



INTEGRATING THE SIX THINKING HATS INTO PROJECT-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TASKS: A TOOL FOR STUDENT AUTONOMY

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Abstract

This paper proposes using the “Six Thinking Hats” method for team project assignments in English. A step-by-step algorithm is described that helps students structure discussion, overcome language anxiety, and activate their vocabulary. The author believes this approach enhances the effectiveness of independent work and develops collective thinking skills.

Keywords: Six Hats method, critical thinking, project-based learning, independent work, credit module system, group dynamics.

Introduction

The credit module system (CMS) of higher education presupposes a significant volume of students' independent work, reaching 50–60 % of the total course workload. In the practice of teaching a foreign language, this share is often realized through collective project assignments, which require not only linguistic competence but also well-developed skills in joint planning, task distribution, argumentation, and decision-making. However, as pedagogical observation shows, student teams in the process of completing such assignments encounter a number of typical difficulties: cognitive chaos, dominance of certain participants, language barriers, and a lack of reflection on their own reasoning processes. These problems reduce the effectiveness of independent work as a didactic tool and contradict the requirements of the competence based approach embedded in the CMS. There is a need for a methodological tool that would structure students' mental activity in a foreign language without simultaneously complicating the linguistic task.

The present paper attempts to describe the methodological potential of Edward de Bono's “Six Thinking Hats” method for organizing students' project-based activities in English, with particular emphasis on its ability to structure discussion, reduce language anxiety, and activate vocabulary at all stages of completing a module assignment. The author proposes a step by step algorithm for introducing color coded cognitive roles into team work and describes the teacher's functions as a facilitator within the point rating system.

The term "Six Hats" (or "Six Thinking Hats") reflects a technology of managed parallel thinking, in which each type of cognitive operation is assigned a specific color metaphor. It was introduced by the renowned psychologist and researcher Edward de Bono, who proposed this method as a means of structuring group discussion and decision making processes. The method is formed from the combination of a numerical component ("six") indicating the number of



thinking modes, and the metaphorical component ("hats"), which denotes the roles participants assume during collective intellectual work [1, p. 15]. Currently, the terms "Six Hats," "thinking hats," and "parallel thinking" are used practically as synonyms to refer to this technique.

The diversity, high dynamism of modern educational processes, and the need for effective organization of students' independent work determine the constant interest in methods that activate cognitive activity [2, p. 78]. Therefore, in this article, special attention will be paid to the methodological potential of the Six Hats method, as it contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms for structuring group discussion and developing critical thinking.

One of the most characteristic features of the credit-module system of higher education is the significant volume of students' independent work, which reaches 50–60 % of the total course load. Alongside its primary function of organizing knowledge acquisition, independent work in a foreign language requires well-developed skills in joint planning, task distribution, argumentation, and decision-making.

Thus, E. de Bono in his works examines the principles of parallel thinking, proposing a system of six cognitive modes: White (facts), Red (emotions), Black (criticism), Yellow (positivity), Green (creativity), and Blue (management). The author argues that alternating these modes allows avoiding intellectual chaos and significantly increases the productivity of group discussions [1, pp. 45–52].

E.S. Polat and M. Bukharkina, in their work "Modern Pedagogical and Information Technologies in the Education System," investigate the application of active learning methods in the context of competence-based education. The authors describe the features of organizing project-based activities and the role of the teacher as a facilitator in the credit-module system [2, p. 105].

The problem of organizing effective group interaction in project-based tasks in a foreign language is of considerable interest for pedagogical analysis, as it allows a deeper understanding of group dynamics and the identification of effective strategies for managing cognitive processes. The category of cognitive strategies in the credit-module system is implemented through a variety of methodological tools, reflecting its functional and substantive diversity [4, p. 27].

Bringing Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats into project-based English tasks shows that structured creativity can make a real difference in how students work together. Instead of discussions sliding into chaos or being dominated by a few voices, the method gives everyone a clear role and a way to contribute. This balance helps reduce language anxiety, encourages students to take risks with their vocabulary, and turns independent work into a more confident, collective effort.



The approach works on three levels: it organizes the flow of ideas so discussions stay focused, it supports students emotionally by lowering the fear of mistakes, and it develops their skills by activating passive vocabulary and building metacognitive awareness. In this way, project-based learning becomes not just about completing assignments, but about learning how to think together in English.

In the bigger picture, the Six Hats method shows that autonomy in language learning doesn't mean working alone, it means having the tools to manage your own thinking while collaborating effectively with others. This makes the method a practical and forward-looking strategy for modern language education, where critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork are just as important as grammar and vocabulary.

References:

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