A review of “**Using Mind Maps in the English Classroom”**

When I arrived at the International School of Management, Stuttgart for my very first workshop hosted by ELTAS, I was not sure what to expect. The title of Ron Morrian’s workshop, “**Using Mind Maps in the English Classroom” seemed intriguing, but not ground-breaking. *Mind maps? That’s nothing new. What can he have to say that I haven’t heard before?* I’ve used mind maps for years, both as a student and teacher. Like most people, I assume, I had always associated mind maps with brainstorming – a useful tool, but certainly not the heart of my teaching and learning repertoire. Despite arriving with my own assumptions about the topic of the day, I hoped that this event would provide me with both new ideas for my teaching practice as well as the opportunity to connect to other like-minded professionals – something that I have found to be especially difficult to do as a freelance English teacher/trainer.**

**Morrian’s passion for teaching and learning was evident from the start. He began the workshop by joyfully giving each participant a copy of his book “Why Mind Maps” which proved to be a useful reference tool during and after the workshop. He then quickly highlighted the characteristics of effective Continuing Professional Development, which set the tone for the workshop. A brief review of student-centered teaching and learning methods generated interests among participants. As a final topic before the break, Morrian addressed the importance of giving students the opportunity to create an authentic product. Morrian led a group brainstorm of potential products and good-naturedly challenged ideas that did not adhere to the characteristics of an observable or objective assessment.**

**The break provided the opportunity to reenergize with coffee and a tasty snack while enjoying the camaraderie of peers. I was very happy to meet new people who kindly offered advice, shared their experiences, and discussed the many ideas already generated by the first half of the workshop. The best part of the workshop, however, came after the break.**

**Morrain resumed by reminding us that “every student has a story” and emphasizing the importance of allowing English learners to tell these stories, as they can be powerful motivators for learning. He then introduced his version of a mind map, which is designed to this end. It is not the standard brainstorm mind map, but a series of structured questions and tasks that lead to the creation of an authentic product by students. It is simple to make, yet invaluable for student-centered learning. We worked in pairs to create our own mind maps on the topic of social media before analysing and discussing our ideas as a group. Finally, we ended by previewing several prefabricated mind maps that are otherwise only available in Morrain’s books.**

**I think it is safe to say that I wasn’t the only one who left the work shop feeling excited and inspired by this fresh look at an old tool. “Don’t do the learning for them,” Morrian reminded us more than once. A simple, but powerful reminder that has stayed with me as I’ve continued to designed learning experiences for my students. Since attending this workshop, I have also begun to consider how I can incorporate mind-maps into my own teaching practice. I was more than satisfied with my experience, and I can’t wait to see what the next ELTAS workshop has to offer!**

**Kiara Graves**

***English teacher/trainer, Stuttgart***