

Lesson plan

Topic

Four Thinking Hats

Aims

- To encourage learners to use English in a creative way.
- To develop learners' speaking skills.
- To role-play a character type while having a discussion.

Age group

Adults, teens

Level

B2 +

Time

50 - 60 minutes

Materials

Thinking hat role cards

Introduction

In the 1980s *Edward de Bono* came up with his *Six Thinking Hats* idea, in which businessmen use a parallel thinking process which helps them become “more productive, focused, and mindfully involved”. A similar process can be used effectively in the English classroom to get learners more involved in discussions. By wearing a coloured hat, learners are given help, guidance and more support when they are taking part in discussions. They are also free of the burden of having to share their own opinions, which can be useful if they have very little to say, or feel shy about giving their views. This is especially true with older teenagers, young adults and groups who have not been together for very long. The *Four Thinking Hats* activity in this lesson borrows the idea from *de Bono* and offers teachers a creative alternative to the usual speaking-focused lesson. It is especially effective with Business English classes where learners are able to use real-life ‘problems’ as the basis of a discussion.

Learners will first work with members of their own group, wearing the same colour hat, developing

their role further by brainstorming words and expressions. Then they will regroup into multi-coloured hat groups with learners wearing hats of each of the four colours. They will discuss a list of questions for a limited time. During the discussions they will take on the role they have been given.

Procedure

1. Warmer (5 - 8 minutes)	<p>Tell learners they are going to develop their speaking skills in this lesson by having discussions in groups. Have a quick chat about ‘discussions’ and ask them to share their experiences of having discussions in class.</p> <p>Explain that in this lesson the discussions are going to be a bit different because it won’t be ‘them’ who is speaking. They will each have a role.</p>
2. (5 - 10 minutes)	<p>Divide the class into four groups: Red, Black, Yellow and Green.</p> <p>For very large classes, sub-divide these groups into smaller, more manageable groups of 4 – 6.</p> <p>Give each learner a role card. All members of the same group should have the same role card! Learners should read the card and make sure they understand the meaning of all of the words and phrases in bold. If necessary, they should look them up in a dictionary or discuss them with their group.</p>
3. (5 - 10 minutes)	<p>Ask learners to work in groups to brainstorm a list of words, phrases and expressions that describe them when they are wearing their hat.</p> <p>If necessary, make a few suggestions and grade the language according to the level of your students.</p> <p>Black hat: <i>gloomy, depressing, ‘put a dampener on something’</i></p> <p>Yellow hat: <i>optimist, happy, ‘see the glass full’, see the sunny side</i></p> <p>Red hat: <i>passionate, obsessed, loud</i></p> <p>White hat: <i>controlling, a control freak, organised, focused</i></p>
4. (30 minutes)	<p>Re-group learners into new groups of four. Each new group should have at least one member with a different coloured hat. For large classes and odd numbers, add extra hat-wearers to groups perhaps allowing those wearing the same colour hat to ‘work together’.</p> <p>Give learners some discussion questions and a limited time to discuss them. They should discuss each question in turn, in their hat-wearing roles. Monitor and observe</p>

	<p>the groups as they speak and help where necessary. Make sure the white hat wearers are controlling the time. This will make your task a lot easier.</p> <p>Discussion questions will very much depend on the class, their interests, levels and ages. Use discussion questions from your course books, look for discussion topics online at a website like <i>esl discussions</i> or write your own. A list of 10 discussion points for a 30-minute speaking should work but feel free to adjust the number of questions or the time.</p> <p>Allow time here for any post-discussion feedback you might want to give learners, error correction, pronunciation information, etc.</p>
5 (5 mins)	<p>If this is the first time you have tried the activity, ask learners for some feedback. Ask them to share their opinion of having a discussion with coloured-hat role cards. If they show interest, direct them to the website for Six Thinking Hats so they can see where the idea came from.</p>

Contributed by

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