

GROUP DISCUSSION AS A METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

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***Abstract:** This paper sets out to explore the theory on classroom instruction particularly group discussion. It includes a short discussion of the benefits of group discussion as an activity to help engaging students in a lesson by encouraging spoken interactions. It also provides a guided discussion to apply in the classroom as the subject matter for students to learn to discuss more effectively. Hopefully the paper could provide educators and instructors a method to use and to lead further studies for helping students to increase their opportunities to have authentic communication in English. Moreover, this paper can also serve as a research reference in the field of classroom instruction, for instance in using group discussion to develop speaking skill.*

***Keywords:** group discussion, classroom instruction, speaking skill.*

I. INTRODUCTION

It is a challenge for teacher or lecture to make their students actively participate in the classroom activities. By engaging in classroom activities, learners interact with peers and they will develop spoken interaction within the structure of activities. As a result, the learning and development occurs. Despite various teaching strategies applied to foster students' spoken interaction, however still passive participation or less spoken interaction are the common problems found by the teacher or lecture, particularly in speaking class. Whereas, making students be able to produce the target language is the teacher expectation. Providing opportunities for them to use the language is a must. Thus, the teacher needs to use a teaching strategy or suitable method of instruction in order to address the problem. Moreover, the teacher has to apply the suitable yet appropriate teaching instruction which can meet the expectation.

Concerning with teaching speaking, using group discussion as a teaching method is a good choice. As Davis (2001) states using class discussion can provide students with opportunities to get knowledge through the face-to-face exchange of information, ideas, and opinions. Students can acquire various skills in accordance with developing their communication skill. It is in line with McGonigal (2005) point of view that discussion is an excellent form for learning to think like a specialist by giving students a chance to practice analyzing the world through the lens of a particular field. In addition, Donald (2010) also argues that small group discussion creates

a sense of security and non-threatening in the teaching environment as students feel more self-esteemed as they contribute and rehearse in the discussion rather than in front of the instructor or class. Furthermore, Aziz (2013) and Adi (2016) also found in their study that the students had positive attitude toward the implementation of the group discussion. The students can speak more active in speaking English and they also felt comfortable, enthusiastic, and enjoy during the teaching and learning process.

Based on the literatures above, this paper tends to explore the theory on classroom instruction particularly group discussion. It includes a short discussion of the benefits of group discussion as an activity to help engaging students in a lesson by encouraging spoken interactions. It also provides a guided discussion to apply in the classroom as the subject matter for students to learn to discuss more effectively. Hopefully the paper could provide teacher, educators and instructors a method to use and to lead further studies for helping students to increase their opportunities to have authentic communication in English. Moreover, this paper can also serve as a research reference in the field of classroom instruction, for instance in using group discussion to develop speaking skill.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. BENEFITS OF GROUP DISCUSSION

Discussion is commonly define as a regular and directed form of exchange of ideas, both in small and large groups, with the aim of obtaining a common understanding, agreement, and decision about a problem. The method of discussion in learning is a way of presenting or delivering materials where the teacher provides opportunities for student who hold scientific talks to gather opinions, make conclusions or arrange various alternative solutions to a problem. What needs to be considered is students should actively participate in each discussion. The more students engage and contribute their thoughts, the more they can learn. Therefore, the role of the teacher should be considered in order to provide or facilitate learning atmosphere.

Considering group discussion as a method of instruction, it is necessary to note the advantages of using group discussion first. According to Burke (2011) small group discussion is an important element of active learning and practice. If carried

out carefully, the discussion is a fun and stimulating experience of learning, because it can be a release of ideas and deepening. In line with Burke, Yang, Yong, & Dong argue that using group discussion allows students to exchange information and ideas and integrates individual's experience to group intelligence (2011). More discussion activities train someone to think logically because in the discussion there is a process of argumentation. The arguments put forward get an assessment from other members, thus they can improve the ability to think in solving a problem. Moreover, group discussion can increase students motivation through peer feedback and can improve English language speaking proficiency (Abdullah & Krishnan, 2013). Feedback can be received directly so that this can improve the speaker's way of speaking, both concerning language and non-language factors. Furthermore, Hadimani (2014) outlines that group discussion is able to make students have better understanding of the subject and develop communication skills. It helps students to arrive at better understanding because there are various contributions of thoughts from other participants expressed from various points of view.

There are some benefits of group discussion listed by Brookfield & Preskill (1999):

1. *It helps students explore a diversity of perspectives.*
2. *It increases students' awareness of and tolerance for ambiguity or complexity.*
3. *It helps students recognize and investigate their assumptions.*
4. *It encourages attentive, respectful listening.*
5. *It develops new appreciation for continuing differences.*
6. *It helps students become connected to a topic.*
7. *It shows respect for student voices and experiences.*
8. *It helps students learn the processes and habits of democratic discourse.*
9. *It develops the capacity for the clear communication of ideas and meaning.*
10. *It develops habits of collaborative learning.*

(Brookfield & Preskill, 1999)

Those benefits will be achieved when the teacher guide them well in a discussion. It is the teachers challenge to provide a guide for students before discussion. Beside, giving appropriate feedback is also important to do. Therefore, preparing a guided discussion will be a solution in order to

GUIDED DISCUSSION TO USE IN THE CLASSROOM

A successful discussion in a classroom can be seen through the enjoyment of the students' interaction and the development of students' understanding of concepts. Students' enthusiasm, involvement, and willingness to participate affect the quality of class discussion as an opportunity for learning (Davis, 2001). Thus, the discussion as a method of instruction should be used correctly in order to help all of the students to make the best use of their opportunities to actively participate in a classroom. Therefore, it is a responsibility for teacher to make sure students understand that discussion is not simply a tool for them neither to voice their opinions nor to criticize the thinking of others; yet it is to examine their own assumptions and evidence (McGonigal, 2005).

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The followings are guides for teacher before applying group discussion described by Davis (2001):

1. *Set the purpose of discussion*
2. *Plan how you will conduct the discussion*
3. *Give pointers about how to participate in a discussion*
4. *Give feedback after the discussion*

(Davis, 2001)

The lectures or teacher need to consider the guides above in order to facilitate a good discussion. First, students can keep on the track of what they are going to talk about by keeping in mind the purpose of discussion. They will be able to prepare material related to the topic to discuss. Second, a good planning is needed for a good discussion. Teacher can ask students to list unfamiliar words or terms, look for and write down the definitions. It will be good if the students can prepare some question to ask beforehand. Beside, teacher can show them a videotape of a good discussion. Then, teachers have to monitor the students during discussion in order to give constructive feedback.

The following are some useful strategies for preparing effective discussions propose by Tennessee Teaching and Learning Center (library, 2010):

1. Spend some time to know your students and allow them to get to know each other. Use names as much as possible. Praise students for their contributions. Great discussions are a result of respectful and trustworthy relationships. Your

students will be more comfortable to contribute if they feel respected and valued.

2. When preparing a guided discussion, consider the objectives. Assign a preliminary reading or writing assignment to introduce students to the topic and help them formulate their perspective. Plan the preliminary assignment and the discussion to suit your desired outcomes.
3. Prepared a prompt to promote participation and facilitate transition from one point to the next. Prepare students to engage in the discussion to test ideas and explore new perspectives. Have students brainstorm about what the environment might look like.
4. When you plan to have students work in groups, circulate the room, listening and even use an encouraging word.

By modeling responsible preparation and respectful activities teacher will create an atmosphere to enhance the quality of the discussions. Helping learners learn to cooperate in their groups gives them valuable life-long learning skills. As students participate, they demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the course topics, promoting a deeper comprehension of the material; allowing teacher to become a facilitator of information rather than the lecturer.

III. CONCLUSION

Teacher or lecturer can use group discussion as an activity to help engaging students in a lesson by encouraging spoken interactions. Guided discussion can be the solution to apply in the classroom as the subject matter for students to learn to discuss more effectively. The way teacher organize students into groups, help groups negotiate among themselves, provide feedback to the groups, and evaluate the products of group work should be consider in the guideline. Therefore, teachers should be able to make good judgments about which subsequent activities will interest students improve their performance, and the way to engage students or motivate them.

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