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Implementing an online escape room based on the need to tackle climate change to enhance ESP students' skills and motivation

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Abstract

Teaching methods are constantly adapting to 21st century students' needs, a well-known process among instructors in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) contexts. This fact makes experiential and game-based learning, e.g. educational escape rooms, gain ground in current approaches to language teaching. Reproducing these live-action team-based games in the language classroom may be seen as a recent challenge. However, escape rooms may have the potential to allow students to enhance the skills which are required in educational and working environments. Our project combines ESP and pedagogical gamification with the need to explore the challenges our planet is currently facing. More specifically, it aims to foster students' cross-curricular skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, among others. In so doing, we designed an online escape room based on the need to tackle climate change and invited undergraduate students from two different fields, i.e. biotechnology and agricultural engineering, to participate. This paper explores the implementation process and some preliminary results of a post-questionnaire (based on Manzano-León et al., 2021). The answers provided by the first 91 participants show the positive effect of escape rooms in an ESP teaching context in terms of motivation, knowledge, or the connection established among participants to attain a common goal.

Keywords: Challenges, communication; gamification; language learning; problem-solving.