

Escaping the traditional classroom

'Escaping the traditional classroom' project focuses on using escape room concepts for educational purposes and, more, specifically, in teaching Spanish as a foreign language. The project has been undertaken at the School of Education of the Polytechnic of Porto in Portugal with two groups of students (between 17 and 25 years old), who are attending either Spanish A2 or Spanish B1.2 classes. Two educational escape rooms were created based on two popular Spanish TV series.

Particularities

1. Microwave's Robbery: students had to discover who the thief behind a microwave's robbery was, by solving a series of puzzles related to the revision of some topics, including vocabulary (clothes, trips environment, mass media), verb tenses, linking words, etc. It worked out as a revision activity which was undertaken in the end of the semester. The introductory video and the aesthetic decoration played an important role for setting the context and immersing the students into the game. In a sequential structure, the students had to achieve a series of tasks (backwards message, a crossword puzzle, globe with a key, message with grammar exercises, e-mail with multiple-choice exercises, a final task with a QR code) before they were finally able to find some cards with the letters revealing the thief's identity.

2. Edgar's murder: this escape room was created by the Spanish B1.2 level students in order to be implemented within A2 level classes. The students had to unveil who murdered one of their classmates, by solving puzzles and tasks related to the "love and friendship" unit of their coursebook, in which students had to learn vocabulary related to the topic, verb tenses, etc. The puzzles again followed a sequential structure and were of various types. More particularly, after an audio narrative to set the game context, the students were asked to make use of an envelope with a map and three-questions, a QR code, a love letter written backwards, a crossword puzzle, a book with a hidden key and finally Edgar's diary notes, before they were able to figure out who Edgar's murderer was.

Why is it relevant to teach languages

All points considered, the two escape rooms involve ample exposure to foreign language practice on language skills, especially receptive ones (reading and listening) and serve as a motivating way for students to revise grammar structures and vocabulary items they have learnt recently. More importantly, the project shows how foreign language teaching can substantially contribute to the development of students' 21st century skills. In particular, the two language learning situations presented here are closely related to the cultivation of students' active participation, collaborative and problem-solving skills.

Resource

Cruz, M. (2019). Escaping from the traditional classroom - The 'Escape Room Methodology' in the Foreign Languages Classroom. *Babylonia - Rivista svizzera per l'insegnamento delle lingue*, [online] 3, pp.26–29. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/41201519/Escaping_from_the_traditional_classroom_The_Escape_Room_Methodology_in_the_Foreign_Languages_Classroom (Accessed 15 Jan 2021).

