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Engaging Activities in the ESP/EAP Classroom

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Games (and engaging activities)

- *definition*
- *classification*
- *characteristics*
- *advantages and shortcomings*

Games and engaging activities in the ESP/EAP classroom in the Republic of Croatia

Some games and engaging game-like activities employed in technical English classes



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Introduction

Games and engaging activities

- the importance of play in the learning process -
recognised in the 1970s

Definition

- a wide range of definitions: rules, fun and outcome

Classification

- a wide range of classifications - focus on specific criteria referring to features and functions of a game



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- competitive and cooperative games
 - linguistic and communicative games
 - movement games and task-based games, computer games added
- on the basis of the tools and various physical materials:
- board games, card games, drawing games, guessing games, role-play games, and movement games



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- focused on a particular language skill:
- listening and speaking games (i.e., receptive and productive games), which may also involve some reading and writing, respectively
- a detailed classification:
sorting, ordering or arranging games, information gap games, guessing games, searching games, matching games, labelling games, exchanging games, board games, and role playing games



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- characteristics:
 - non-typical and free
 - dynamic and flexible
 - stimulate one's imagination
 - based on flexible rules
 - contribute to the development of communication skills
 - can be tailored to specific language learning contexts and students' needs or adapted to suit the content of the curriculum



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- **advantages:**

- improve learning motivation, concentration of students and their desire for self-improvement
- increase their interest in subject matter
- cause their attention and active participation
- contribute to innovation and creativity in the classroom
- bring energy into classes
- immediate feedback



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- **shortcomings/problems:**
 - large and mixed-ability classes → noise
 - language proficiency → adapt the activity or skip parts
 - adult students → too childish for their age
 - individual students not willing to participate
 - takes more time than planned
 - when students drop out of game → prepare some additional activities



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- to carry out a game or any engaging activity successfully, the teacher should know his/her students and take into account:
 - their age
 - their interests
 - the level of their language proficiency
 - the number of participants in the group
 - the characteristics of the group as a whole
 - the ability to meet the technical requirements
 - the need for additional material prepared in advance
 - the time devoted to the activity



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- learner-centred activities
- can be used at any stage of our classes:
 - beginning of class
 - during the lesson
 - end of class
- can be carried out as:
 - whole class work
 - group work
 - pair work
 - individual work



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- students must be familiar with the activity ←
teacher: explains the rules in detail
writes instructions on the board
simulates the activity
- students must be familiar with the grammatical structures or vocabulary used/practiced in the activity
- students must fully understand what is expected of them and what steps must be taken



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- study: the use of games and other engaging game-like activities in the ESP/EAP classroom in the Republic of Croatia
- participants: 27 ESP teachers
- 22 questions
- questionnaire – Google Docs, by email



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1. Do ESP teachers use and, if yes, how often and in which part of their classes do they use games and other engaging game-like activities such as (online) puzzles, crosswords, quizzes, games, experiments, QR codes, etc. in their classes, especially when teaching and revising grammar and vocabulary?
2. Which of these activities are most commonly used in ESP classes and when?

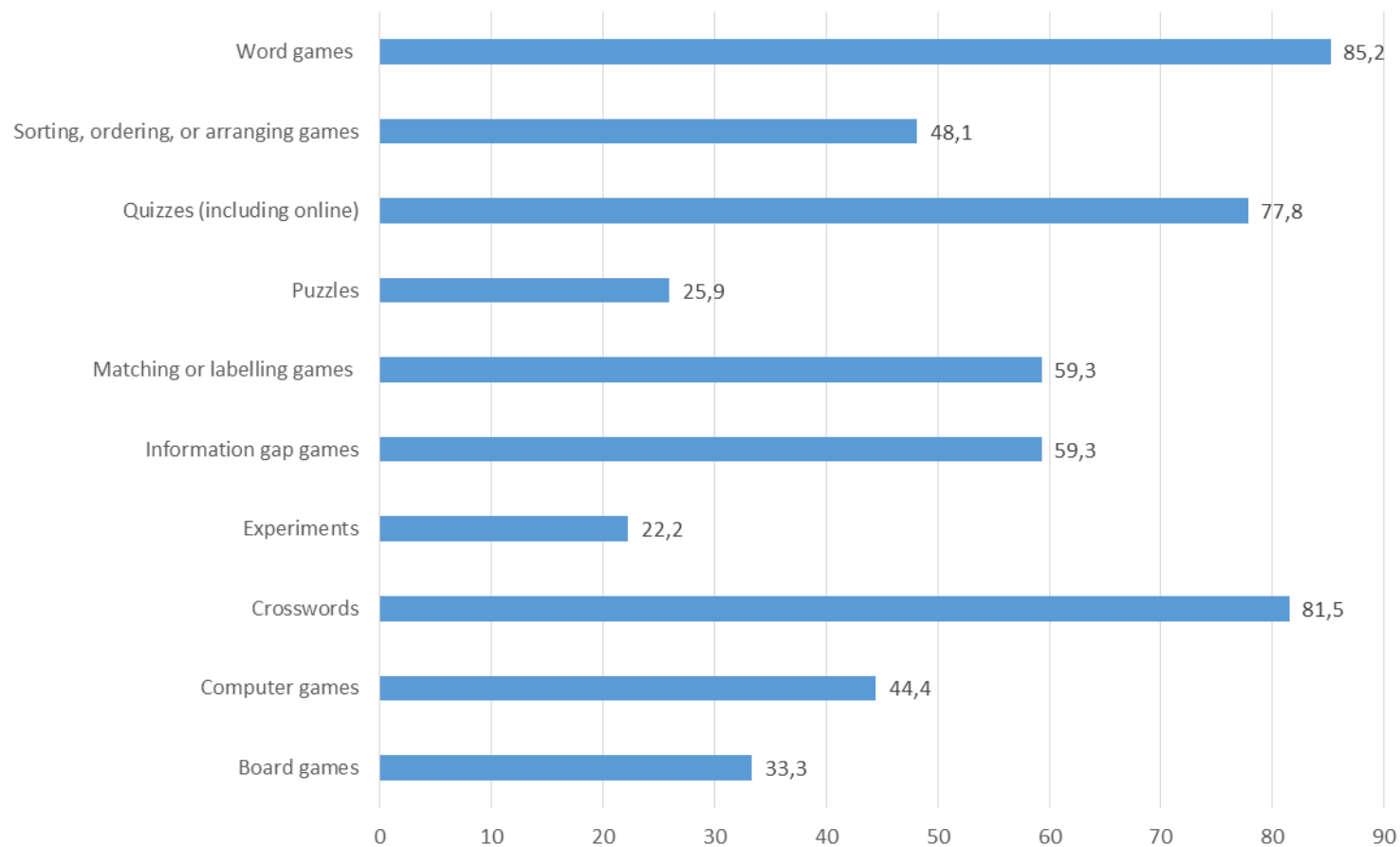


Figure 1 Distribution of games and engaging game-like activities used in ESP classes in the Republic of Croatia

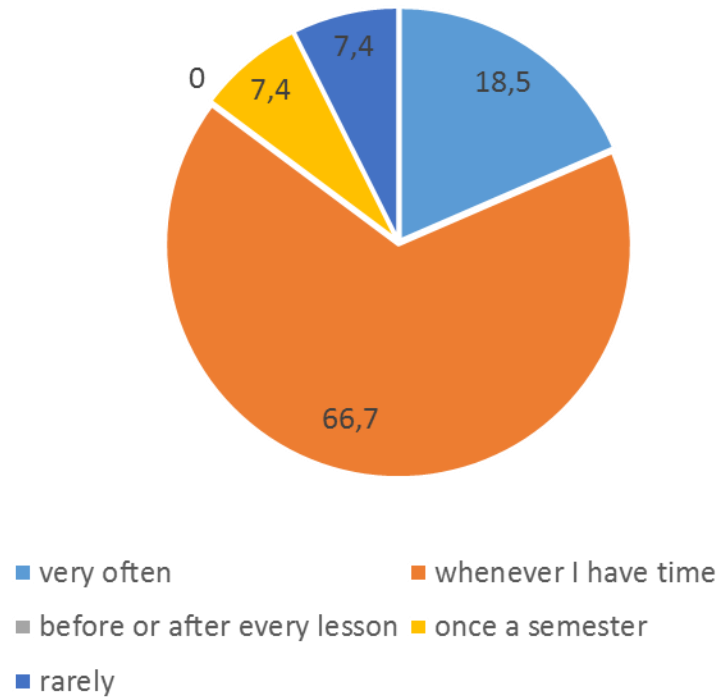


Figure 2 Frequency of use

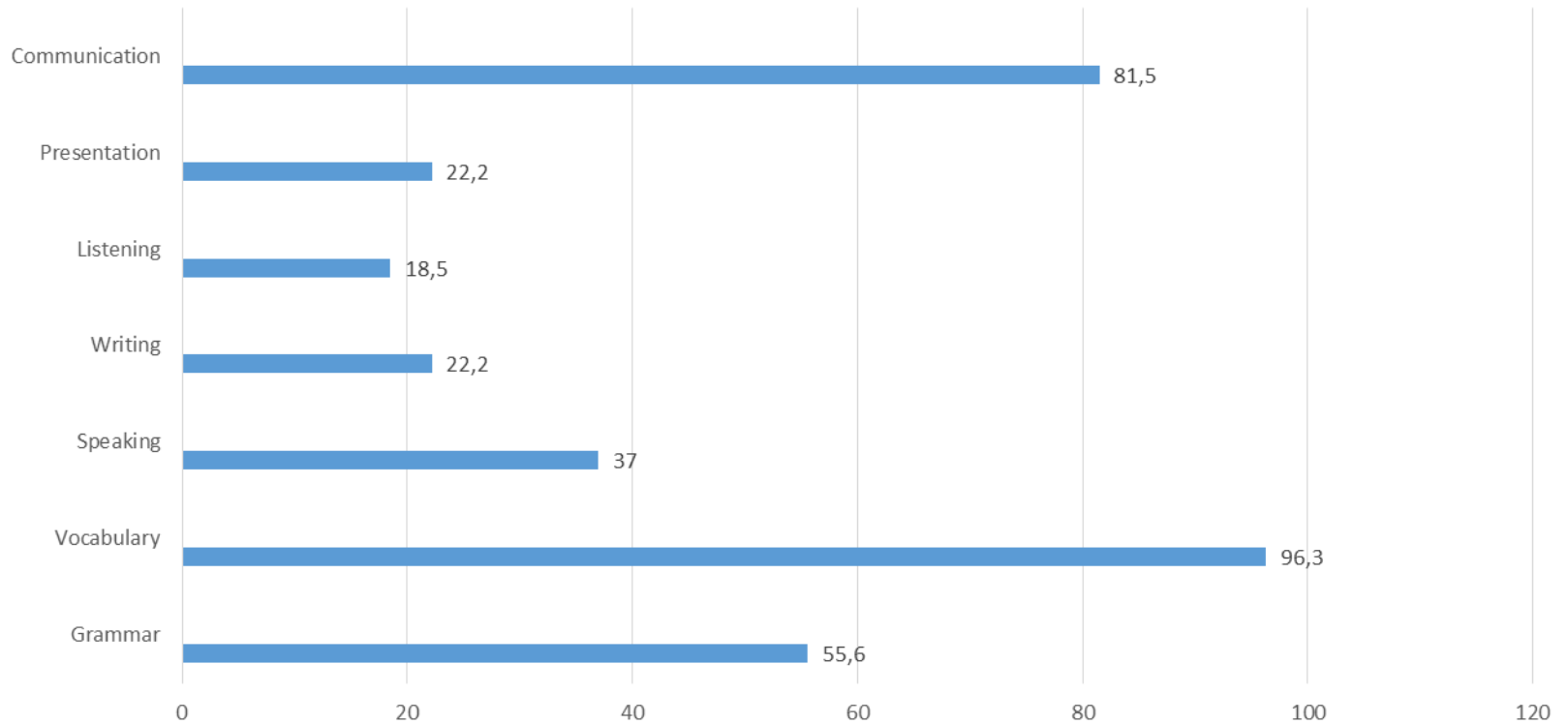


Figure 3 Skills that games and engaging activities are usually focused on

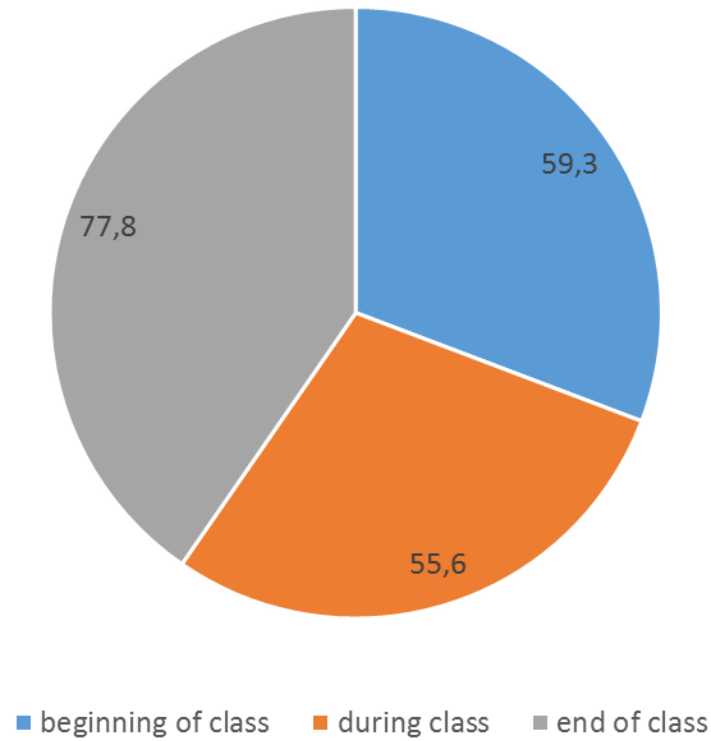


Figure 4 Preferred time for employing the activity



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The purpose of using engaging activities in your ESP classes is ...	Frequency	Percent
to warm up the class	19	70.4
to introduce a new topic	14	51.2
to keep students engaged or interested	22	81.5
to teach (new) vocabulary/grammar	8	28.6
to revise (new) vocabulary/grammar	19	70.4
to practice some patterns	11	40.7
as a recap exercise	18	66.7

Table 1 The purpose of using engaging activities in your ESP classes



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- Most participants - no drawbacks
- Some mention conditions like: *As long as they meet some meaningful teaching/learning purpose, ... If selected and prepared well and in advance, ... If they are interactive and provide immediate feedback for students,...*
- *... such activities are time-consuming, ... limited in skills they practice, ... it usually takes more time for the activity than foreseen, ... not all students are engaged equally, ... the students sometimes do not get them serious enough and the atmosphere is too relaxed, they lack interest and motivation, ... it may become difficult to switch to a “less engaging” activity, ... groups are too large, ... maybe problems with the internet access and cables*



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Some games and engaging game-like activities (and their variations) employed in technical English classes:

- Word Association
- Collocation Pelmanism
- Taboo
- Plickers
- Kahoot! and Socrative
- Experiments
- QR codes



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- Word Association

A ACCUSATION	B CONTINUOUS	C SHIELDED	D AIR
A POSITIVE	B ANTENNA	C COPPER	D ELECTRONS
A FEE	B CIRCLE	C CHICKEN	D GALVANOMETER
A RESPONSIBILITY	B LOCAL	C CONDUCTOR	D TREND
CHARGE	LOOP	WIRE	CURRENT
ELECTRIC CIRCUIT			



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- help - word association generators:

<https://visuwords.com/atom>

<https://wordassociations.net/en/words-associated-with/atom?button=Search>

<http://www.wordassociation.org/words/atom>



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Variations:

- basic: give a student a word and have him/her state the first word or phrase that comes to mind
(conductor → current)
- have students respond to a given word with a synonym or antonym (resist → oppose, resist → let)
- have students try to guess a secret word by providing related words or phrases (neutrons, electrons, protons, nucleus → atom)



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- words related to topic:
- provide students with a list of words and have them determine what these words have in common or provide a topic for the words
- provide a topic and have them try to think of as many words related to a topic in a given time period (brainstorming: atom)



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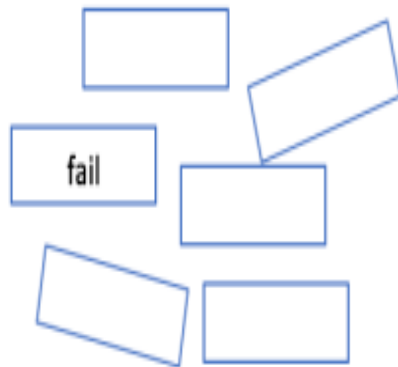
- Collocation Pelmanism
 - aka Concentration or Memory or Pairs
 - a picture and a word, a word and a definition, a word and a synonym/antonym, prepositions of time and time phrases, irregular past tense verbs, verb-noun collocations, nominal compounds, phrasal verbs, etc.
 - <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/teaching-kids-activities-collocation-pelmanism-business-english.pdf>



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Variations:

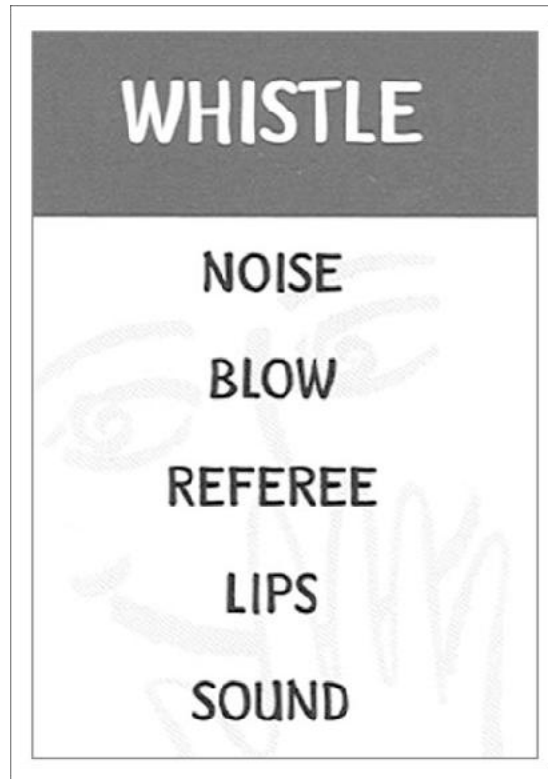
- students choose which word cannot collocate with all the others in a group, i.e., miscollocation or odd-man out: **to come – to an agreement/a decision/an answer/a conclusion**
- students write a sentence by using a collocation (define the number of collocations/sentences and time)





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- Taboo





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Variations:

- with or without timing/points
- students use a correctly guessed word in a sentence
- students create their own cards
- student takes a word from the container and tries to describe it to their teammates without actually saying the word or using their native language

<https://eslgames.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Inventions-taboo-cards.pdf>



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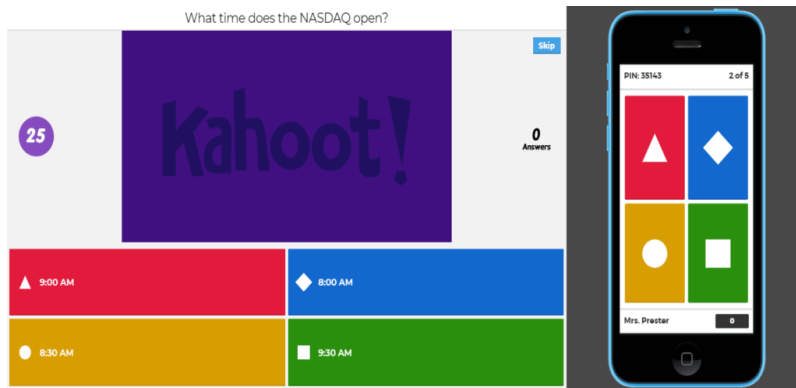
- Plickers
 - plicker (a "paper clicker") = an image similar to a QR code on a piece of paper that can be scanned by a tablet or smart phone
 - a card with a unique number – assigned to students to track their responses (done automatically), students rotate their cards to put their chosen answer on top
 - advantages: easy to use, anonymous and increased participation, instant feedback and tailored instruction, large classes

- disadvantages: lost or mixed up cards, late or absent students, novelty



- Kahoot!

<https://kahoot.com/b/>

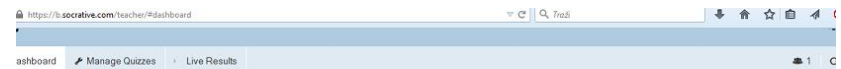


- questions and answer choices on the shared screen, players use their own devices to submit answers (different colors and shapes), competitive

- Socrative

<https://socrative.com/>

- players use their devices to read the questions and submit answers, competitive
- 'explanation' box





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KAHOOT

Pros

Easy to use. Can create your own quizzes, or use one already created.

Engages students.

Gives real time results.

Allows for easy data analysis.

Cons

Only multiple choice.

Often works slowly or game pin is not shown.

Requires each student to have a internet-capable device.

Shows the question only on teacher computer.



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Socrative

PROS

- Free!
- Super easy to set up and use
- Students love getting immediate feedback, improves their awareness of their understanding
- No limits on quizzes you can make or number/size of images
- Can download and print out quiz for students who require a paper copy or modifications
- Cuts down on active grading time and increases available data analysis and planning time
- Easy to access and use results to inform instruction, grouping, and pacing
- Can download results into Excel or Google Sheets to manipulate
- Easy to share quizzes with other teachers to distribute the load of quiz creation

CONS

- Functions best in a 1:1 setting, each student needs smartphone or computer
- Occasionally (particularly with random order option) a few answers are not recorded
- Cannot integrate questions or quiz results into presentation
- Cannot import quizzes from Word document or PDF file, must add each individual question

From MrsGeology





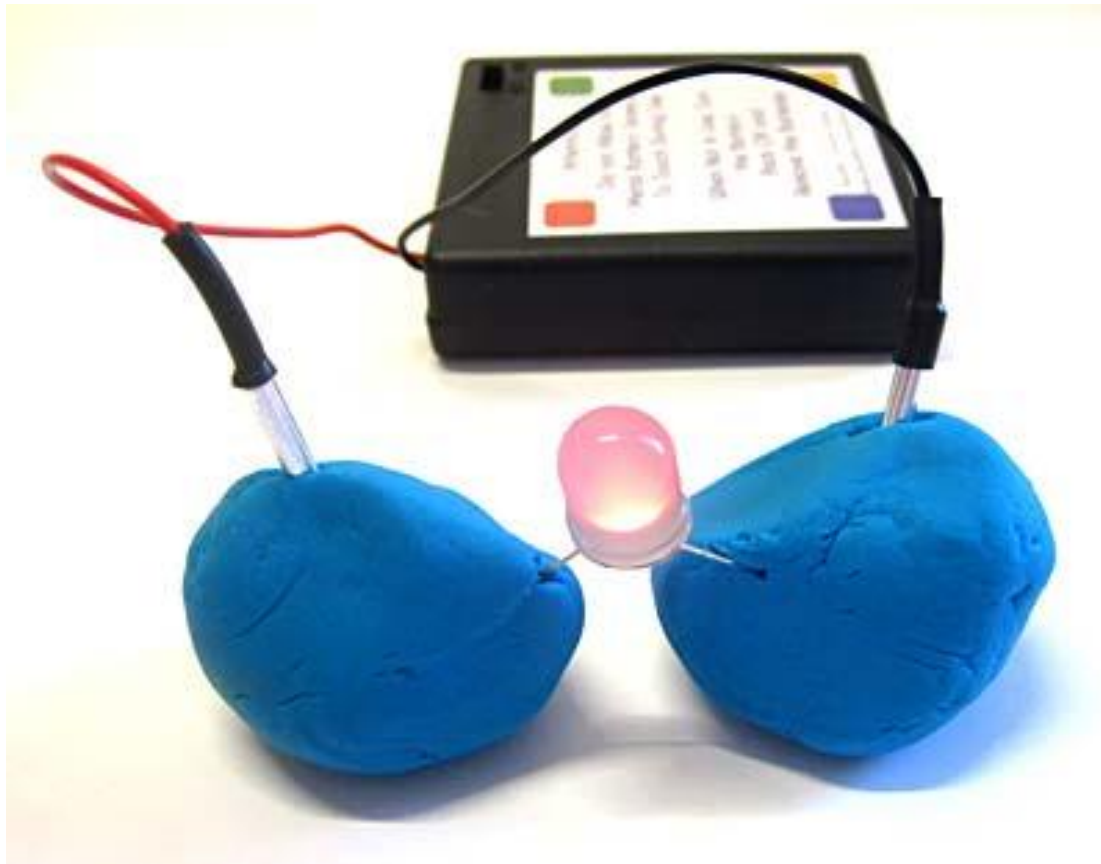
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- Experiments
 - help students simultaneously develop scientific and English language knowledge
 - hands-on and experience-based activities - learning by means of the senses, like observation and experimentation
 - foster students to use their expert knowledge to acquire English language skills
 - pay attention to individual dispositions



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- Squishy circuit



- Further ideas:

- Bristle bot
- Bending water
- Dancing balls



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- QR Codes
 - easy to use, versatile, flexible = gaining popularity in the teaching process
 - easily generated via online generators (e.g. <https://www.qr-code-generator.com/>)
 - enable a direct link to online content or a plain text created by the teacher when scanned with a mobile phone with a QR code reader



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- advantages: enhance the existing lesson materials, enrich paper-based activities, boost learner autonomy, add an element of surprise

- activities:
 - Guess the word
 - Explore the lab
 - Mini presentations



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Conclusion

- games and other engaging game-like activities:
 - contribute to the acquisition of the content being taught and increase the effectiveness of language learning and teaching
 - encourage creativity of both students and teachers in ESP classes
 - support teachers' efforts to increase student motivation and engagement in class



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Thank you for your attention!