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Hats off to de Bono: Innovatively enhancing presentation skills in the ESL classroom

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Abstract

Within the realms of the ESL classroom, there has been a growing interest to integrate thinking and language skills, particularly in tertiary education. The aims for this are twofold: firstly, to create a community of thinkers among language learners; secondly, to immerse students in a task-based-language-learning atmosphere, one beyond the intimidating confines of oral presentations that are judged solely on language skills. In addition, there is a dire need to fill the gap in critical thinking and communication skills in the tertiary curriculum to meet employers' expectations. In designing the curriculum for the English for Academic and Professional Communication (ENG1050), an ESP subject offered to semester one Communication students, our objective was to enable students to transcend language skills and engage in critical, out-of-the-box thinking both in writing and oral presentations. Accordingly, Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats, a methodology that advocates parallel thinking, was incorporated into the ESP subject. This paper discusses how the incorporation of de Bono's Six Hats into the ENG1050 curriculum introduced students to creative and critical thinking skills and assisted them to view particular concepts from different angles and directions to derive analyses, syntheses and eventually, effective conclusions. Analysis of students' presentations supported by video recordings of the sessions demonstrated the benefits of such a curriculum. To conclude, the inclusion/incorporation of de Bono's creative and critical thinking skills into an ESP curriculum helped students to acquire oral skills more naturally as they were more focused on the 'what' (content) than on the 'how' (methods) of oral presentations.

Keywords: *Innovation, creative thinking, critical thinking, de Bono, ESP*

1 Introduction

1.1 Setting the context

It is clearly not new information that with the advent of the “information age” comes a pressing need for organisations to recruit knowledge workers who can contribute productively and effectively to the success of the organisation. Due to this demand, universities are now faced with the challenges of preparing and producing graduates with personal and intellectual attributes that are desirable to the prospective employers (Lee, 1999; Koo et al. 2008; Rajendran, 2008). Whilst undeniably the most sought after skills in the current “*intensely competitive marketplace*” (Koo et al. 2008, p.2), higher order thinking, language and communication skills are also paradoxically the most lacking skills in graduates, which has prompted the call for further reforms to the Malaysian higher education system (MoHE, 2007; MoHE, 2009). As with other sectors of education, the tertiary-level English-language classroom has witnessed a growing desire and attempt to integrate thinking and language skills in its curriculum. According to Emanuel (2011), teaching oral communication is necessary to encourage “*critical habits of mind*” (p.3) among university students. Hence, integrating thinking and language skills into student academic pathways becomes central to the success of these programmes, to the success of the students within these programmes, and beyond to professional practice. The aims for this are twofold: firstly, to create a community of thinkers among language learners and secondly, to immerse students in a task-based-language-learning atmosphere where students are taught how to use the language skills acquired in various contexts. In order to achieve these aims, innovation in the tertiary-level English language education needs to take place. De Lano et.al (1994, p.488) defined innovation in a second language teaching program as “*an informed change in an underlying philosophy of language teaching/learning, brought about by direct experience, research findings, or other means, resulting in an adaptation of pedagogic practices such that instruction is better able to promote language learning as it has come to be understood*”. Fullan (2001, cited in Waters, 2009, p.423) identified three broad phases involved in an educational innovation process – *initiation*, *implementation* and *institutionalisation*. The initiation phase includes 1) evaluation of the current curriculum and pedagogy and needs analyses which establish the need for change (De Lano et.al, 1994), 2) setting goals and objectives and deriving learning outcomes, and 3) ensuring that the change is *feasible*, *relevant* and *acceptable* to all stakeholders affected by the change (Waters, 2009). Innovation in the context of English language education encompasses changes made to the present teaching materials used, lesson plans and teaching approaches and hence, the teacher’s willingness to accept and implement the change, is vital. The most critical phase of innovation is the implementation phase in which the new teaching materials and teaching approaches are piloted and assessments are carried out to ensure that the learning outcomes derived for the course are achieved. Institutionalisation or continuation of the change is therefore, determined by successful implementation and stakeholders’ acceptance of the change.

1.2 Delineating the study

This paper discusses our initiative to improve the curriculum for *English for Academic and Professional Communication (ENG1050)*, a tertiary-level ESP (English for Specific Purposes) subject offered to Semester One Communication students at a private university in Malaysia, with the objective of enhancing language acquisition and content knowledge. As a pedagogical framework for the new curriculum design, we chose to employ Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats, a methodology which advocates a parallel thinking process during education. The objectives for this integration included, but were not limited to:

- assisting students to transcend language skill practices, and in the process, to engage in critical, out-of-the-box thinking, in both their literacy and oral practices and presentations;
- aiding an oral presentation task, and the effect of this task in increasing students' creative and critical thinking skills; and
- providing students with multiple perspectives of concepts to analyse, synthesise, and arrive at conclusions.

The improvised curriculum engages students in task-based / problem-based learning activities that cultivate group participation, develop criticality, encourage creative exploration and discovery, and increase students' motivation and sense of ownership for their work (Boothe et.al, 2011; McTighe, 1987). As the literature on innovation suggests, we have also considered the feasibility and relevance of the curriculum change to our students and the teachers who will be implementing the change. Thoughtful methodologies and strategies were derived with careful consideration of students' learning behaviours, interests and styles (Boothe et.al, 2011), adequacy of the content developed (Paul & Elder, 2008) and the complexity of executing the change (Waters, 2009). However, despite having anticipated the types of problems that may potentially arise from the implementation of the curriculum, and having found ways to minimise the problems, there were also other issues that arose concerning students' confidence level in oral presentation and uncooperativeness in group work. Nevertheless, the incorporation of de Bono's aforementioned framework into the curriculum has not only enhanced the students' oral presentations skills in the English language, but also their ability to articulate, justify and defend their ideas presented as to convince the audience to accept these ideas. In playing the role of the audience, the students also developed the ability to critique and question the ideas presented. Playing the roles as the presenter and audience in this activity has proven to be effective in advancing students' understanding (of the content presented), and communication skills (Rajendran, 2001), and at the same time, in developing their English language skills as they attempt to argue and defend their points in the target language. This paper further presents the analysis of the successful implementation and to aid analysis and assessment of the task, the oral presentations were video recorded, which were subsequently viewed and used as a data resource to demonstrate the benefits of the integrated curriculum.

2 Literature review

2.1 Inculcating Critical and Creative Thinking Skills

Creative and critical thinking are two important dimensions of thinking that are *interwoven* (Paul & Elder 2008, p.4), *complementary* (Forrester 2008, p.100) and are in *continual transaction* with each other (Lipman 2003, p.197; Swartz, 1985). According to Paul and Elder (2008, p.4),

“it is the nature of the mind to create thoughts, though the quality of that creation varies enormously from person to person, as well as from thought to thought. Achieving quality requires standards of quality – and hence, criticality”.

De Bono (2000, p.6) stresses that as the world changes and becomes increasingly competitive, our thought process should not be confined to the “what is” (judging our way forward), but it should also involve the “what can be” (designing our way forward). Critical thinking incorporates intellectual discrimination, inference and/or discernment of information or a fact presented to determine its validity and suitability. In the language education context, it can be applied in both task-based and problem-based learning activities where students are encouraged to analyse all angles, by questioning, inductive and deductive reasoning (Forrester, 2008, p.101) and enquiring for details and explanations, of a particular problem or concept to derive solutions. Critical thinking, from Paul & Elder’s (2008) perspective, also spurs creative thinking. According to Paul & Elder (2008, p.8), “*all thinking is thinking within a system*”, that is, creative thinking often works hand in hand with critical thinking (Forrester, 2008) in which new concepts are formed and new assumptions and interpretations are made during a critical thinking process. Therefore, thinking critically and creatively promotes the effective use of language as students derive ideas and concepts (Paul & Elder, 2008). Swartz et.al (2008), as well as Swartz (2001), inform us that development of thinking skills enhances student cognitive and intellectual levels (Beyer, 2008), while also improving their professional, social, and affective attributes. The integration of thinking skills with content- and task-based learning therefore becomes a highly effective practice (Hadzantonis, 2013; Prawat, 1991).

There are generally two approaches to teaching thinking skills – one that advocates thinking skills be taught as a standalone subject (de Bono, 1987, p.217; Rajendran, 2001) while the other, contends that it is more effective to embed thinking skills in specific subjects (Ennis, 1987, p.40; Halpern, 1987, p.69; McTighe, 1987, p.25; Paul & Elder, 2008, p.33; Swartz, 1987, p.111). In the former approach, de Bono (1987, p.217) suggests that teaching thinking within a subject area is ineffective because “*attending to content distracts from attending to the thinking tools being used*”. In this contention, de Bono argues that too much focus on direct teaching of thinking skills within a subject, limits the time spent on teaching the content of the subject. In this approach, students learn about thinking skills, the types of thinking and what critical and creative thinking entails, with no contextual applications of the skills acquired. This is a stark contrast from the latter approach in which classroom time is spent on both teaching the content using activities that indirectly develop thinking skills (Rajendran, 2001). In this case, students play an active role in their learning, while teachers merely play the role of facilitator of these

activities in class. Learning outcomes that include developing thinking skills in a specific coursework are translated into assessment criteria which students need to be aware of. Meyers (1986, cited in Forrester, 2008, p.101) emphasises that for learning that encourages development of thinking skills to take place, the following elements need to be considered:

- *students' interest* on the subject matter discussed;
- *creation of meaningful discussion* which also means a platform for students to exchange views and ideas;
- *exposure to the thoughts and views of others*; and
- *a supportive and trusting atmosphere* that allows students to share their viewpoints confidently

The approach of embedding thinking skills in subjects which we adopted in our new curriculum seems to gain far more acceptance and recognition among educators, with the possible reason that thinking allows students to reflect on what they have learned in a specific content and thus, increases their understanding and acquisition of the knowledge taught and language used.

2.2 De Bono's Six Thinking Hats

Edward de Bono (2000) extends greatly on the concept of lateral thinking through the metaphor of six differently coloured thinking hats, developed as a way to halt adversarial thinking as opposed to focused, synergised thinking in order to achieve positive results. The Six Thinking Hats technique uses de Bono's own theoretical perspective of parallel thinking that provides a method of thought-process, allowing participants to concentrate on one point-of-view at a time. Parallel thinking can be taught, modelled, and learned via the use of de Bono's Six Thinking Hats, a system where de Bono identifies various thinking modes with respectively coloured metaphorical hats. Each of these Six Thinking Hats represents one of six colours.

These are:

- **The Blue Hat** – The use of this hat (the colour blue could represent the wide, blue sky) requires an overview of the matter at hand. Only one person wears this hat at any one time, and this person owns the hat throughout the whole session. It follows that this person controls the meeting and agenda, and ensures the unbiased, accurate documentation of all ideas, while also enforcing all rules. The wearer of the Blue Hat is therefore entrusted the duty of managing; i.e. leading and controlling the discussion, to ensure that all participants stay focused on the topic of discussion in order to meet the goals.
- **The Red Hat** – Universally representing caution, the colour red also symbolises blood. Hence, the Red Hat is used metaphorically to represent feelings and to warrant thoughtfulness in separating negative feelings from logic. The use of this hat prompts discussion through inference, intuition, emotions and hunches, all of which offer valuable input to the discussion by sensitising participants to recognising their attitudes rather than thoughts on any particular aspect in the discussion. It serves to legitimise emotions and explores fears, likes, dislikes, loves, and hates. Again, it is recommended that only one person speaks at any one

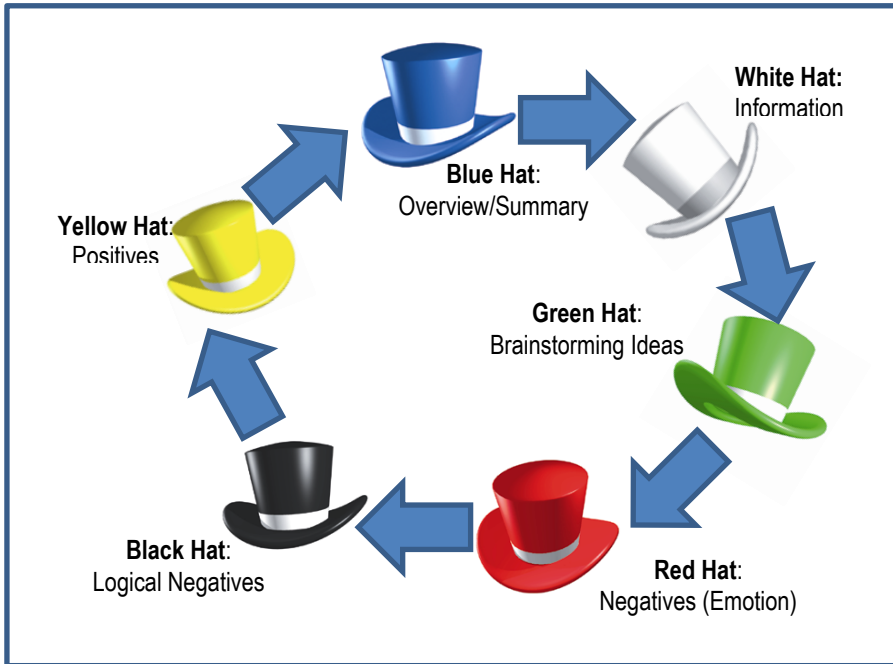
time to which all others must contribute their perspectives in a systematic turn-taking fashion.

- **The White Hat** – This prompts discussion of facts. It summons the importance of data and information, and of revealing this information. The White Hat is likened to a clean slate – an open mind where all facts can be written as they are. The White Hat is neutral and covers facts, figures, information needs, and gaps.
- **The Black Hat** – The Black Hat could be signified through the visual metaphor of a Judge dressed in a black robe, and who has the authority and power of coming down heavily on a wrong-doer. It follows that the black hat concerns logical caution, judgment, and critique. The Black Hat requires that members identify associated difficulties, and impediments. Therefore, during the use of this, members critically analyse negative but logical factors, thus offering practical alternatives to aid resolution. Since it addresses possible setbacks, the Black Hat is deemed one of the more important hats, and serves as a necessary gatekeeper.
- **The Yellow Hat** – Just as the bright, yellow sun symbolises perpetual hope and optimism, the Yellow Hat encourages constructive thinking, both intra and interpersonally, and represents possibilities of positive options. While wearing this hat, group members must scaffold positive attributes of an idea, and act optimistically. This hat ensures positive attributes are recognised, highlighted and praised accordingly, and acts as a motivator that keeps the discussion progressive.
- **The Green Hat** – Signifying the greener, fertile pastures in life, this hat urges all members to think creatively. Although members apply all other hats to specific concepts, they use the Green Hat as a bridge to generate new conceptions and extended visions. Members can do this through generating questions that inspire new ideas and alternatives, sometimes through metaphorical pathways. This hat is vital in the brainstorming stage of the discussion, and while in use, no ideas are discarded or criticised. The Green Hat encourages out-of-the-box thinking, and in many cases, has been a highly effective tool in problem-solving.

According to De Bono (2000) these hats can be used systematically, where one metaphoric hat is worn at a time before moving on to the next, or non-systematically, where the hats may appear in particular clusters, sequences, or permutations, where certain instances require the use of some but not all of the hats. For example, when students write a synthesis essay, they can apply a combination of the White Hat, Blue Hat and Black Hat, so to make *“informed critical judgments”* as Swartz (1987, p.113) suggests, concerning the accuracy and relevance to their essay topics and outlines of the information. Alternatively, students can also use the same White, Blue, and Black hats in oral presentations, possibly with the addition of the Green Hat, which assists students to developmentally engage in effective discussions, arguments and reasoning. Consequently, this semiotic tool assists students to negotiate, and increase, in terms of both productivity, as well of quality, of ideas and concepts. We found that by infusing de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats to the teaching of ENG1050, our students’ thinking skills and their abilities to acquire and apply language knowledge and concepts in the given oral presentation assignment have improved. Our findings also show that thinking is instrumental to

the acquisition of knowledge, concepts and skills required by the subject taught (McTighe, 1987, p.25).

Figure 1: Parallel Thinking: A Systematic Use of the Six Thinking Hats



3 Materials & Methods

3.1 Incorporating the Six Thinking Hats into ENG1050

The Six Thinking Hats tool was originally taught in the standalone course COM1034 (*Innovation and Thinking Skills*), prior to the department choosing to embed the model into another course ENG1050 (*English for Academic & Professional Communication*). COM1034 was originally designed to encourage students to ‘think out of the box’, to be more innovative and creative in the way they approach situations, ranging from day-to-day problems, new product creation, or using rhetoric to present an argue a point of view. The coursework for COM1034 included testing students’ knowledge and application of these thinking skills through tasks such as presentation of new and innovative business proposals. Although the core of the COM1034 (*Innovation and Thinking Skills*) subject focused on thinking skills, creative management, innovation and critical thinking, the assessment criteria for the coursework dedicated a mere 20% for thinking skills, with 60% being weightage for content and language. Interestingly, although product and audience analysis had been allotted marks, the marks given were mainly for interpretation rather than analysis. Competence in de Bono's model did not constitute the assessment criteria for the oral presentation. In the former approach to teaching ENG1050, students were also assigned an oral presentation task, requiring the students to develop speech outlines on any topic of their choice. As for this assessment, the percentage of marks was skewed towards the general aspects of public speaking such as presentation skills and visual aids, with a rather insignificant percentage of five percent being given for creative thinking.

We noted that in the presentation assignment for COM1034, students did not effectively integrate the ‘Hats’ model into the development and presentation of their business proposals whilst for ENG1050, students appeared to focus solely on the techniques associated with public speaking, and merely recalling the speech outline prepared. It was also noted that although critical thinking was emphasised as a learning outcome for both courses, the skill was not substantively assessed in either of the courses. Subsequently, it was also noted that the presentations for both subjects failed to effectively engage the audience. The oral presentation sessions lacked active involvement of the audience in the critique sessions following each presentation. Based on student feedback and post-course evaluations, the course conveners opted to redesign the courses, and investigate the effectiveness of integrating the Six Thinking Hats into the English for Academic and Professional Communication course.

The incorporation of de Bono’s model was done with the objective of providing students with a thinking tool (the Six Hats) to develop and apply thinking skills in their oral presentations and written communication skills. It was hoped that students would be inspired to use this tool beyond the confines of academic and professional contexts: with the more ambitious goal of aiding decision-making in life.

3.2 Primary observation

A comparison of the three courses and their approaches offered contrasting results in which, students who were exposed to the use of the Six Thinking Hats model in specific content areas appeared to be more competent and confident in their conceptualisation and

presentation of ideas. This comparative observation motivated the development of this study, after which, the researchers embarked on the study, guided by the following research question: What are some ways in which the integration of de Bono's Six Hat's model with English language courses effects an increase in the development of student competence in the English language for tertiary students in Malaysia? Furthermore, this research question follows an initial hypothesis, which stipulates that tools such as de Bono's Six Hats model can guide thinking so to facilitate a more holistic student development in English language courses (or language courses in general).

3.3 Sample cohort

The sample consisted of all students enrolled for the '*English for Academic and Professional Communication*' (ENG 1050). The course comprised 30 students, between 18 and 25 years of age, and of which, 12 are male and 16 are female. Fourteen of the students are Malaysian citizens, and the rest are of mixed nationality and ethnicity, from various global regions. Though the sample size cannot be representative of a language community, it was sufficient to provide an initial indication of the effectiveness of such pedagogy. Therefore the sample served the purpose of facilitating the pioneering study, and hence, sufficed.

3.4 Research design

Following familiarity with and work on de Bono's model during the length of the course, the students in the sample cohort were provided with a specific task to complete (see *Appendix 1 – Oral Presentation Assignment Brief*). This comprised an oral presentation task, for which they were asked to work in groups of four, so to develop a marketable or commercial product or concept, and to present this to an audience of professionals, portrayed by the other students in the cohort, who observed, critiqued, and evaluated the presentations. The lecturer and students dedicated significant time developing familiarity and a strong competence with de Bono's model. Students were guided to follow a pre-designed sequence of hats (Table 1), one which lay emphasis on parallel thinking, and dedicated an appropriate amount of time for each hat to enable deeper understanding of how each hat affected the thinking process. Consequently, students discussed reflections to clarify and align thinking. Tutorial activities dedicated to providing various contexts for experimentation of the Six Hats further heightened awareness and understanding of application of the model. A substantial amount of time (approximately twelve contact hours) was dedicated to discussion and activities on the Six Hats model to ensure comprehensive understanding, that led to students inherently being able to not only identify, but to wear, and additionally switch between hats. The course convener thus made effort to adequately prepare the students for the presentation task. This preparatory work spanned approximately six weeks, and hence half of the semester. During the presentation task, students were assessed on their affordances with which to:

- communicate ideas fluently with appropriate language and intonation.
- convey to the audience the soundness of the product or concept.
- demonstrate innovation or creativity in their presentation.
- critique the content presented.

- respond to questions accurately and confidently.

Group presentations and the critique sessions were documented on video so as to allow for further insights into the data and the study.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Following the presentation session, and sessions during which the researchers scrutinised the video recordings of the presentations, it became apparent that the application of the de Bono Six Thinking Hats model was employed in various permutations and in situated fashions. As opposed to the former COM1034 and ENG1050 student presentations, the students were aware- through identification and discussions- of the incorporation of each hat throughout the coursework activity. Notes were made as each hat was 'seen' to be applied, and students actively took responsibility in 'changing' hats when they realised that one hat was being worn for too long. The data in Table 1 represents a general indication of ways in which the students in the course employed de Bono's Six Hats model to discuss, present, and critique the assigned task work. We note that not all student groups employed the same hat permutations, and the groups well evidenced the possibility of variation when employing the model (refer Table 1).

Table 1 provides a general overview, and the fact remains that the use of de Bono's model throughout the process varied. Furthermore, the variation occurred not only across groups, but also across stages. During Stage 1, all student groups opted to use all of the hats. During Stage 2, the number of hats used declined to only four: the white, green, yellow, and red. The next stage also saw the use of four hats: the black, red, white, and yellow. In the final stage, the students all used only three hats: the black, yellow, and green.

Stage	Task(s)	Application of de Bono's Six Thinking Hats in Tasks
1	a) Developing product or concept b) Creating speech outlines, and selecting visual aids to sell products or concepts effectively	<p>Blue Hat: Organise thoughts and ideas given by each group member and to control discussion so as to ensure it stays focused on topic</p> <p>White Hat: Search for facts and information about product or concept to be produced</p> <p>Green Hat: Brainstorm for ideas for product or concept</p> <p>Red Hat: Identify possible hunches or negative feelings about product and legitimise these feelings</p> <p>Black Hat: Critique and filter irrelevant information/ideas and point out possible problems with ideas presented</p> <p>Yellow Hat: Provide positive and constructive feedback to ideas</p> <p>Blue Hat: Wind up discussion and decide on one product or concept</p> <p>This process is repeated for the development of the speech outline, with the aim of effectively and creatively selling product or concept to a professional audience</p>
2	a) Presentation of products or concepts to audience to gain their acceptance b) Buy-ins towards products or concepts	<p>Blue Hat: (Group leader) ensures that presentation tasks are distributed effectively to meet goals, maintains group cohesion</p> <p>White Hat: Ensure that accurate facts or information are presented about products or concepts</p> <p>Green Hat: Develop creative ways to communicate ideas and to persuade audience to accept products or concepts</p> <p>Yellow Hat: Provide constructive or positive information about products or concepts presented (from the perspective of the product developer)</p> <p>Red Hat: Use emotion in speeches to engage with audience during presentation of products or concepts</p>
3	Enacting role of professional audience to critique and evaluate products or	<p>Black Hat: Critically evaluate advantages and/or disadvantages of products or concepts by asking relevant questions to obtain accurate information before making informed decisions for purchasing products</p> <p>Red Hat: Use emotion or make inferences that prompt further</p>

Stage	Task(s)	Application of de Bono's Six Thinking Hats in Tasks
	concepts presented	<p>constructive discussion about products or concepts</p> <p>White Hat: Ask relevant questions to obtain facts or accurate information about products or concepts presented</p> <p>Yellow Hat: Provide positive or constructive feedback on product or concept</p>
4	Responding to critiques and questions from professional audience	<p>Blue Hat: Manages Question and Answer session, delegates roles effectively, based on area of expertise of group members</p> <p>Black Hat: Critically evaluate critiques or questions from audience in order to provide accurate and acceptable answers</p> <p>Yellow Hat: Develop ideas to spur constructive discussions with audience and to encourage audience to ask questions in order to understand audience needs and requirements towards products or concepts presented</p> <p>Green Hat: Respond to critiques or questions in creative manner so to persuade audience to accept products or concepts presented</p>

Table 1: Application of de Bono's Six Thinking Hats in the Oral Presentation

The observations of the recordings, and comparison of these recordings to previous semester courses, indicate that student activity and participation had significantly increased in this course. This occurred in various ways. Firstly, students collaborated to a much greater extent. Secondly, collaboration was much more organised in that students tended to deliberate their activity and passivity so as to guide their own and others' learning. Thirdly, students acted in a more egalitarian manner. Fourthly, and aligning with the second point, students were much more prepared to act as experts and apprentices and hence to welcome newcomers to the community of practice. Lastly, students appeared to be significantly more critical, and hence inspiring a positive move toward a more effective and critical language pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

4.2 How the data complements the initial hypothesis

The initial hypothesis suggested that tools such as de Bono's Six Hats model can guide thinking so to facilitate student involvement and development in English language courses. The results from the recordings indicate the following:

- a) The students in this course significantly increased their activity and participation when applying the model, as compared to the previous courses which did not employ the model. This became evident in the structural aspect of collaboration, the extent to which the students followed the task through to fruition, the egalitarian nature of participation, and

the attempts to maintain and strengthen critical perspectives. This greater participation and activity therefore suggests that language competence will have increased.

- b) The Six Thinking Hats model appears to offer several benefits for students apprehensive of oral presentations which inevitably entail individual speech-giving. Students often feel a great amount of anxiety when asked to give formal presentations to a professional audience, and strategies that help minimise anxious feelings may be helpful. This model provides a useful structure for exploring options in dealing with, and mastering the topic at hand, a component deemed vital for managing students' anxiety. Additionally, with this process being conducted in a group setting, students report of a more 'relaxed', safe environment in which to explore alternatives, give and receive feedback, discover distortions in their perceptions and assumptions, and hear alternate views and strategies.
- c) The use of the hats across levels varied, indicating that students learned to multi task, that is, to employ a critical thinking model, while also engaging in their language practice. This was evident in that students first employed all hats in Stage 1, and then selectively and deliberately limited the number of hats to only those appropriate for the desire task, and hence in later stages.
- d) The students exercised their ability to transfer their newly developed skills, that is, applied the model in various contexts, and hence to repeatedly re-contextualise the model. This was evident in that students applied the model in pedagogical and social capacities. Within these dimensions, students, also explored ways in which to extend the application of the model, such as from different perspective in business, and more so from a business production side and a critical business side.
- e) The students effectively developed the skill of applying the correct hat and hence the appropriate level of thinking to task. This was evident in the alternating deployment of hats, and in the extensive discussions concerning which hats to appropriate at any instant, which the video recordings evidenced. This metaphor that de Bono suggested (2000), of wearing one hat at a time, is an apt one as the technique indicates a structural sorting out of the problem-solving process. When wearing a specific coloured hat, the rule is that everyone in the group had to adapt that particular perspective of thinking. The rule of all group members wearing the same hat is that they co-operatively explore the situation from that specific perspective exclusively. As all members of a given group works in synergy to metaphorically remove that hat and put on another hat, team work and group cohesion inadvertently increased. Similar to the classic Gestalt empty-chair technique, students seemed to transition seamlessly from one chair to the next, changing focus in groups as they switched hats.
- f) The game aspect of the Six Thinking Hats is one that cannot be overlooked. Throughout the processes of developing the idea as well as planning and carrying out the presentation, students likened the Six Thinking Hats strategy to playing a game while actively switching roles (hats). Clearly, the Six Thinking Hats advocates a very powerful form of gaining insight and changing perception. It was interesting to note the use of humour to rein a member who had veered off into another mode of thinking back into the hat in use.

g) Additionally, it was noted that the incorporation of the Six Thinking Hats enhanced collaboration among group members. For example, one student appreciated that in his own previous problem-solving attempts, he tended to be the overly optimistic Yellow Hat thinker, while another student acknowledged that he was the overly negative Black Hat thinker. Collaborating as a team helps minimise such polarised, entrenched positions among students as it fully utilises the intelligence, experience, and knowledge of all participants in a collaborative rather than competitive manner. In sum, there is a higher level of reflection involved, hence a more critical teaching and learning atmosphere.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Summary of findings

The department's decision to integrate the two courses based on theoretical and pedagogical reasons proved to be a sound foresight. The increased participation and activity, and the higher level of engagement by all members of the classroom community, strongly supports the decision by the department and the course convener to integrate the model into the course ENG1050, and hence to combine the two courses, which previously impeded student development in both areas. Integrative pedagogies have long been explored (Schmuck & Schmuck, 2001), and the success of the experiment in the course ENG1050 justifies the significance of this element of educational psychology.

The specific inclusion of de Bono's Six Thinking Hats as a tool to inculcate critical and creative thinking proved effective as it facilitated visible, focused, in depth, and higher levels of critical and creative thinking, developed problem-solving, decision-making and leadership skills, expedited focused and in-depth discussions, eased systematic reflection and ensured effective, organized cooperative groups and teamwork.

The researchers found that students have an increased concrete experience by applying de Bono's framework, coupled with a clear insight into the technicalities of using de Bono's Six Thinking Hats in conducting the tasks. They were observed to be sensitive to their thinking where they consciously wore black or yellow hats when providing feedback on the product / concept as well as the overall presentation. In addition, the study evidenced that students successfully reached the learning outcomes for the oral presentation assignment, with the students gaining awareness of their thinking, and gaining competence and confidence in the delivery of their presentations. The study has found that the approach to integrating a de Bono Six Hats thinking skills model in a content-based environment indicates that it may significantly benefit development. The benefits include the following: a teaching and learning environment conducive to stronger socio-cognitive activity, stronger student and teacher engagement and agencies, and an increased participation; by beginning with structure, students can negotiate their phobias of conducting presentations, as well as of participating in groups, as the students ultimately focus on the process rather than on the product. Accordingly, students develop a capacity to transfer skills across the boundaries of language pedagogy, and to re-contextualise these skills effectively.

5.2 Implications for future research

The central question is: How will this course design benefit English language teaching at tertiary levels? Clearly, combining integrative pedagogies can facilitate transition between courses and subject fields. Students consequently develop competence in contextualising language, which is crucial for language development and language education. This pedagogy assists students to develop their agencies as members of classroom communities of practice, and therefore has significant social consequences. Being a first year, first semester course, that is, for freshman students, the course provides the students with tools that they can employ throughout their academic tenure, and beyond. Hence the course affords the students adequate time to develop their competencies with the various components. It further aids in the contemplation of ways in which students can effectively employ these competencies in potential fields and contexts.

The pedagogical implications of this research can assist both curriculum designers as well as educators enhance the language development experiences of students. As with any endeavour to develop a positive student-centred curriculum that would benefit *all* stakeholders – the students, the University, as well as future employers, there exists a necessity to consider the different contexts of language competence as well as the various institutional environments. The researchers suggest that other courses in the department and the university observe the example of this attempt to integrate pedagogies, and to hence include the concept, following which, students may effectively transfer between, and across subject fields. Questions to ask for future studies include the following: In which ways do the (multi)cultural dynamics influence the findings of research on de Bono's model in language classrooms in regions such as South East Asia? What are some of the benefits of de Bono in assessment practices? What are some ways in which the de Bono model differs for oral and literacy skills?

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Appendix 1



ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION: ENG 1050

Oral Presentation (10%)

Question:

Present a concept you wish to promote to a professional audience

OR a product you want to sell to a professional audience

Note:

As this is a GROUP assignment, you are expected to work as a team. You must have a clearly defined topic that I will need approve. Each group will have 20 minutes in the spotlight, where you will “sell” your idea/product to your audience. You must lead a Q & A (critique) session post-presentation. Please note that it is vital that you read, understand and apply de Bono’s Six Thinking Hats for this assignment.

Criteria:

- Innovation and Creativity
- The effectiveness of communicating the idea
- Clarity of speech
- Correct language and intonation
- Soundness of the idea/ product/ project
- Ability and confidence in responding to questions

Required Elements:

1. General Purpose
2. Specific Purpose
3. Thesis Statement/Central Idea
Outline of major ideas:
 - a. Remember to limit the number of main ideas that you attempt to share to **THREE**.
 - b. List the major ideas you will include in your presentation. List the ideas and evidence that will support your main points. Be clear, concise, and complete.
 - c. Assessment **questions (Again, these are for your guidance)**: Is there enough evidence? Is there balance between each major idea? Is the logic of your presentation evident? Have you made your ideas accessible to your audience (will they understand them)? Are you able to convince your audience?
4. Visual aid(s):
 - a. Identify and justify each audio/visual aid you have chosen.

- What point(s) will this aid help to explain?
- What is the purpose of your aid?

(Adapted from <http://www.uiowa.edu>)