

HELLO, KTU!

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of the EER prepared for KTU students was “Welcome to KTU”. It was based on KTU structure (faculties, buildings) and history (rectors, important dates).

The target age group was the first year students of new media language (about 19 years old).

In order to adapt it to younger participants, e.g. school pupils, there should be an introductory video (e.g. Powtoon) or a small lecture (e.g. Padlet) about KTU and universities in general, describing typical parts of universities. On the other hand, it might be too easy to the graduates of KTU or the last year students. For this reason each of the tasks could be improved by adding time restrictions, distributing students into different groups, etc.

Duration of the task is about 1 hour 30 minutes (1 regular lecture or 2 academic hours without a break). The first thing that should be done is the analysis of place. Once the place for an escape room is chosen, it should be investigated very precisely in order to check all the possibilities for tasks, avoiding possible mistakes/ flaws. Even better, if there is chance to invite someone to test it briefly, to check if everything works according to the plan. As our place was the largest library at KTU, librarians helped to find the best places to hide the hints.

2. OVERVIEW

All types of Escape Rooms are very popular in Lithuania. It could be chosen for birthday parties, team-building activities, or just friends’ gatherings. Also, there is a great variety of online escape rooms (for education and entertainment). As the library chosen for this escape rooms is the largest and the most innovative at KTU, the plan was to introduce students to this building, to teach them about all the services it provides and to remind about the historical events at KTU. In order to prepare this educational escape room, various online sources and physical books related to KTU history were checked. Also, library workers recommended different areas of the building to create the routes for the participants. Taking into consideration the age of participants, the tasks were distributed to calm (reading, solving puzzles) and active (looking for hints in the building).

3. PRE-GAME BRIEFINGS

Introduction

Discussion

Cracking the code

Finding the words

Solving the riddle

Solving the riddle

Looking for hints in the library

Solving the riddle

Translating

Looking for hints in the library



4. DESCRIPTION OF THE EER

Step 1: the students arrive to the library and the teachers wait for all of them to gather at the same time as they are supposed to work as a team. It is important to wait for all the students to describe the rules and structure of this escape room, because when some of the students are late, they do not know all the instructions properly.

Step 2: The students are invited to the private room in the library and sit around the table. The format is a regular business meeting. The students are welcomed to the breakout room. Then, the rules are briefly discussed. The students are not allowed to use their smartphones, smart watches, laptops or any other electronic devices. They are invited to use their knowledge and personal skills. Moreover, the importance of team is emphasized. Then they get the first letter

I wish you best of luck. Your English teacher Marija
 Collaborate.
 Work as a team.
 Believe in yourself.
 Welcome to the best library in city. There will be different tasks prepared for you.
 Dear students,

The letter is the welcoming words of their teacher, but the word order is changed. The last words are at the beginning and vice versa. Moreover, the students need to have/find the mirror to read the message. The message is (Dear students, welcome to the best library in city. There will be different tasks prepared for you. Believe in yourself. Work as a team. Collaborate. I wish you best of luck. Your English teacher Marija.

Step 3: The students are invited to one of the conference rooms. They get a sheet of paper of mixed letters. Students are asked to find the words related to their major working one by one. Some of the students solve this part quickly, while other are struggling a bit. However, it is great to see the team members supporting each other and trying to help.

Step 4: The students get back to the first room. The teacher reminds them, that they should get back there after each of their tasks. It is a kind of the main room in comparison to online escape rooms. The following task is a poem on the smart screen:

We both have it.

We both respect it.

We both protect it.

We both recognize it.

Just one has 2 parts, the other has 3.

They are asked to find the answer in the room. If the teacher notices the students struggling, there is one more hint prepared to find the same thing:

There are two girls

Both wear unique dresses

Just one dress has two colours

And the other one has three.

The answer to this question is the flags of Ukraine and Lithuania as the students participating are Ukrainians and Lithuanians. (According to the different groups, the number of flags and the poems might be different.

Step 5: The students stay in the main room and get the next task:

“There 90 of us, we are similar and different at the same time, beautiful and innovative.
Check each of us. One has a letter on the top of her head”

The students are invited to find the next task and to find 90 identical things. Moreover, the students already notice personification used in tasks. It is very popular in online escape rooms, so the students know that it might be either a person or a thing described. For this task they finally split into pairs and smaller groups to investigate all the floors of the building. Finally, they manage to notice that there are 90 identical lockers on the first floor. On the top of one of the lockers there is a sheet of paper. So, the students take it and get back to the main room.

Step 6: The sheet of paper students find on one of the lockers says: “I am a guardian. I never sleep. I almost never drink. I guard the exhibitions”. Now, I comfortably sit on your next task.” The students immediately guess it might be a thing as personification is used quite frequently. They start a discussion about things that do not need water. Furthermore, the students decide to walk around individually to save some time. Once one of the students notices the cactus in a front of an exhibition, he invites the colleagues. The next hint is under the cactus. This task could be done with different plants, naming it as guardians of something, according to the place its place.

Step 7: The students are back in the main room. They are provided with the next task. It is a short story on a smart screen:

Mother Alma has a few sons and no daughter. One of her sons is Kęstutis, another Raimundas, it is difficult to remember all the names. We just want to know, what is the name of the youngest son?

Ukrainian students immediately tell they do not know the Lithuanian names. At the same time, Lithuanian students comment that the task should be international so the mother should be famous. They discuss it for a while, when one of the students understand that mother Alma, is Alma Matter in Latin. KTU will be Alma Matter to all of them, so they quickly understand that the name represent the rectors of KTU. Now, the Ukrainian students know the last name as it is the name the KTU rector Eugenijus Valatka.

The task may be changed according to different universities, mentioning names of rectors or schools, mentioning the names of principals.



Step 8: The students are still in the main rule and they get one more letter from their teacher. The letter says:

Hej alla.

Hur mår du?

Vi hoppas att du förstår språket. Om så är fallet, skaffa någon bok om detta språk.

The students are asked to translate the message. As one of the students had visited Norway before, she recognized the language immediately. Then all the students guess the unknown words according to the given text. (In different scenarios, students may need to find the dictionary of the given language)

The message says:

Hello everyone. How are you? We hope you understand the language. If so, get any book about this language.

The students leave the main room looking for the book about Norwegian language. This task turns out to be the most time-consuming one. Maybe because the students are quite tired. Some of them mention being hungry. Luckily, there are two teachers in the escape rooms and one of the teachers might be travelling with students giving them hints. After about 20 meeting students get back with the book about Norway.

Step 8: Staying in the main room, the students get different pictures. Each picture represents faculties of KTU. The task says that some of the faculties are missing. The students have to place the photos in a line from the oldest to the youngest building and to draw the missing one on the sheet of paper. It turns out there is a talented student, having great skills in drawing. For this task students are allowed to use their smart devices and computer in the library to find the dates, facts, etc.

Step 9: The students are promised the next task will be the last one and there will be a small award in it. The teacher provides them the last hint:

It is a book, but not a book. Its words are sweet but there are no poems. Find it and you will be rewarded. It is related to your major.

At the beginning of preparation, the box of chocolate was bought for the students as the reward. However, as it looked like a book, the librarian printed the fake code that was glued to the side of the box. The teacher hit the box among the books of linguistics. After about 10 minutes, students get back to the main room, holding the box of chocolate. They sit around the table and discuss this experience with their teacher.

Materials/logistics

- sheets of paper, pencils or pens
- smart screen
- mobile phone, computer
- Other, specify: box of chocolate or any other small reward (e.g. a certificate of achievement).



5. FINAL REFLECTIONS

The students were asked to share their insights in two different ways. Firstly, they were asked to create short poems based on their experience. As they were quite tired in the end, most of the poems are based on the task including box of chocolate. Secondly, the students had a round table discussion with both teachers. As it was the first lecture on Friday morning, some of the students were quite sleepy or hungry. These feelings were mentioned as an obstacle to concentrate at the beginning.

Roses are red Violets are blue

Mentimeter

This experience was great And so are you	Roses are red,Violets are blue.If drinks are provided,I like KTU	A box of chocolate Is not really a book
I dont know what's a bookAnd neither do you	Roses are red Violets are blueDon't trust the booksBecause you could be fooled	If you find yourself fallingDon't forget to protect your head too
Roses are redViolets are blue Book not a book What's wrong with that?	Roses are red, Violets are blue, Chocolates in fact, don't count as a bokk	Stairs in the morningAre always good
roses are red, violets are blue, strolling around a lotis pretty hard though	Roses are red violets are blue i liked the activity, i hope you did too	roses are redviolets are bluehungry and deadbut i learned something new

6. OUTCOMES / IMPACT

The main outcome was the pleasant experience of a game-based lecture. The students were excited to change the learning environment and solve the puzzles. The benefits of the escape room were: (1) better understanding of library tools and services, (2) learned history of KTU, (3) improved team-working, problem-solving, critical-thinking skills. The disadvantage was that a few of the tasks were time consuming. For the following applications of this room, extra hints will be added. The teachers improved their skills of lecture planning, tasks preparations. It inspired to collaborate with the library workers not only for creating future educational escape rooms, but also creating other activities for students. The model of an escape room is still quite popular nowadays so this might be useful and relevant for at least a few upcoming years.

7. LESSONS LEARNED

The primary challenge was to know the setting perfectly well. In order to avoid flaws, the teachers spend a few extra days just to investigate every room, every bookshelf in the library. Also, some school pupils were invited to test some of the tasks and they might have noticed more details in the environment. At the very beginning, the plan was to hide the hints in all the floors. However, as some of the hints seemed to tricky for the trial version. I was decided to choose the first 2 floors of the library. Another obstacle was the other people. There was no chance to close the entire library for this task and there were other students and university staff members around. The challenge was to hide to tasks and to avoid them being found by random people. The main leading factors were the enthusiasm of both sides (teachers and students), relevance and popularity of escape games among young people.

8. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE OUTLOOK (100 TO 150 WORDS)

The game-based learning is a well-known and applicable method in higher education at KTU. However, the implementation of an escape room was a new thing to try. The project MOOC was a great chance to learn about Educational Escape Rooms, to see its possibilities in application. It gave KTU teachers food for thought and inspired them to try this method themselves. The EER worked well for the students of New Media Language and was a great experience to the organizing teachers and library workers. There will definitely be more EER created for the future students and not necessarily just for this major.

Some pictures from the EER implementation:





