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Productive Epistemic Games

in an Investigative Science Learning Environment

Christopher Robin **SAMUELSSON** [1],*, Bor **GREGORCIC** [1], Maja **ELMGREN** [2], Jesper **HAGLUND** [3]

1 Department of Physics and Astronomy, Uppsala University, Sweden

2 Department of Chemistry - Ångström Laboratory, Uppsala University, Sweden

3 Department of Engineering and Physics, Karlstad University, Sweden

* Lead researcher: robin.samuelsson@physics.uu.se



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Labs: What are our students
supposed to learn?



Labs: **What** are our students supposed to learn?



Epistemic knowledge

Conceptual knowledge



Labs: **What** are our students supposed to learn?

There are too many goals!
(Wilcox & Lewandowski, 2017)

Epistemic knowledge

Conceptual knowledge



Labs: **What** are our students supposed to learn?

Lab education should **focus on experimentation** rather than theory (Smith & Holmes, 2021) and this may improve students' critical thinking skills and views on experimentation (Walsh et al., 2022)

Experimentation as in **"the approach, techniques, skills and ways of thinking when conducting authentic physics experiments"** (Smith & Holmes, 2021, p. 662)



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Epistemic knowledge



Labs: **How** are our students supposed to learn?

Active learning is more effective than traditional lectures (Wieman, 2014; Deslauriers et al., 2011, Deslauriers et al., 2019) and improves epistemological skills in laboratory education (Holmes et al., 2015)

Learning environments that use active learning require students **”processing and applying information”** (Wieman, 2014, p. 8319) **through for example discussions and problem solving together with other students**



Labs: **What** and **how** are our students supposed to learn?

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Successful in regards to the goals of the learning environment



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What makes students productive within a learning environment that involves these aspects?

We need:

- 1) Learning environment that involves a focus on experimentation and active learning**



The learning environment

Investigative Science Learning Environment (ISLE) (e.g. Etkina et al., 2013)

Two goals (Etkina et al., 2021):



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Two goals (Etkina et al., 2021):

- 1) To engage students in processes that mirror the scientific processes used by physicists
- 2) To enhance social aspects related to laboratory work



The learning environment

Elements of ISLE

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(Etkina et al. 2021)



The learning environment

Elements of ISLE

Observational experiments

(Etkina et al. 2021)

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The learning environment

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Observational experiments

Explanations

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The learning environment

Elements of ISLE

Observational experiments

Explanations

Testing experiments (with predictions based on explanations)

(Etkina et al. 2021)

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The learning environment

Elements of ISLE

Observational experiments

Explanations

Testing experiments (with predictions based on explanations)

Reflection and revision (if outcome doesn't agree with predictions)

(Etkina et al. 2021)

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The learning environment

Elements of ISLE

Observational experiments
Explanations
Testing experiments (with predictions based on explanations)
Reflection and revision (if outcome doesn't agree with predictions)
More testing experiments (if outcomes does agree with predictions)

(Etkina et al. 2021)

Investigative Science Learning Environment (ISLE) (e.g. Etkina et al., 2013)

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Labs: How are our students supposed to learn?

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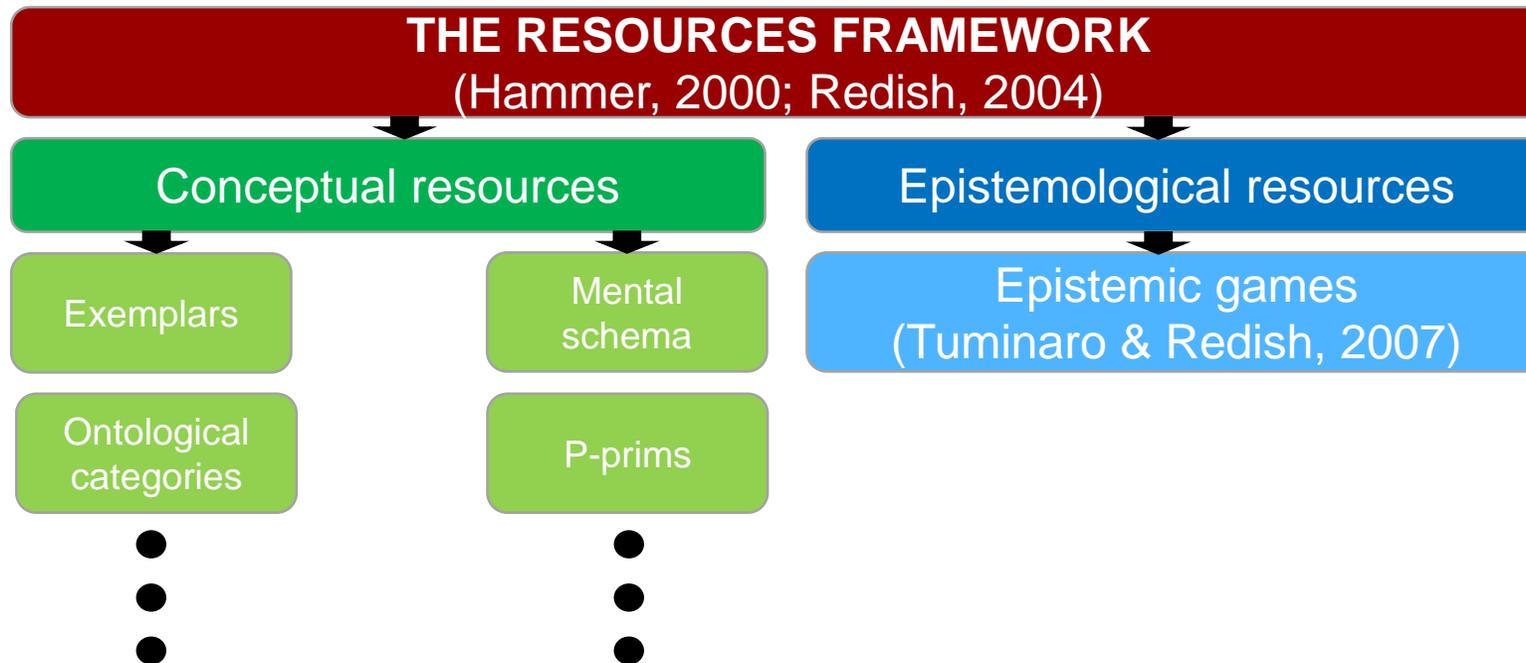
We need:

2) Framework to study epistemological aspects

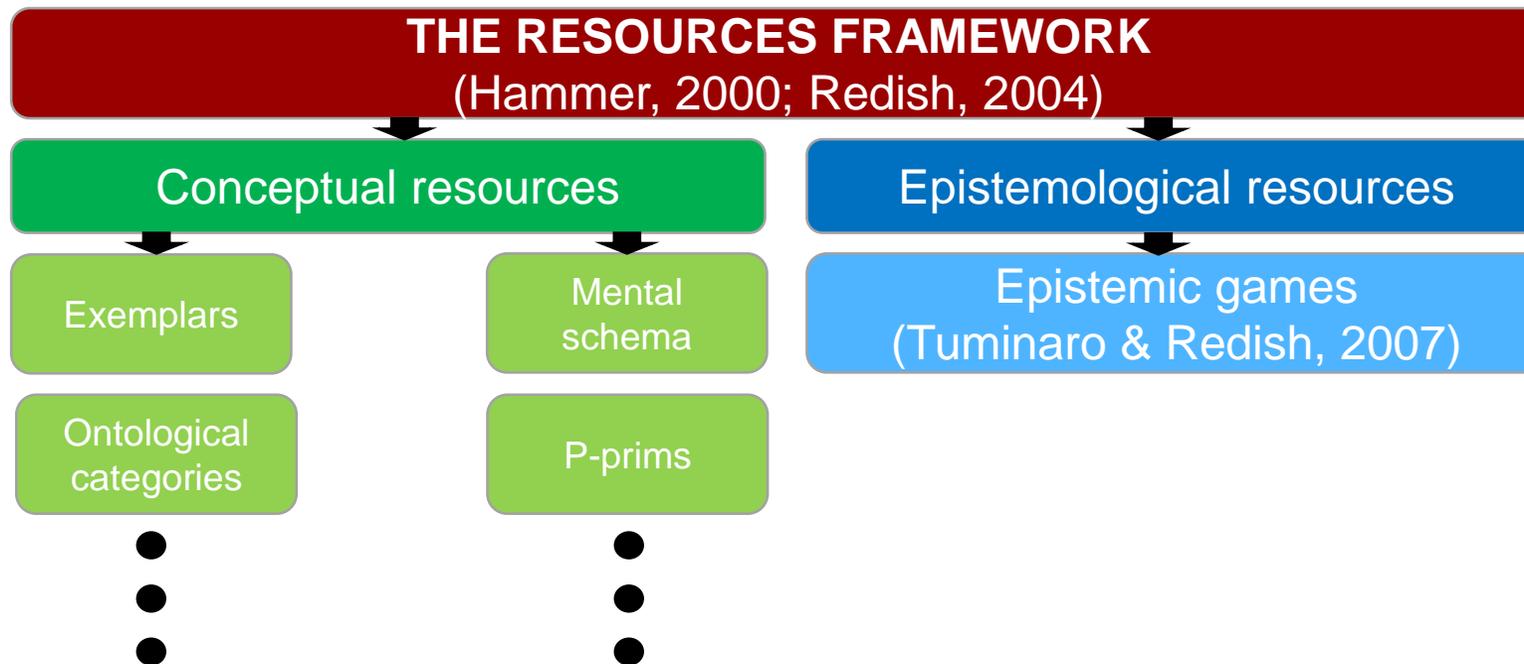




The framework



The framework

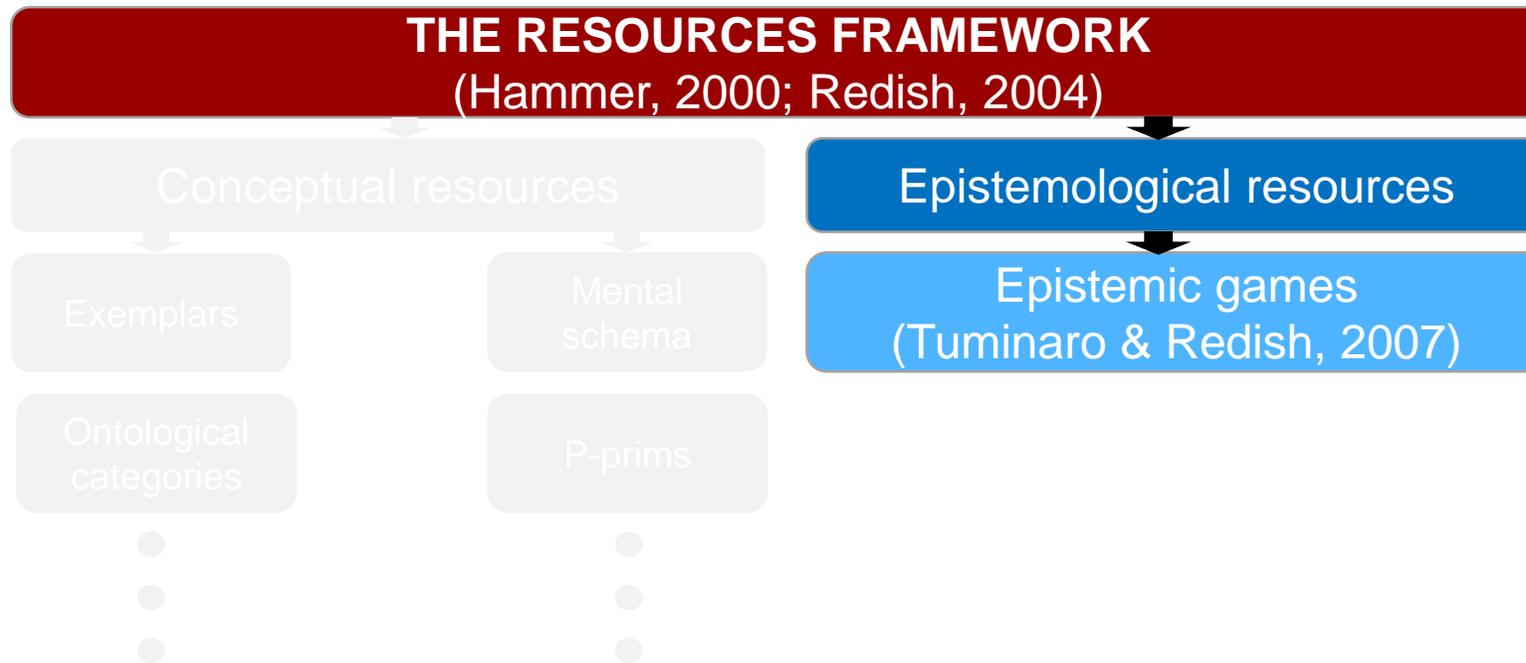


"Resource – a compiled knowledge element, [...], different levels of structure may be used as resources by different individuals."
(Redish, 2004, p. 58)



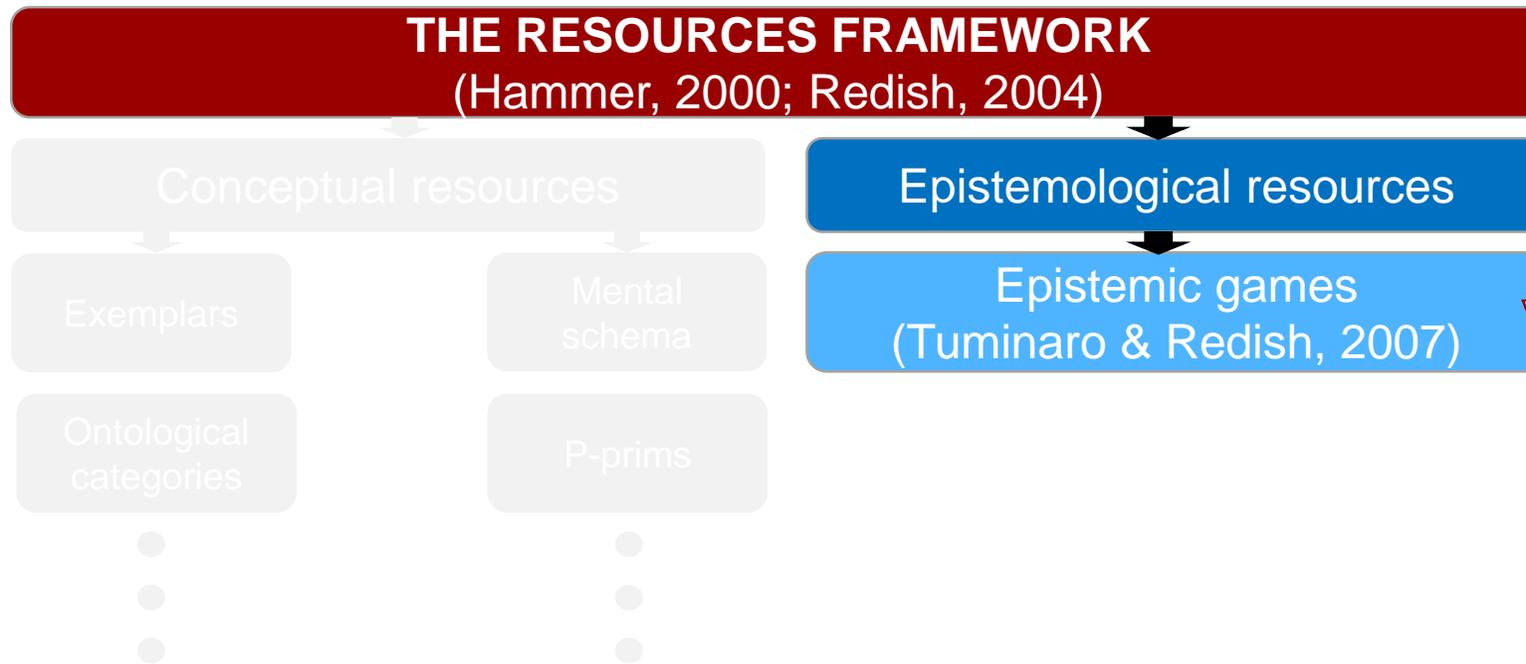


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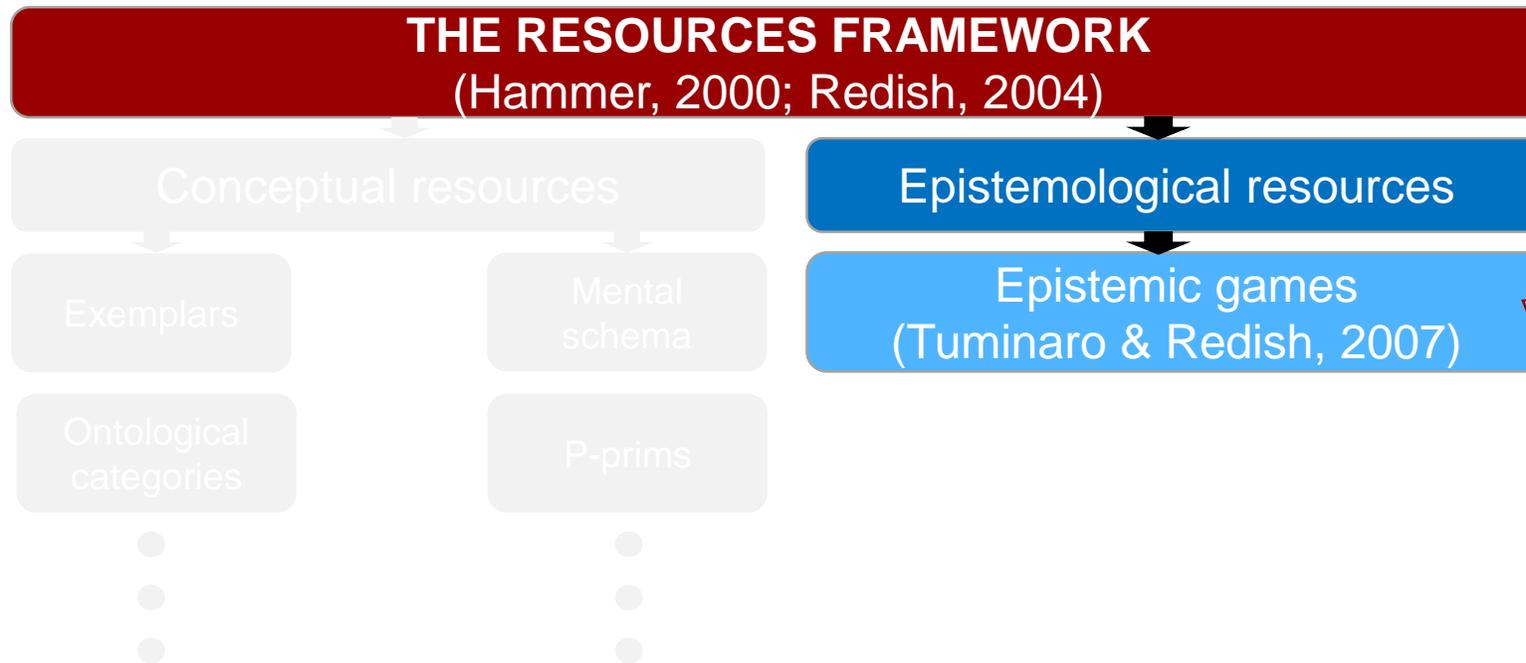


"a coherent activity that uses particular kinds of knowledge and processes associated with that knowledge to create knowledge or solve a problem." (Redish, 2004, p. 30)





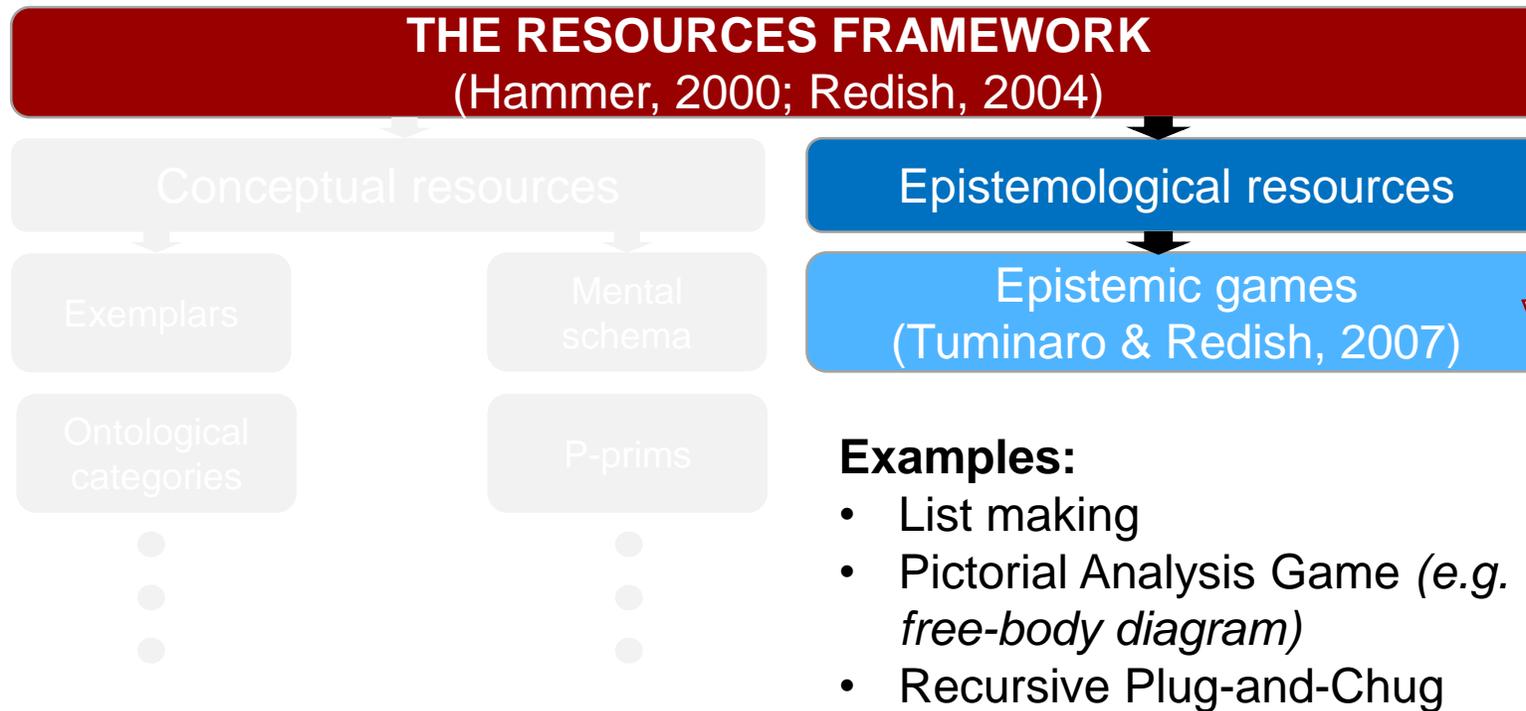
The framework



Basically: Strategies to create, gather, share and process knowledge.



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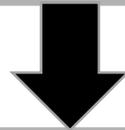
Research question

What makes students productive within a learning environment that involves these aspects?



Research question

What makes students productive within a learning environment that involves these [experimentation and active learning] aspects?



What epistemic games do students employ when formulating observations, hypotheses and designing possible experiments about a phase transition within an investigative science learning environment?



Activity: Frame

General: Think aloud! Tell each other how you reason, what you associate to and think about. For example “but we know from “X” that...”, “When I cook food...”, “I remember a lab from high school in which...”

Go through the following steps:

1. **Observe** the ice in front of you when salt is added to the ice. What happens? Try to be as complete in your descriptions as possible.
2. Formulate some possible **explanations** to your observations. It is encouraged to formulate multiple such explanations (at least 2). The explanations do not have to be correct, but they should be experimentally testable. Write down your explanations.
3. **How would you test** your explanations? Propose different testing experiments.
4. The researcher shows what equipment that is available. **Modify** or add to your testing experiments if necessary after seeing the equipment.
5. Give a **prediction**, based on your explanations, for the experiments before you carry them out. Predictions for the experiments should be based on the different explanations (what happens in the experiment if the explanation holds?).
6. **Carry out** the testing experiment, note the result and compare with your predictions. Discuss what the result tells you about your explanations. Is it possible to **reject** any of them?



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Activity: Participants

Physics teacher students
(TS)

Electrical engineering
students (ES)



Activity: Participants

Physics teacher students
(TS)

Electrical engineering
students (ES)

- The teacher students have some experience with ISLE.
- The teacher students have additional training in thinking about learning and knowledge.
- About the same amount of training in physics.
- No background in chemistry
- Phenomenon novel for both pairs.



Activity: Phenomenon

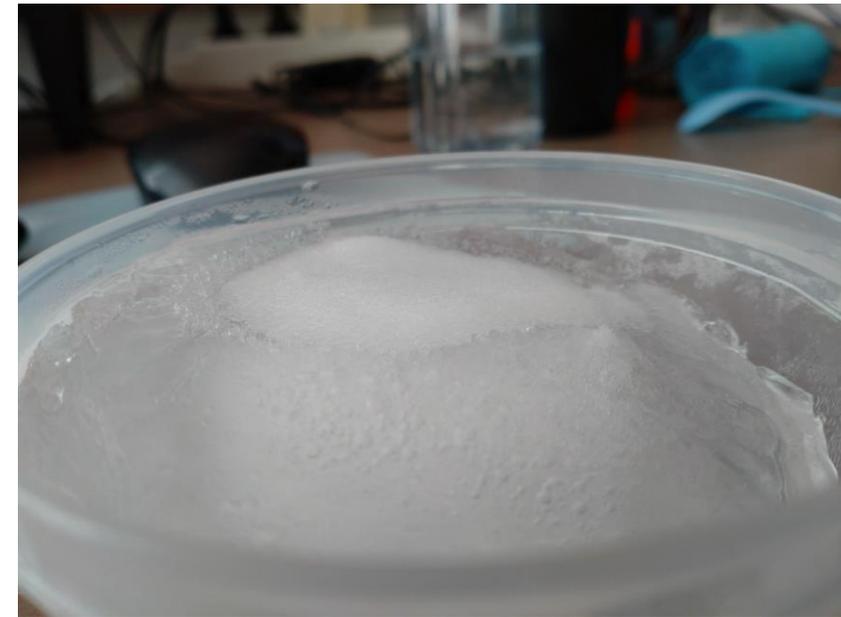


Activity: Phenomenon



Activity: Phenomenon

The ice melts





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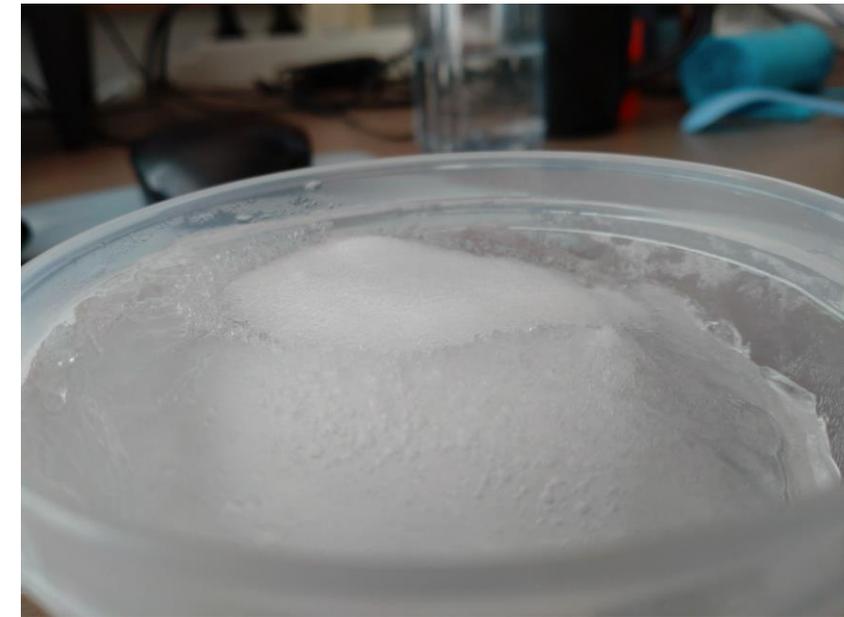
Activity: Phenomenon



The ice melts

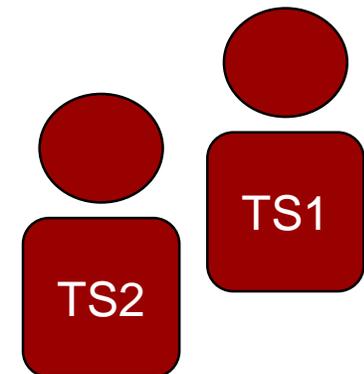
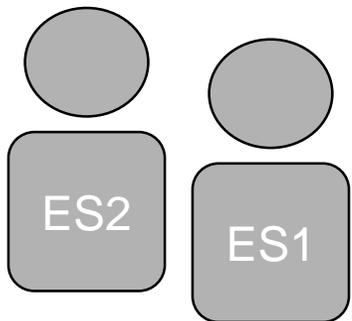
Some potential explanations:

- The temperature for the phase transition is lowered when salt is added to the ice
- The salt has a higher temperature than the surroundings
- The salt has a higher thermal conductivity than the surroundings
- There is an exothermic reaction when salt dissolves in water



Activity: Sharing knowledge – "interthinking"

Engineering students (ES) &
Teacher students (TS)



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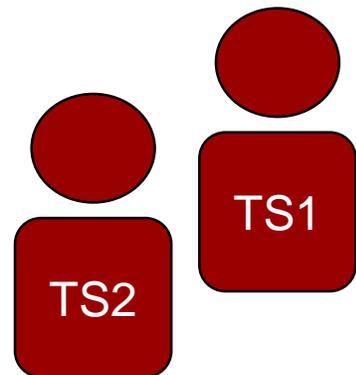


Activity: Sharing knowledge – “interthinking”

Exploratory talk

Explaining ideas to each other and building a shared knowledge base-
“knowledge is made more publicly accountable and reasoning is more visible in the talk” (Mercer, 1995, p. 104)

I'm thinking that it also melts because of heat transfer.

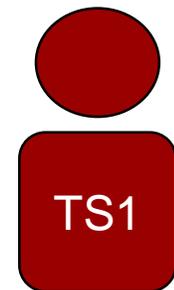
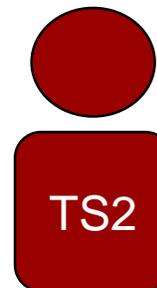


Activity: Sharing know- – ”interthin

Yes but I want to add that I think it has...that the ice together with the salt gets a lower...ehm...phase transition...phase transition. I mean the phase [transition] from ice to water occurs at a lower temperature, below 0 if you have ice mixed with salt.

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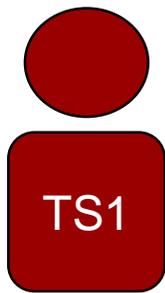
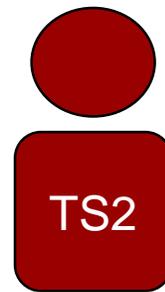
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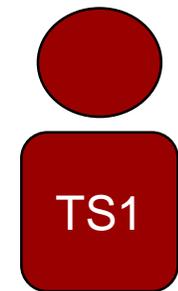
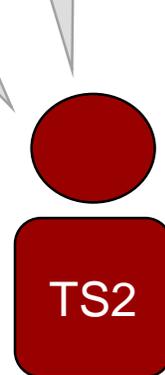
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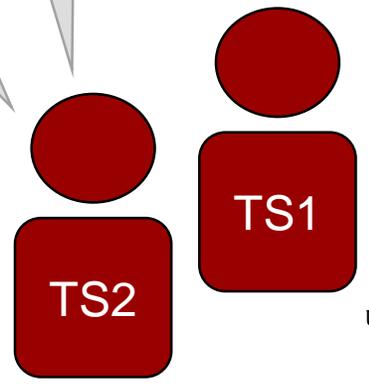
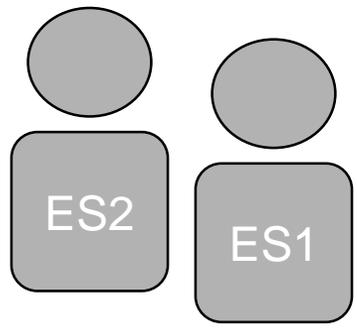
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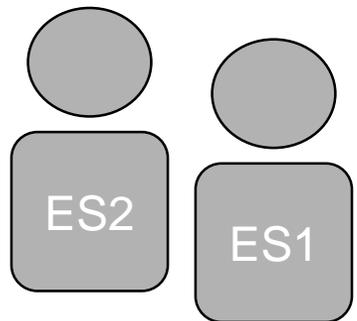
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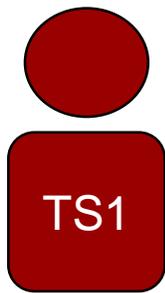
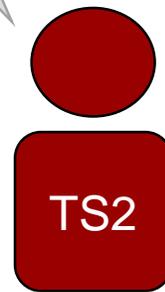
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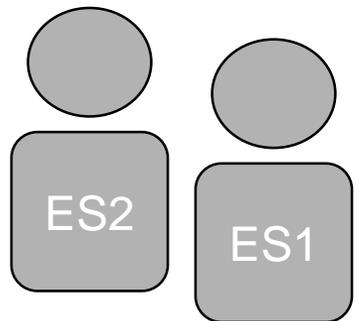
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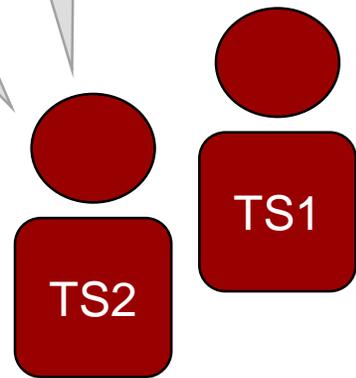
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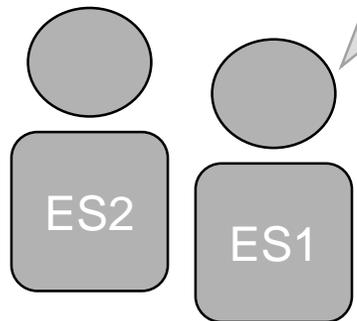


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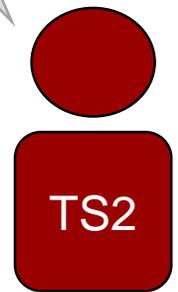
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But should we say that it takes a free electron but...it feels like...it is really difficult to think creatively. You don't want to break...This with equilibrium, it feels like there should be energy added for it to be...some potential maybe. It always wants to go there where it fits the best, where it is the highest...I don't remember what it is called but I mean it is really potential between molecules in this way. [inaudible] and the location where it fits the best kind of.



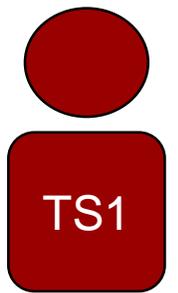
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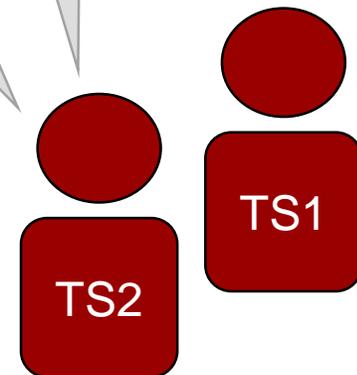
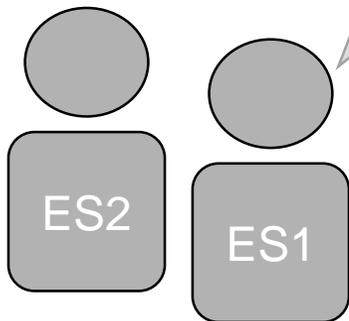
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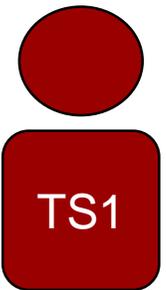
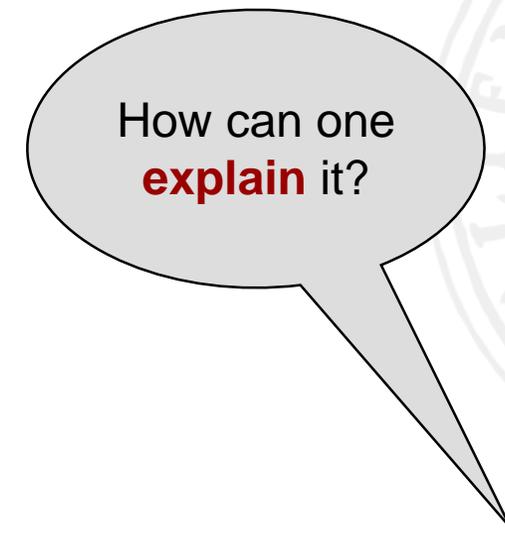
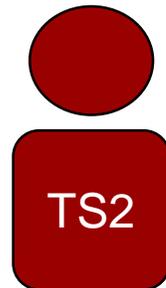
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Activity: Sharing practice

Self-regulation

ISLE as a framework for
the students to regulate
against

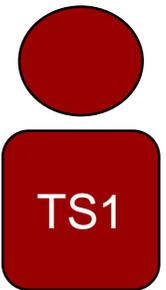
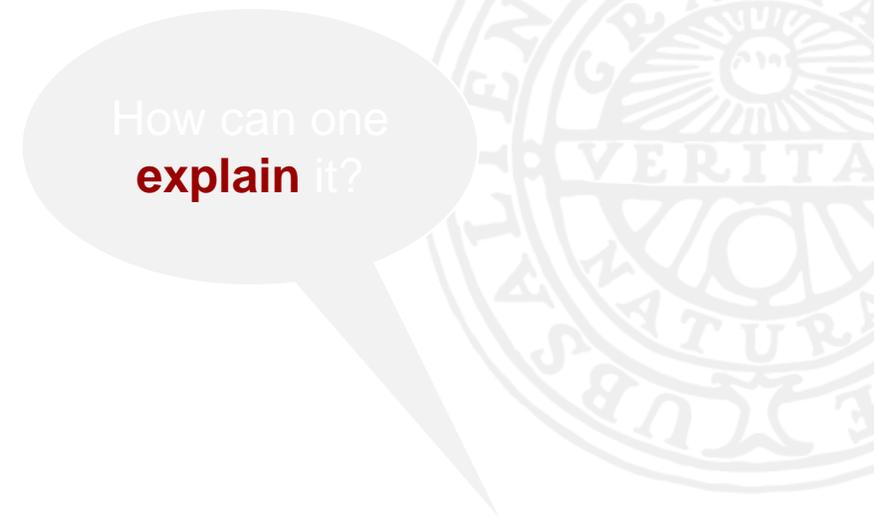
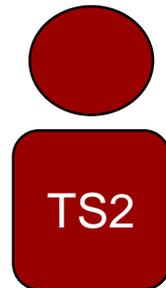


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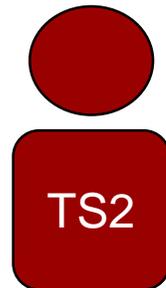
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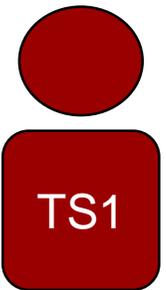
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Yes, because I
think it is
easiest for us
to **test**.

How can one
explain it?

Ok, but in any
case, we **saw**
that it quickly
became wet.

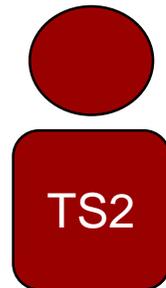


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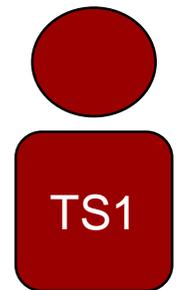


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Do you **see** it?

How can one
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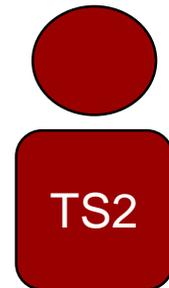
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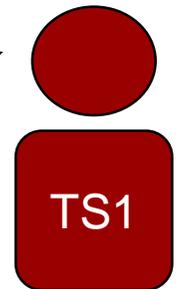
Yes, because I
think it is
easiest for us
to **test**.

Do you **see** it?

How can one
explain it?

Ok, but in any
case, we **saw**
that it quickly
became wet.

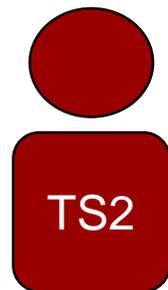
But do you **see**
that it is getting
wet? Do you **see**
that it is
beginning to
melt?



Activity: Sharing practice

Self-regulation

ISLE as a framework for
the students to regulate
against



Yes, because I
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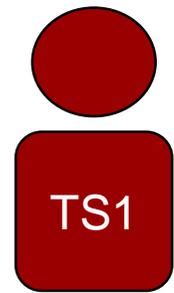
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If we make a
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assumption

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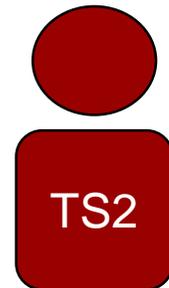
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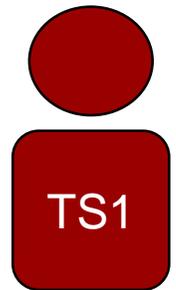
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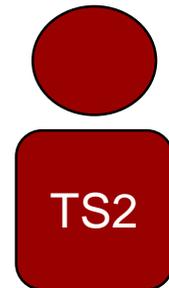
But it was an
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Activity: Sharing practice

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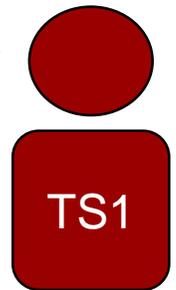
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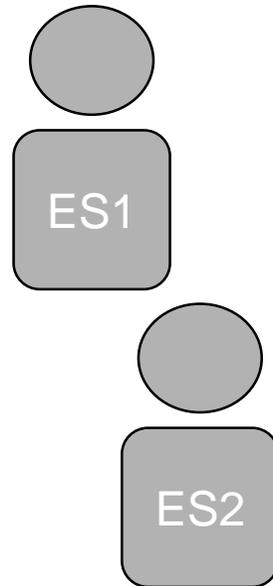
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Activity: Sharing practice

External regulation –

ISLE as a framework for
the students to regulate
against

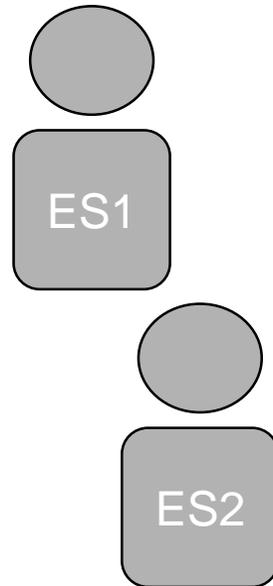


So what can you give as
explanations now? [...]



Activity: Sharing practice

External regulation –
ISLE as a framework for
the students to regulate
against



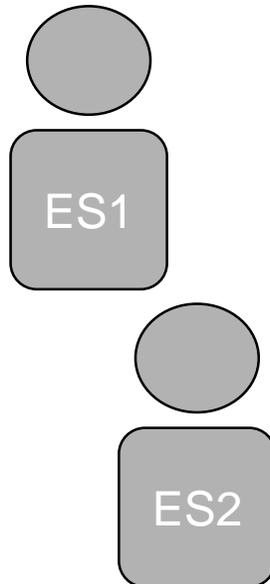
So what can you give as
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Activity: Sharing practice

External regulation –

ISLE as a framework for
the students to regulate
against



Are you now
allowed to say
what you have
seen from
before?

So what can you give as
explanations now? [...]

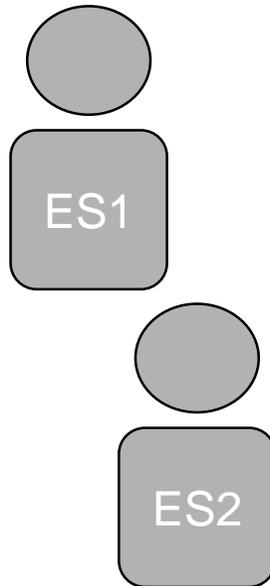
Yes, you can
start from that
and then
**formulate
explanations.**



Activity: Sharing practice

External regulation –

ISLE as a framework for
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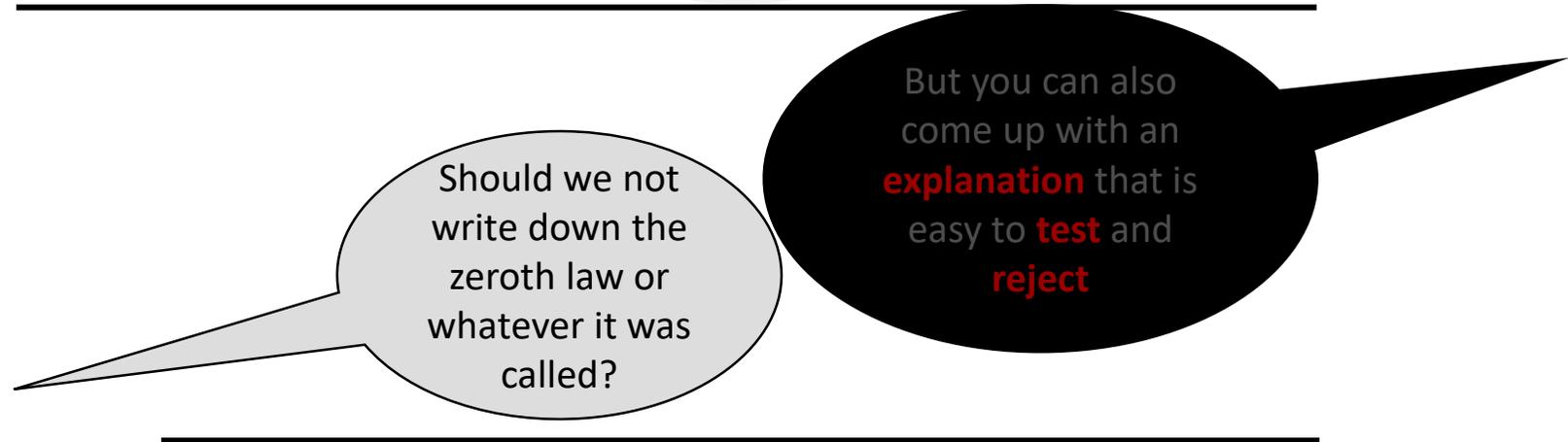
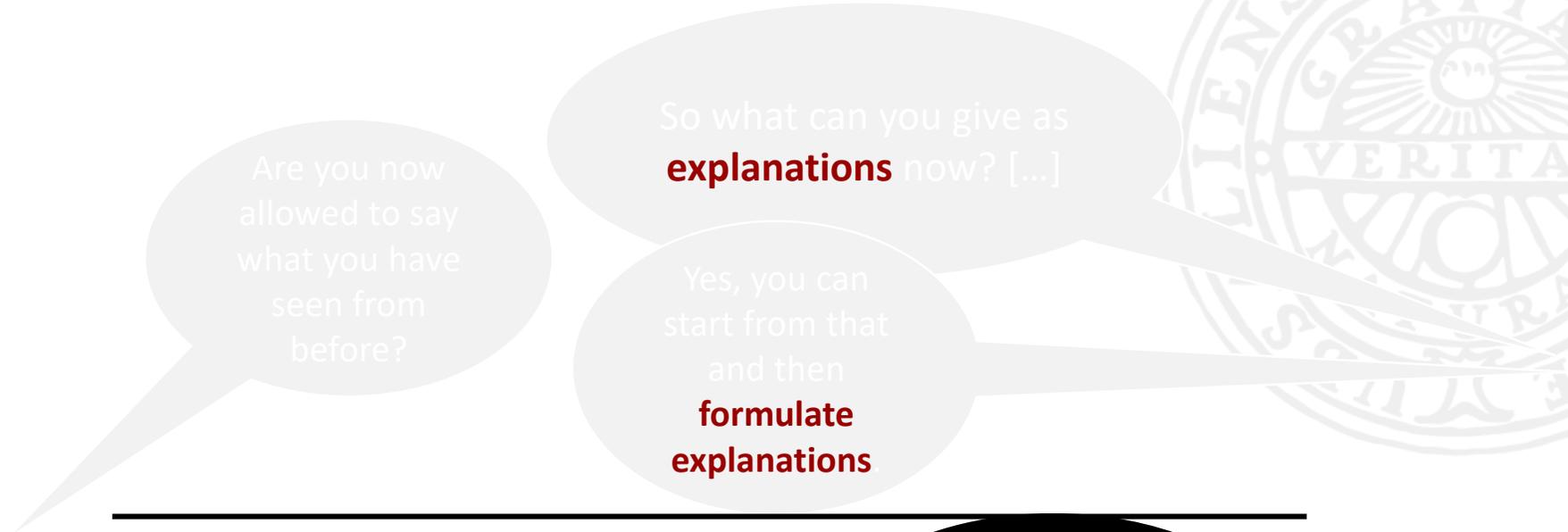
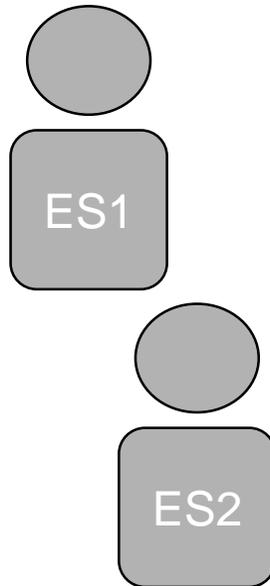
But you can also
come up with an
explanation that is
easy to **test** and
reject



Activity: Sharing practice

External regulation –

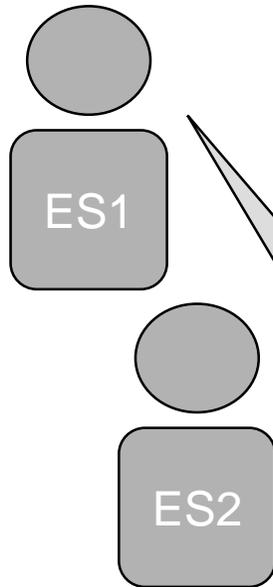
ISLE as a framework for
the students to regulate
against



Activity: Sharing practice

External regulation –

ISLE as a framework for
the students to regulate
against



Actually, I would
say that one
should check
the pressure.
[...]

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Should we not
write down the
zeroth law or
whatever it was
called?

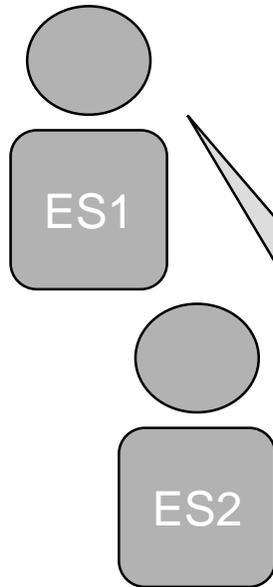
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Activity: Sharing practice

External regulation –

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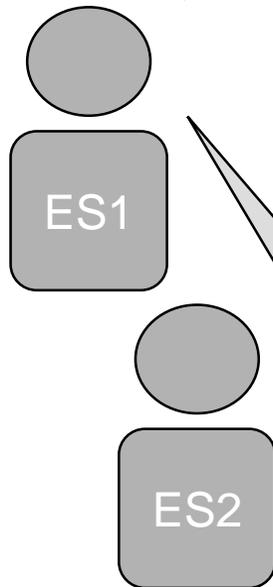
You can first think:
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Activity: Sharing practice

External regulation –

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Conclusion: Productive epistemic games

Productivity seems to be associated to two patterns.



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1. The talk is explicit, coherent and confident
2. The use of the structure from ISLE to structure the activity



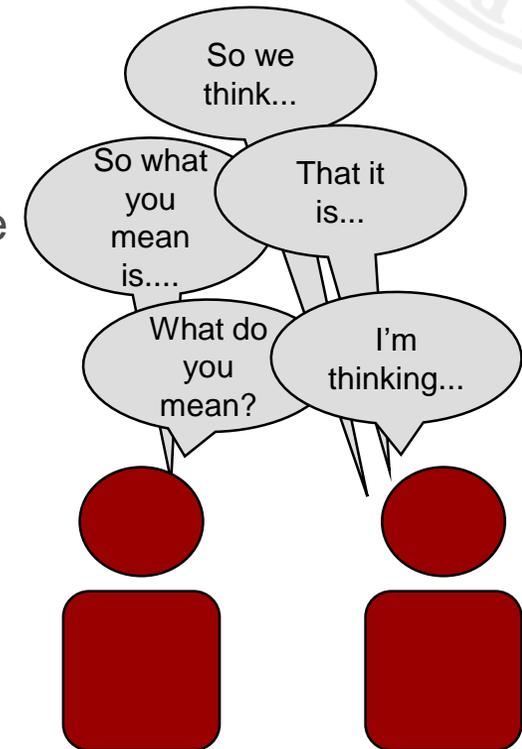
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Possible to identify two epistemic games:

- 1. Exploratory talk**



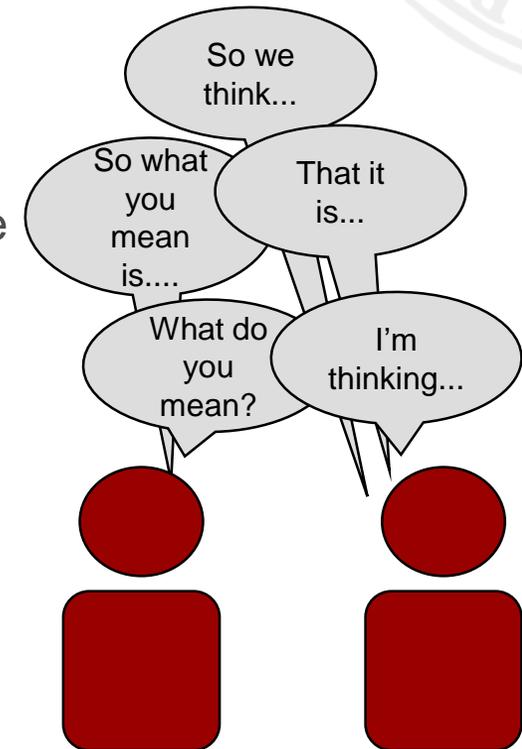
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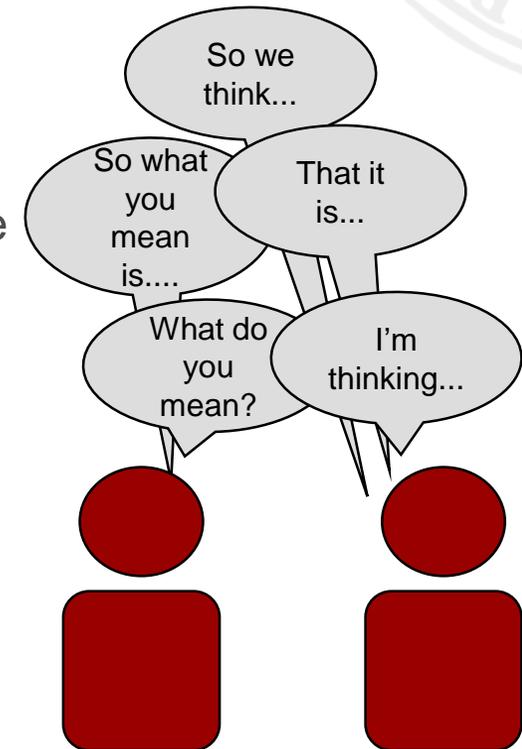
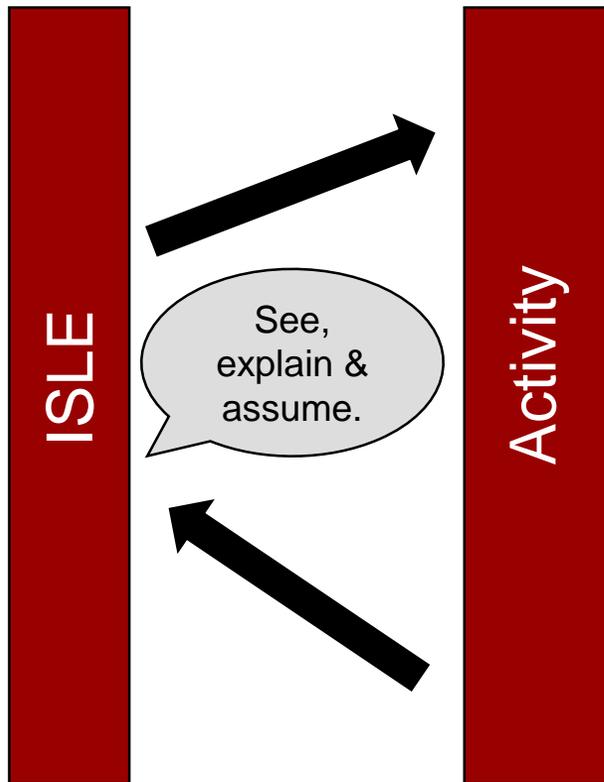
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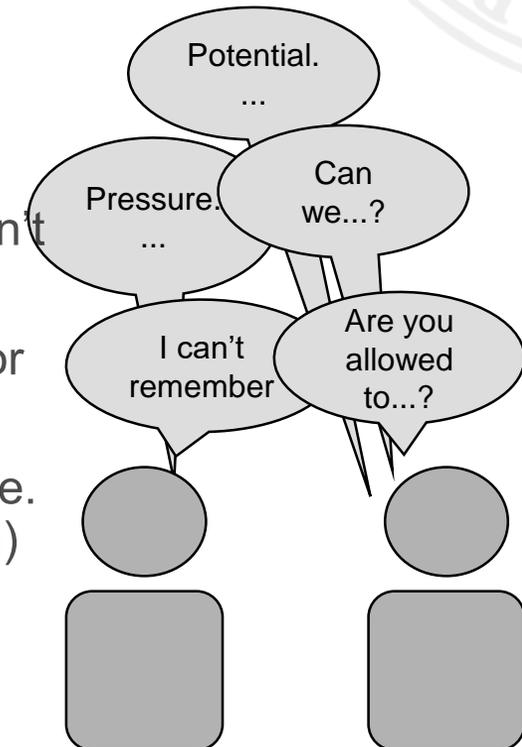
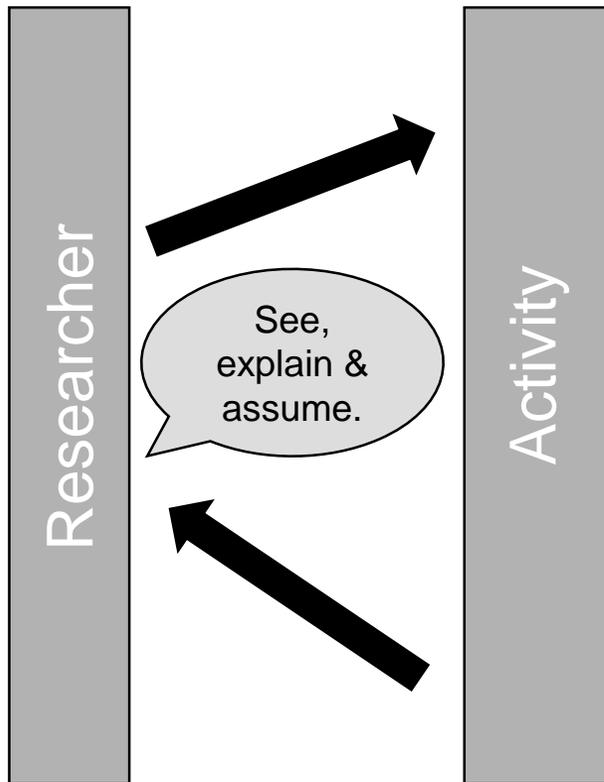


Conclusion: ES

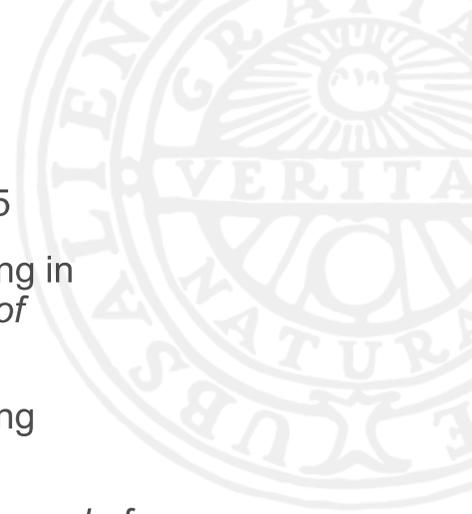
Conversly, the difficulties for ES seems to be associated to two patterns.

1. The talk is incoherent and hesitant (it often doesn't lead anywhere)
2. The students often "get stuck" in their practice or forget what they are supposed to do.

This is somewhat helped by **external regulation** (i.e. they rely on the researcher/instructor for regulation)



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Thanks for listening!

Questions?



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET



Christopher Robin Samuelsson: robin.samuelsson@physics.uu.se

Bor Gregorcic: bor.gregorcic@physics.uu.se

Maja Elmgren: maja.elmgren@kemi.uu.se

Jesper Haglund: jesper.haglund@kau.se



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