhancement, d. Personal growth and e. Management of learning.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS version 20 to get the mean and standard deviation. Prior to analyzing the quantitative data, testing the reliability of instruments was needed. Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was done on the data obtained from the pilot test. It is a coefficient of internal consistency which is commonly used as an estimate of the reliability of a psychometric test for a sample of examinees.

Variables were coded according to Likert scale as follows: Strongly agree= 5; Agree= 4; Neutral = 3, Disagree= 2, and Strongly disagree= 1. Using the descriptive statistics mode of SPSS frequencies, random cases were checked for accuracy. The data was checked for outliers, normality and linearity using stem and leaf plot and histogram and corrected for it. Descriptive statistics, frequencies, independent sample t-test, and one way ANOVA were performed.

In this study, the computed range of the pilot testing participated by the randomly selected 30 students in the third and fourth years of the university college was 0.830 which was interpreted as having reliability in the instrument (Cronbach, 2004). As for the internal consistency of each category, the computed reliability analysis test is shown as follows:

Table 2. Reliability of constructs on discussion method

Category	Discussion
a. General preferences	0.784
b. Improvement of language/linguistic skills	0.700
c. Cognitive enhancement	0.707
d. Personal growth	0.824
e. Management of learning	0.831

Table 2 reflects that the students' responses for the discussion method showed the value of more than 0.60. All the values are higher than the acceptable lower limit of 0.6 according to Nunnally (1978).

## 4. Results and Findings

Students were asked 40 questions on their perceptions of the discussion method. The majority of respondents indicated that the method had been of value to them. Likewise, majority of respondents indicated that they had learned a lot from the discussion method material which is interesting. The majority of respondents indicated a preference for interaction during the discussion.

#### 4.1 Analysis of students' questionnaire

The mean and rank order of students' perception of the discussion method is shown as follows:

Table 3. Perception of students for the discussion method

Categories	Discussion	
	Mean	Rank
b. Improvement of language/linguistic skills	3.89	I
e. Management of learning	3.66	II
d. Personal growth	3.66	II
c. Cognitive enhancement	3.66	II
a. General preferences	3.26	III

Table 3 shows that the category 'Improvement of language/linguistic skills' has an agreement mean value of 3.89 to be placed in rank 1. The category 'General preferences' has a neutral mean of 3.26 and placed last in ranking among the other five categories.

According to statistics, a result is considered significant because it has been predicted as unlikely to have occurred by chance alone (Sirkin, 2005). *P*-values are often coupled to a significance or alpha ( $\alpha$ ) level, which is also set ahead of time, usually at 0.05 (5%). Thus, if a *p*-value was found to be less than 0.05, then the result would be considered statistically significant (Schlotzhauer, 2007). Students' responses to the five categories are as follows:

Table 4. Students' responses to discussion method with reference to General Preferences

Item No	A. General Preferences	Mean	S.D
1.	I benefit from discussion.	3.88	1.06
2.	Discussion is a waste of time.	2.45	0.99
3.	I like to have discussion more often.	3.59	1.02
4.	I feel bored during the discussion	2.47	1.11
5.	I like to listen to the lecturer than the students.	3.06	1.12
6.	Concentrating on text is not useful.	2.94	1.18
7.	I like lecturing as well as discussion during the same lecture.	3.97	0.79
8.	Discussion method should be applied to other subjects too.	3.67	0.99
9.	I intend to apply discussion method in my teaching career.	3.31	0.98

Table 4 presents the students' responses to the discussion method with reference to General preferences. It is observed that students agree in item 7 that they 'like lecturing as well as discussion during the same lecture', in item 1 'I benefit from discussion', item 8 'Discussion method should be applied to other subjects too', and in item 3 'I like to have discussion more often'.

Students reported a neutral mean in item 9 towards 'I intend to apply discussion method in my teaching career.' item 5 'I like to listen to the lecturer than the students'. Neutrality was also noticed in item 6 'concentrating on the text is not useful'. Students disagreed with item 2 'discussion is a waste of time', and item 4 'I feel bored during the discussion'.

It may appear from the above tables that students prefer to have both lecturing and discussion during the same class, but they affirm that they benefit from discussion and like to have discussion more often in the class.

Table 5. Students' responses to discussion method with reference to Language/ Linguistic Skills

Item No	B. Language/ Linguistic Skills	Mean	S.D
10	In discussion, I am able to listen to others' opinions and take notes.	3.92	0.83
11.	I am able to ask and answer questions.	3.87	0.93
12.	I am able to make an oral summary of topic of discussion.	3.66	1.00
13.	I am able to give short talk on the topic of discussion.	3.71	1.02
14.	I am able to express my ideas which can be understood by others.	3.85	0.97
15.	I feel my fluency develops by discussion.	3.96	0.97
16.	My pronunciation improves by discussion.	4.09	0.82
17.	My command of the English grammar improves through discussion.	4.05	0.93
18.	My vocabulary increases by discussion.	3.97	0.91

Table 5 shows the students high mean is found in item 16 as they agree that 'pronunciation improves by discussion', and item 17 in which 'students' command of the English grammar improves'.

The students agree in item 18 that their 'vocabulary increases by discussion', in item 15 that 'fluency develops by discussion', in item 10 that 'ability of students to listen to others' opinions and take notes', in item 11 that 'the ability of the students to ask and answer questions', item 14 that 'students are able to express ideas understood by others', item 13 where students are 'able to give short talk on the topic of discussion', and item 12 as students are 'able to make an oral summary of topic'.

Students believe that they would be able to improve their various essential language and linguistic skills through the active participation in the class discussion. This trend is significant for students as these skills would enable them to use the language in developing their ability to form ideas and points of view when reading linguistic or literary texts.

Table 6. Students' responses to discussion method with reference to Cognitive Enhancement

Item No	C. Cognitive Enhancement	Mean	S.D
19.	In discussion, I am able to identify ideas in the topic of discussion.	3.62	0.87
20.	I am able to analyze detailed information while listening.	3.44	0.97
21.	I am able to extract detailed opinions while listening.	3.48	0.94
22.	I am able to compare my ideas with others' ideas.	3.62	0.94
23.	I broaden my general knowledge through discussion.	4.14	0.95
24.	I am able to distinguish between different opinions in discussion.	3.68	0.93

Table 6 reveals students' high mean is noticed in item 23 as they agree that students in discussion sessions 'broaden general knowledge' and students also agree in item 24 that they have the ability to 'distinguish between different opinions in discussion'.

Students, however, agree relatively less in item 19 regarding the ability to 'identify ideas in the topic of discussion', in item 22 with the ability of 'comparing ideas with others', in item 21 of the 'ability of the students to extract details', and in item 20 in relation to the ability to 'analyse information while listening'.

Table 7. Students' responses to discussion method with reference to Personal Growth

Item No	D. Personal Growth	Mean	S.D
25.	I am able to state my points of view without hesitation during discussion.	3.73	.793
26.	I want to present my opinion in discussion but afraid to do so.	3.78	1.006
27.	I prefer others to state their opinions during discussion.	3.66	1.311
28.	I expect the lecturer to ask for my opinion during discussion.	3.68	1.105
29.	My self-confidence increases through discussion.	3.70	.920
30.	I am motivated to participate in future discussions.	3.63	1.065

Table 7 exhibits students' high mean is realized in item 26 as they agree with the 'fear among students to express their opinions', in item 25 with the students' 'ability to state viewpoint without hesitation', and in item 29 with the 'improvement in self-confidence during discussion'.

Nevertheless, the students identified relatively less in item 28 where students 'expect lecturer to ask for opinion', in item 27 with the concepts of 'preference of others to state their opinions' and in item 30 where students are motivated to some extent to 'participate in future discussion'.

Table 8. Students' responses to discussion method with reference to *Management of Learning*

Item No	E. Management of Learning	Mean	S.D
31.	The lecturer raises topics for discussion in collaboration with students.	4.20	.795
32.	The lecturer notifies us in advance of the topic of discussion.	4.24	.882
33.	The lecturer helps us form our sentences during discussion.	4.02	.845
34.	The lecturer corrects our pronunciation immediately.	3.96	.925
35.	The lecturer gives us equal opportunities to talk during the discussion.	4.21	1.003
36.	Few students only talk all the time.	2.22	1.093
37.	The lecturer dictates his points of view.	2.00	1.000
38.	The discussion topics are relevant to our preferred choices.	3.98	.833
39.	The lecturer interferes only occasionally.	3.97	1.120
40.	As a student, I should be free whether or not to participate in the discussion.	4.06	1.123

Table 8 shows students' high mean as they strongly agree in item 32 that the 'lecturer notifies students in advance of the topic of discussion', in item 35 that 'equal opportunities should be given by lecturer to students to talk' and in item 31 as lecturer may 'raise topics for discussion with students'.

Students, however, agree in item 40 that 'freedom in participating in the discussion' should be available for students, in item 33, students 'forming sentences with the help of lecturer', in item 38 that 'topics are relevant to preferred choices of students', in item 39 as the lecturer 'interferes occasionally in the discussion', and in item 34 where lecture 'correcting students' pronunciation'.

Disagreement of students is noticed in item 36 as 'few students participating in the discussion' and in item 37 where the lecturer 'imposes points of view on students'.

Students are in agreement that in a discussion class, lecturers notify them in advance about the topic of discussion, give them equal opportunities to talk during the discussion, raise topics for discussion in collaboration with them, feel free to participate in the discussion, and help them form sentences during the discussion (Boyd & Maloof, 2000).

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Students' Views on Using the Discussion Method

Students disagree that they feel bored during discussion and they believe that discussion is not a waste of time. Moreover, students disagree that only few students talk all the time and that the lecturers impose their ideas during the discussion (Wallace, 2004). Students' participation in class activities would have an impact on their real learning as they would be motivated and encouraged to participate in future discussions.

Students believe that they would be able to improve their various essential linguistic skills through the active participation in the class discussion. This trend is significant for students as these skills would enable them to use the language in developing their abilities to form ideas and points of view when reading language and literature texts (Ramsden, 2003).

Most of the students stated their confidence in enhancing their cognitive aspects by discussion. They agree in regard to their ability to identify ideas during the discussion and broaden their general knowledge, yet some are less assured whether they are able to analyze information, extract detailed opinions or compare their ideas with the others'.

Students affirmed that they develop self-confidence during discussion, state opinions without hesitation and are motivated to participate in future discussion. Yet, some students were less confident in presenting their opinions as they preferred to wait for the lecturer to encourage them to do so, or other students to carry out the task (Brookfield & Perskil, 2005).

Student's responses to the discussion method indicate that they prefer the lecturer to notify them about the topic of discussion in advance in order to have sufficient time to gather relevant information to manipulate during the discussion. Also, she/he should give them equal opportunities to talk during the discussion and they demanded that the lecturer include them in selecting the topics to be discussed in class.

### 5.2 Students' Benefits from the Discussion Method

It can be concluded that students stated they benefited from the discussion method in teaching English language and literature as it offered them a chance to express their thoughts, helped them to improve their English as well as expand their knowledge in preparation for future careers. They also got information from different sources.

It was noted that students could ask questions and get information from their lecturers as well as from their colleagues during the discussion. Students may also learn how to respect and listen to other speakers. Hence, this method provides opportunities to speak, share ideas and improve language communication skills and thus improving their self-confidence as well as their higher-order thinking abilities (Howard, 2015).

## 6. Implications for Teaching and Learning

The implications for teaching and learning are noticeable. The discussion method could encourage the active participation of students during the lecture time as there would be interactions between students and lecturer and also among students themselves. Through sharing, exchanging and advocating of ideas and opinions, learners have the opportunity to express themselves, defend their points of view and shape their thoughts through the contrast and comparison with those of their fellow students.

The discussion method as shown by the findings assists students in improving their language and linguistic skills, develop their cognitive abilities, enhancing their personal growth and provide the academic atmosphere to manage their learning. The use of the discussion method leads to the accomplishment of many other objectives among which are providing the lecturer with feedback about students' learning, meeting higher-order cognitive goals, such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation which help students develop interest and values and change attitudes (Cashin & McKnight, 1986). The implications of the use of the discussion method could be extended to the social side of education (Elkind & Sweet, 2000).

Lecturers of English language and literature at university may accept the fact that actual participation of students in their learning is an urgent and significant step to achieve the goals set by their educational institutions. It certainly does not affect the role of the lecturer as an educator and leader. On the contrary, it could create an active and enjoyable atmosphere for exchanging knowledge and views which lead to improving the academic skills.

## 7. Conclusion

It would not be unusual to state the fact that good teaching expectedly leads to good learning. It has been reaffirmed that lecturing could be an essential means for communicating knowledge at university. Yet, learners may need more participation in class to consolidate their learning. The method of teaching preferred by students could have a great impact on the outcomes that would be eventually achieved by them at the end of a course. Lecturers, therefore, may bear a huge ethical responsibility towards themselves and their students by choosing the most effective method of teaching.

The study indicated that the discussion method improves students' ability to think and could be more tempting to learning than mere listening to a lecture. It may also assist in fostering intellectual growth, individual expression and character development. It offers students opportunities to exchange thoughts and views with each other and heightens language proficiency through constant reinforcement and use.

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