

## Project management activities in the classroom with Nathan Arthur

Eltas Event Review by Kirsten Bergen

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Nathan led us all on an incredibly interesting tour of learning while playing. He began by talking about the flipped classroom, where theory is learnt at home and practice happens in the classroom – or where the bulk of the teaching time is given over to exploration and putting the theory into practice. This concept was highlighted by Confucius' quote "Tell me and I will forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I will understand".

He then moved on to present his concept of English for Project Management (EPM) which, he believes, leads to total project involvement. The concept means less work and control for the trainer and more student autonomy, involves some serious games and gives learners the 'TKEA effect' (emotional attachment to and pride in objects you have built yourself). Nathan assured us that it was very easy to do. The classroom basically becomes the meeting room; role plays become real plays (students write their own role cards and create real settings); and imagination becomes production.

Done with the theory – and true to his flipped classroom concept – we moved on to the practice. We were introduced to the activity *Babel Kapla*. A brief explanation of the activity was followed by nearly 40 minutes of intense activity while our teams all brainstormed and discussed and worked together to build the highest tower at the lowest cost while ending up with the lowest/highest end score. Needless to say, we were all very proud of our creations and eyed up our competitors' towers both critically and with some envy too.

After a break with some delicious pumpkin soup, bread for dipping and cookies and coffee to round it off (brain food, you understand), we went back in and a team of French speakers of varying degrees of fluency was formed. We were to build another tower, but speaking French to each other. No problem. But, hang on, what was this? We were not allowed to use our thumbs!! Now came the fun

of remembering the rules, speaking a foreign language and making sure everyone understood and was involved. We succeeded with about 3 seconds to spare. We were beginning to get an idea of what our language students feel like.

Nathan took us through a selection of variations for this activity and then ran through a few other activities he uses to give us more ideas. These included an origami activity; a catapult/moon lander activity (phase 1 – concept, design and materials; phase 2 – agreeing on 'purchases'; phase 3 – build, test and improve; phase 4 – present – following up with an oral or written description of the project and the processes); and a Lego activity which looked deceptively simple, but which we quickly realised could be incredibly challenging. The Lego activity demonstrates the principle that the client is king; never to assume something; and to go for low context rather than high context (vital for construction projects).

The afternoon was over all too soon and before we knew it, it was time to thank Nathan, pack up and head home with our heads full of immediately applicable and wonderfully engaging activities with lots of language learning ramifications and implementations. I, for one, now have 16 hours of teaching materials for 4 courses prepared and ready to go tomorrow and over the next 2 semesters.



Nathan Arthur with our ELTAS Chair



Towers higher than ever!



Working on the puzzle