

Description

The invention concerns a connecting means for a toy building set. More particularly, it concerns a connecting means which can be used for interconnecting respective toy elements when erecting mechanical structures.

Various forms of construction toys are known, comprising a plurality of construction and coupling means.

For example the CA patent specification 878 619 discloses a building system where elements with holes are interconnected by means of bolts and nuts. Building systems of this type have the drawback that it is difficult for small children to use them since the children cannot both hold the parts in a specific mutual position and also have two hands available for fixing bolts and nuts.

The GB patent specification 1 285 185 discloses a similar building system where pegs are additionally provided on the elements for cooperation with holes in other elements. This enables temporary coupling of two elements, but gives no possibility of erecting a complete, stable structure.

The German patent specification DE-A-3 324 484 concerns a toy building set in which the building elements are provided with complementary coupling means. During interconnection of two elements one coupling part must be moved elastically in order to be inserted in a coupling part on another element. The elastic force retains the coupling parts by friction, and no clamping device is provided for locking the interconnected building elements.

The object of the invention is to provide a toy building set which is unique in including compact elements, which comprise integrated means for temporary attachment and which are adapted to fix and secure mutually coupled elements effectively.

This is achieved in that, as stated in the characterizing portion of claim 1, a connecting means comprises a first coupling part and a second coupling part, said parts being provided on their respective ones of a pair of building elements, adapted to be interconnected, and formed with respective, complementary coupling means, said coupling parts being adapted to interconnect the elements by elastic movement of at least one coupling part. This interconnection is flexible and may be made permanent by means of an adjustable clamping device for blocking the elastic movement.

Thus, a simple, compact and functional toy building set is provided, permitting rapid erection of structures by means of the snap lock principle and simple clamping through the aid of means integrated in the elements.

Claims 2-4 define an advantageous embodiment of the coupling parts with a view to providing

the elastic movement when joining two complementary coupling parts.

Claims 5-10 define various advantageous details of the clamping device; claim 7 states that it comprises a thread of great pitch enabling rapid clamping; claims 8 and 9 state that the coupling device is operative in connection with a device for disengaging an applied tightening torque when this exceeds a certain limit. The disengagement device operates in one direction of rotation, which prevents the elements from being destroyed when the clamping device is excessively tightened; and claim 10 states that the clamping device is provided with a snap lock, preventing it from dropping out of the element when loosened.

The mutually cooperating depressions defined in claim 11 enable fixing of the parts in various mutual positions. When, as stated in claim 12, the projections are formed as resilient tongues, a click function is obtained in certain positions with movability between these. Claims 13 and 14 state that parts, subjected to wear in use, can advantageously be arranged in a separate part, which may optionally be exchangeable, but to render exchange superfluous, it is preferably made of a more wear-resistant and therefore more expensive material than the rest of the means, which does not need to have the same wear resistance and can therefore be made of a less expensive material.

The invention will be explained more fully below with reference to the drawing, in which

Fig. 1 shows a preferred embodiment of a building element provided with coupling parts according to the invention,

Fig. 2 is a top view of the building element from Fig. 1 (without clamping device),

Fig. 3 shows a horizontal section through the element from Fig. 2,

Figs. 4 and 5 show examples of some possible connections between two building elements,

Fig. 6 is an exploded projection of parts of complementary coupling means in an alternative embodiment, and

Fig. 7 shows a horizontal, central longitudinal section through an alternative coupling means in Fig. 6.

Fig. 1 shows a preferred embodiment of a building element 10, intended to be connected with other elements by a connecting means according to the invention. In this case, the building element has connecting means comprising a first coupling part 11 and two other coupling parts 12 and 13. It is evident to a skilled person that the number of coupling parts on a building element is immaterial; however, each building element must at least include a first coupling part and/or a second coupling part. Thus, building elements are conceivable which comprise only for example a first coupling

part, since this element may thus be coupled with building elements comprising at least one second coupling part. The first coupling part 11 comprises a claw-shaped jaw part 14, while the second coupling part 12 and 13 comprises a bushing 15 and a clamping device 16.

Fig. 2 is a top view of the building element from Fig. 1. The second coupling part is shown without bushings, and, as will be seen, the second coupling part is formed with two collars 20 which, in combination with an associated cut 30 in the first coupling part (see Fig. 3), produces a snap lock effect when two corresponding coupling means are brought together. The snap lock effect may be generated in that at least one of the corresponding coupling parts is resilient, in this case the second coupling part, where for example the beam areas 21 and 22 move apart when the connecting means is engaged.

Fig. 3 shows a section through the building element from Fig. 2. It appears that the first coupling part is provided with cuts 30 which are complementary to the collars 20 of the second coupling part. A clamping device may be implemented by for example a screw whose head is concealed in a recess 31 and whose outer threads fit with inner threads 32 implemented in the building element. When the screw, with abutment in the recess 31, is tightened in the thread 32, the resilience in the second coupling part in question is removed, which causes a first coupling engaged with the second coupling part to be fixed. According to a preferred embodiment the thread pitch is great, which means that fixing can take place very rapidly without the screw having to be rotated noticeably. The screw may also be provided with a snap lock device on the shaft, which fixes it in the building element when the second coupling part has full resilience, i.e. that the screw cannot drop out of the building element when loosened. In the loosened state, the outer threads of the screw may moreover be out of engagement with the inner threads 32, so that in this state disengagement is involved. It is evident to a skilled person that the snap lock effect can also be provided in that the first coupling part is resilient instead of the second coupling part.

Since, according to the invention, the connecting means will typically be made of plastics, the clamping device - with a view to avoiding overloading - may be operatively connected with a disengagement device, so as to ensure that the clamping device can maximally be tightened with a predetermined torque. Such a disengagement device may either be integrated in the clamping device or be integrated in a clamping tool intended for the purpose. In the latter case, the use of unauthorized clamping tools may be prevented by forming the clamping device with a special cou-

pling means intended for coupling with a complementary coupling means on the clamping tool.

Figs. 4 and 5 show some coupling possibilities between two building elements of the type shown in Fig. 1. A first coupling part 11 on a first building element 40 is caused to engage a second coupling part 12 on a second building element 41. In this state, the building elements will be mutually rotatable around the clamping device 16. The elements may now be locked in a desired position by rotation of the clamping device 16. As appears, the clamping device may be provided with a substantially pentagonal coupling means, which provides a safeguard against the use of unauthorized tools.

Fig. 6 shows an exploded projection of respective coupling parts. A first coupling part 51 essentially corresponds to the coupling part 11 and has likewise a claw-shaped jaw part 14. The first coupling part 51 is formed with a depression or cut like the cut 30, but is here provided with a plurality of radially extending depressions 52. The second coupling part comprises several separate parts in this embodiment. A separate part 54 is adapted to be mounted in the building element 53 where it is retained. The separate part 54 has a central hole 55 with threads to receive a screw 16 which is likewise threaded. The part 54 has a plurality of resilient tongues 56 on its inwardly directed end face, said tongues, in assembled state, cooperating with the depressions 52 in the first coupling part 51. The first and the second coupling part can hereby rotate with respect to each other, the cooperating depressions 52 and resilient tongues 56 providing a click function.

Fig. 7 shows a horizontal longitudinal section through a building element in the alternative embodiment. It is shown here how the two separate parts 54a and 54b are firmly mounted in the building element. A screw 16a is shown without threaded engagement with the treads in the part 54a, and it is prevented from dropping out since a jump in its outer diameter acts as a snap lock, as mentioned. A first coupling part can be coupled by the screw 16a with the shown coupling part since its jaws are here free to perform the necessary elastic movement for the coupling. A screw 16b is shown in engagement with the corresponding threads in the separate part 54b, and the outward elastic movement is blocked in this state by the parts of the building element adapted for this purpose, so that coupling and particularly separation of assembled building elements is prevented. When the screw 16 is screwed into the threads in the separate part 54, clamping between these parts is established, and this allows in particular the unhindered mutual rotation of two assembled building elements, while their separation is prevented, as mentioned.



Claims

1. A connecting means for a toy building set, comprising a first coupling part (11) and a second coupling part (12, 13) complementary to said first coupling part, said first and second coupling parts being provided on respective ones of a pair of building set elements which are to be interconnected, **characterized** in that the coupling parts are adapted to interconnect the elements by elastic movement between a stressed condition of at least one of said coupling parts (11, 12, 13) wherein said first coupling part (11) may be inserted within portions (20) of said second coupling part (12, 13) and a relaxed condition of said one of said coupling parts wherein said second coupling part (12, 13) will be retained by said portions (20) of said first coupling part, and that said connecting means further includes a clamping device (16) movable between a release position (16a) in which elastic movement of said one of said coupling parts between said stressed and relaxed conditions is possible and a lock position (16b) in which said clamping device prevents said elastic movement of said one of said coupling parts.
2. A means according to claim 1, **characterized** in that the first coupling part is claw-shaped and is adapted to receive a portion associated with the second coupling part upon mutual movement of the coupling parts transversely to the longitudinal direction of the bushing.
3. A means according to claim 1 or 2, **characterized** in that the elastic movement is provided by a collar on the first coupling part and a corresponding cut on the second coupling part.
4. A means according to claim 1 or 2, **characterized** in that the elastic movement is provided by a collar on the second coupling part and a corresponding cut on the first coupling part.
5. A means according to claims 1-4, **characterized** in that the clamping device is firmly mounted.
6. A means according to claims 1-5, where only the second coupling part is elastically movable, **characterized** in that the clamping device is integral with the bushing and serves, when activated, to limit the elastic movement of the coupling part.
7. A means according to claims 1-6, **characterized** in that the clamping device is formed

with threads having great pitch, and that it comprises a disengagement device in unscrewed state.

8. A device according to claims 1-7, **characterized** in that the clamping device comprises a screw known per se with threads, and that a disengagement device is provided, said disengagement device being operatively connected with the threads by tightening of the screw and disengaging an applied tightening torque when said torque exceeds a predetermined size.
9. A means according to claim 8, **characterized** in that the disengagement device is integrated in the screw.
10. A means according to claims 1-9, **characterized** in that the clamping device comprises a screw known per se with threads, said screw being provided with a snap lock so that in unscrewed state it is fixed in the building element in an axial direction.
11. A means according to claims 1-10, **characterized** in that the coupling parts have mutually cooperating projections and depressions on respective ones of the parts.
12. A means according to claim 11, **characterized** in that the projections are formed as resilient tongues.
13. A means according to claim 12, **characterized** in that the resilient tongues are formed in a separate part for mounting in one coupling part.
14. A means according to claim 13, **characterized** in that the separate part also comprises threads for the clamping device.

Patentansprüche

1. Verbindungsmittel für einen Bauspielsatz, aufweisend einen ersten Kupplungsteil (11) und einen zweiten Kupplungsteil (12), der zu dem ersten Kupplungsteil komplementär ausgebildet ist, wobei der erste und der zweite Kupplungsteil an einem entsprechenden Teil eines Paares aus Bauspielsatzelementen ausgebildet ist, die miteinander zu verbinden sind, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Kupplungsteile so ausgebildet sind, um die Elemente durch elastische Bewegung zwischen einer Spannungssituation von wenigstens einem der beiden Kupplungsteile (11, 12, 13), in welcher der



- erste Kupplungsteil (11) in Teile (20) des zweiten Kupplungsteils (12 und 13) eingesetzt werden kann, und einer entspannten Situation des einen der Kupplungsteile, in welcher der zweite Kupplungsteil (12, 13) in den Teilen (20) des ersten Kupplungsteiles gehalten ist, und daß die Verbindungseinrichtung weiterhin eine Klemmeinrichtung (16) aufweist, die zwischen einer Freigabeposition (16a), in welcher elastische Bewegung des einen der beiden Kupplungsteile zwischen der Spannungs- und der entspannten Situation möglich ist, und einer Verriegelungsposition (16b), in welcher die Klemmeinrichtung die elastische Bewegung des einen der beiden Kupplungsteile verhindert.
2. Mittel nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der erste Kupplungsteil klauenförmig ausgestaltet und geeignet ausgebildet ist, um einen Abschnitt aufzunehmen, der dem zweiten Kupplungsteil bei wechselweiser Bewegung der Kupplungsteile quer zur Längsrichtung der Buchse zugeordnet ist.
 3. Mittel nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die elastische Bewegung durch einen Kragen an dem ersten Kupplungsteil und einem entsprechenden Ausschnitt an dem zweiten Kupplungsteil geschaffen wird.
 4. Mittel nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die elastische Bewegung durch einen Kragen an dem zweiten Kupplungsteil und einen entsprechenden Ausschnitt an dem ersten Kupplungsteil geschaffen wird.
 5. Mittel nach den Ansprüchen 1-4, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Klemmeinrichtung fest montiert ist.
 6. Mittel nach den Ansprüchen 1 bis 5, wobei lediglich der zweite Kupplungsteil elastisch bewegbar ist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Klemmeinrichtung mit der Buchse einstückig ausgebildet ist und dazu dient, wenn sie betätigt ist, die elastische Bewegung des Kupplungsteils zu begrenzen.
 7. Mittel nach den Ansprüchen 1-6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Klemmeinrichtung mit Gewindegängen großer Steigung ausgebildet ist und daß sie eine LÖseeinrichtung in nicht aufgeschraubtem Zustand aufweist.
 8. Vorrichtung nach den Ansprüchen 1-7, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Klemmeinrichtung eine an und für sich bekannte Schraube mit Gewindegängen aufweist und daß eine LÖseeinrichtung vorgesehen ist, wobei die LÖseeinrichtung arbeitsmäßig mit den Gewindegängen durch Festziehen der Schraube verbunden ist und ein angelegtes Anzugsmoment auskuppelt, wenn das Drehmoment eine vorbestimmte Größe überschreitet.
 9. Vorrichtung nach Anspruch 8, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die LÖseeinrichtung in der Schraube integriert ist.
 10. Mittel nach den Ansprüchen 1-9, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Klemmeinrichtung eine an und für sich bekannte Schraube mit Gewindegängen aufweist, wobei die Schraube mit einer Schnappverriegelung so ausgebildet ist, daß im nicht eingeschaubten Zustand die Schraube im Bauelement in axialer Richtung festgelegt ist.
 11. Mittel nach den Ansprüchen 1-10, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Kupplungsteile wechselseitig zusammenarbeitende Vorsprünge und Ausnehmungen an den entsprechenden Teilen aufweisen.
 12. Mittel nach Anspruch 11, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Vorsprünge als nachgiebige Zungen ausgebildet sind.
 13. Mittel nach Anspruch 12, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die nachgiebigen Zungen in einem separaten Teil zur Montage in dem einen Kupplungsteil ausgebildet sind.
 14. Mittel nach Anspruch 13, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der separate Teil außerdem Gewindegänge für die Klemmeinrichtung aufweist.

Revendications

1. Moyen d'assemblage pour jeu de construction modulaire, comportant une première partie de liaison (11) et une seconde partie de liaison (12, 13) complémentaire de ladite première partie de liaison, lesdites première et seconde parties de liaison étant agencées sur un élément respectif d'une paire d'éléments d'un jeu de construction qui doivent être assemblés, caractérisé en ce que les parties de liaison sont adaptées pour relier les éléments par déplacement élastique entre un état contraint d'au moins une desdites parties de liaison (11, 12, 13) dans lequel ladite première partie de liaison (11) peut être insérée à l'intérieur de tronçons (20) de ladite seconde partie de liaison (12, 13) et un état relâché d'une desdites



parties de liaison dans lequel ladite seconde partie de liaison (12, 13) sera retenue par lesdits tronçons (20) de ladite première partie de liaison, et en ce que lesdits moyens d'assemblage comportent en outre un dispositif de serrage (16) pouvant être déplacé entre une position relâchée (16a) dans laquelle le déplacement élastique d'une desdites parties de liaison entre lesdits états comprimé et relâché est possible et une position verrouillée (16b) dans laquelle ledit dispositif de serrage empêche ledit déplacement élastique d'une desdites parties de liaison.

2. Moyen selon la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que la première partie de liaison a une forme de griffe et est adaptée pour recevoir un tronçon associé à la seconde partie de liaison lors du déplacement mutuel des parties de liaison transversalement à la direction longitudinale de la douille.

3. Moyen selon les revendications 1 ou 2, caractérisé en ce que le mouvement élastique est fourni par un collier situé sur la première partie de liaison et une découpe correspondante située sur la seconde partie de liaison.

4. Moyen selon la revendication 1 ou 2 caractérisé en ce que le mouvement élastique est fourni par un collier situé sur la seconde partie de liaison et une découpe correspondante située sur la première partie de liaison.

5. Moyen selon les revendications 1 à 4 caractérisé en ce que le dispositif de serrage est monté de manière ferme.

6. Moyen selon les revendications 1 à 5, dans lequel uniquement la seconde partie de liaison peut avoir un mouvement élastique, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif de serrage est venu de matière avec la douille et sert, lorsqu'il est actionné, à limiter le déplacement élastique de la partie de liaison.

7. Moyen selon les revendications 1 à 6, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif de serrage est muni de filets ayant un grand pas, et en ce qu'il comporte un dispositif de libération à l'état dévissé.

8. Dispositif selon les revendications 1 à 7, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif de serrage comporte une vis connue en soit munie de filets, et en ce qu'un dispositif de libération est prévu, ledit dispositif de libération étant relié de manière opérationnelle au filet par serrage de la

vis et libérant un couple de serrage appliqué lorsque ledit couple dépasse une valeur prédéterminée.

9. Moyen selon la revendication 8, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif de libération est intégré à la vis.

10. Moyen selon les revendications 1 à 9, caractérisé en ce que le dispositif de serrage comporte une vis connue en soit munie de filets, ladite vis étant munie d'un verrou à cran de telle sorte qu'à l'état dévissé elle soit fixée dans l'élément de construction dans une direction axiale.

11. Moyen selon les revendications 1 à 10, caractérisé en ce que les parties de liaison ont des saillies et des cavités complémentaires mutuelles situées sur l'une des parties respectives.

12. Moyen selon la revendication 11, caractérisé en ce que les saillies sont formées sous forme de languettes élastiques.

13. Moyen selon la revendication 12, caractérisé en ce que les languettes élastiques sont formées dans une partie séparée destinée à être montée dans une partie de liaison.

14. Moyen selon la revendication 13, caractérisé en ce que la partie séparée comporte aussi des filets pour le dispositif de serrage.