

The use of the discussion method at university: enhancement of teaching and learning

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