Expédition aux Terres Australes

A Web-based Online Role-play Simulation: the enhancement of language acquisition through social interaction

by

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A report of an investigation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Education at Murdoch University
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content, work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.

Andrée Vanda Barbara Hartley

Signed: ______________________

Date: 12th November, 2004
ABSTRACT

This research project investigates to what extent a social constructivist approach to teaching and learning online can enhance the use of language acquisition for learners of foreign languages. I designed an online role-play simulation in which the students sailed on the expedition of Nicolas Baudin to Australia and took different authentic roles on a simulated voyage. All communication was conducted in the French language, thus enabling the students to interact in realistic conversations, relevant to this historic event. Being in a third year TAFE French class, the students had already been exposed to sound grounding in grammar, relevant vocabulary, and use of colloquial and idiomatic expressions, and thus they had acquired a reasonably high level of proficiency in the language.

The study was conducted over a four-week period in which I examined the intense interaction between the participants, while fulfilling the role of facilitator/moderator. In this role, I gave clear guidelines as to what was expected from the participants; provided the students with their identity which was unknown to the other participants during the simulation; created incidents through a weekly “Course of Events” announcement; answered all questions within 12 – 24 hours; encouraged engagement within the learning community; made occasional suggestions if the characters seemed uncertain of what to do next; and, above all, endeavoured to create a non-threatening, friendly online environment for the students.

After the four-week online role-play simulation, the participants met for a debriefing session in which they revealed their identities and discussed any issues, in particular technical issues, that had emerged. This provided an opportunity for the participants to disengage from the virtual world in which they have been immersed for four weeks as well as an opportunity to reflect upon their personal learning.

A qualitative methodology, drawing on interpretive research, was employed to analyse the data. Student pre- and post-questionnaires, online contributions by the students and the debriefing discussion were used as the major sources of data collection.

Most of the students took up the challenge of interacting online through asynchronous and synchronous communication. The study focused on how the use of a social constructivist epistemology could enhance language acquisition for learners of foreign languages and also analysed to what extent did the students’ participation in a web-based online role-play simulation affect their communication skills and fluency in the second language.

The findings provided me with guidance for future implementation of online role-play simulations in which I would ensure that all students have the basic computer skills and necessary access to internet in order to participate fully in the simulation. Nevertheless, this study demonstrated many benefits to the language enhancement of the participants and will become a regular activity as it permits students to use their conversational skills in a “real-life” virtual learning community.
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This project would not have been possible without my digital interpreter, Victoria Alonso, who guided this digital immigrant through the online minefield of possibilities until the seed of Baudin’s online role-play simulation was born, and then stayed on board until the end of the voyage. My gratitude also goes to Albi Clough, Wen Tsai Lim and Louise Schofield.

The attractive WebCT site was set up by James Taylor and Mary Aquino of the Academic Support Group at Central TAFE in Perth, Western Australia. A special thanks to the students who enthusiastically participated and contributed to the success of the research.

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CHAPTER 1: RELIVING HISTORY THROUGH E-LEARNING

Teaching today has become more flexible, varied, collaborative and negotiable than the former “tradition of ritualized classroom interaction controlled by the teacher” (Voigt, 1994, p. 294). Students’ expectations of learning have also changed in that no longer do they want to be spoon-fed with facts and figures but they want to explore and discover knowledge for themselves. In order for this to occur, teachers have become facilitators of learning and are adopting new technologies to stimulate their students’ learning.

To offer variety away from the normal face-to-face classroom situation, this research project focused on a web-based online role-play simulation, using the internet to access the site. The participants were given the opportunity to play out their characters’ roles online instead of within the classroom. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the benefits of learning through a constructivist pedagogy using online role-play simulation (RPS).

The project that I chose for my research study was a web-based, online role-play simulation for advanced students of French in the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector. I first saw such a role-play at a conference and, being intrigued by the degree of spontaneity and enthusiastic involvement of the participants in the chat room, I was curious to know how this could benefit students of the French language. Postings on the bulletin board were asynchronous, permitting the participants the opportunity to put a lot of thought into their contribution to the dialogue. One obvious advantage was that the role-play was conducted over a given period of time, with clear guidelines, and could only progress through the students’ active participation. It differed from simply reading information online in that the role and action of each character was developed by the individual participant, through interaction and collaboration with the others in the role-play.

Simulated situations and role-play are common activities in the foreign language classroom as they provide students with an opportunity to utilise their acquired
language more creatively and spontaneously (Carrier, 1987; Ur, 1987). Naturally, in
the classroom role-plays are conducted orally and synchronously but this was not
possible in the web-based role-play on Baudin’s voyage that was created on WebCT,
thus the characters had to interact by means of written communication. This had the
added advantage of giving the participants time to reflect upon what they were going
to say before posting their contributions onto the Discussion Board. It was solely
during the Chat sessions that they had the opportunity to communicate
synchronously.

There are often constraints such as funding, accessibility of the target group, agenda
of the institute where one carries out the study, and some trade-off with that institute,
to name a few. However, I was fortunate in that “Learnscope”, an arm of the
Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) (www.anta.gov.au), contributed
funding towards the technical support necessary in the establishment of the site. In
my position as a lecturer at Central TAFE, I received permission from my Program
Manager to conduct the study with my third year French students who are working
towards a Certificate IV of Applied Languages (© State of Queensland, 2001). This
certificate course forms part of the Vocational Education & Training (VET)
nationally accredited TAFE program that provides training in a workplace or
industry-based framework. The students come from all walks of life and many of
them attend classes in between travelling around the world on business so the ability
to participate in some online activity offered them greater involvement with their
peers during the six-week duration of involvement in the role-play preliminaries, the
role-play simulation and the debriefing.

EXPÉDITION AUX TERRES AUSTRALES

Nicolas Baudin’s voyage was chosen as the subject for the role-play simulation
primarily as it was a historic event that linked France with Western Australia. There
was enough discord between the most notable figures on the real expedition to
provide an interesting scenario. Baudin was responsible for mapping much of the
Western Australian coastline and the Swan River up to the Swan Valley, having sent
Heirisson to map the latter (“Our French Connections”, 1985). Until recently, little
has been publicised about Baudin as he died before the ship’s return to France and, in an effort to claim glory for themselves, some of the scientists and artists discredited his name, upon their return to France.

The expedition which was sponsored by France’s First Consul, Napoléon Bonaparte, left the port of Le Havre in northern France in October 1800. The findings of the expedition were significant in its scientific endeavours, bringing back live creatures for Josephine Bonaparte’s zoological gardens at the Chateau of Malmaison, as well as almost 300 live plants. Over 200 000 specimens were brought back to France on two ships, the Géographe and the Naturaliste. Of these more than 2500 of the preserved zoological specimens were declared to be ‘completely new to Science’ (Toft, 2002, p. 278).

It was left to the zoologist, François Péron, with the assistance of de Freycinet, to write an account of the expedition. This he did in a publication called “Voyages de Découvertes aux Terres Australes” (Journey of Discovery to Terra Australis) (Horner, 1987, p. 439) with barely a mention of Baudin. The few remarks made about the “Commandant” (Péron did not mention the commander of the expedition by name) were of a negative nature. It was stated at the time that, had Nicolas Baudin survived the voyage, he would have been tried for treason upon his return to France.

Matthew Flinders, an English explorer of the day, was outraged by Péron’s account as, despite glossing over much of the outstanding mapping of Australia’s coastline carried by Baudin’s cartographer on Baudin’s orders, Péron did claim some parts of the coastline which Flinders had been the first to map. Baudin had conceded this when he and Flinders met in Baie des Rencontres (‘Encounter Bay’, off South Australia) (Horner, 1987). However, in 1807 when this account of the expedition was published, Flinders could do nothing as he was languishing in a French goal in Île de France as a political prisoner. It is largely through the journals of English explorers of the day who met Baudin that his name has now been restored. The

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1 At that time it was believed that Australia consisted of two large land masses with a passage from what is now the Northern Territory to St Vincent’s Gulf in South Australia – thus, Terres Australes is sometimes referred to in the plural rather than the singular form, Terra Australis.
French government has belatedly made amends by erecting statues of Nicolas Baudin, in honour of the bicentenary of the expedition, in the land where he is perhaps now best known – Australia.

Baudin’s original maps exist to this day and one can see where Péron crossed out names and replaced them with names that would gain him favour, particularly with Napoléon Bonaparte. It was the custom in that day for the Captain to name newly discovered areas after crew members or often political figures who may look favourably on future expeditions or ventures (Bloomfield and Barnes, 1995). It is interesting to note that in the Shire of Shark Bay in Western Australia, there is a miniscule dot on the map called “Baudin Island” which is a stark contrast to a large national park on the largest peninsula named after François Péron (see Appendix 1).

This story had enough intrigue and tension between the characters to make a great nineteenth century play and thus provide the basis for lively interaction between the participants of the role-play simulation implemented and discussed in this study. It gave the students the framework within which to develop their French language and communication skills through reflective, asynchronous and synchronous interaction.

THE AIM OF THE ROLE-PLAY SIMULATION

The aim of the online role-play simulation was to provide advanced students of French with a simulation of a historic event, in which they could recreate a character with total anonymity and interact with the other characters by communicating online. The important factors were interaction and communication rather than accuracy of language structure and orthography. Nicolas Baudin’s *Voyage to Terres Australes* gave the students a setting but the historical events did not have to be accurate and, in fact, they were free to re-write history if they so wished. All the instructions and communication were conducted in the French language thus encouraging a building of knowledge through their collective prior knowledge of the language, culture and historical facts.

The aim of the online role-play simulation was to provide these students with a means of expressing themselves in a conversational style which encouraged them to
utilise the French that they had learnt in a more realistic and creative manner. As the Baudin Voyage is set on a ship two hundred years ago, the participants also learnt about French naval customs and protocol as well as historical, cultural aspects of French life at that time.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to investigate the effects of introducing e-learning into the VET French language course in order to enhance fluency by using a social constructivist approach in which interaction and collaboration provided the platform for increased knowledge and usage of the foreign language. An analysis of the individual student’s computing skills in relation to the resultant findings were also taken into consideration and an assessment of the value of utilising online role-play simulations as a vehicle for the construction of knowledge was also conducted.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It is important to select an “appropriate unit of analysis” that will lead to the formation of some useful conclusions (Patton, 1990, p.168). Patton stresses the importance of keeping in mind what one wants to demonstrate in the findings of the study. In order to ascertain the usefulness of online role-play simulation in enriching foreign language learning, the following questions were formulated:

*How can the use of a social constructivist epistemology enhance language acquisition for learners of foreign languages?*

*To what extent does participation in a web-based online role-play simulation affect communication skills and fluency in learning a foreign language?*

The answers to these questions will be useful in implementing change and improving subsequent online programs for language students in the future.

To date, WebCT (Web Computing Tools) had only been used in the LOTE (Languages Other Than English) classes at Central TAFE to deliver workplace
communication skills, such as creating a website, within the VET Diploma of Applied Languages course.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This online role-play simulation was conducted within a social constructivist framework which was learner-centred, thus providing the participants with the scope to build their own knowledge through interaction with their peers, the facilitator and the context of the Baudin voyage. They were encouraged to be creative, inventive and, most of all, collaborative. Language usage and fluency were enhanced through active dialogue as the participants could not predict what the respondents would contribute and had to adapt their own contributions in order to maintain the flow of conversation or to clarify what they meant to say if this was not understood. The learning was shared and built upon within the group.

Von Glaserfeld (1993, p. 24) maintains that “social interaction is a powerful influence in the construction of knowledge”. In order for interaction to occur, there must be a thread of continuity in the discussion where the students answer each other, thus furthering the dialogue and creating interdependence amongst the participants ((Hathorn and Ingram, 2002). As the participants became more adept at interacting, they could use their skills to argue and negotiate, thus utilising the online spaces – ‘Discussion’, ‘Email’ and ‘Chat’ – on the site, to “bring the discourse quality to a high level” (Oubenaissa, Giardina and Bhattacharya, 2002. p. 44).

The role-play simulation was process-related rather than content-related as the aim of the activity was to improve the students’ language fluency and the outcome of the ‘voyage’ itself was not paramount to the desired outcome (Hathorn and Ingram, 2002). The process took a social constructivist approach and its effectiveness was assessed in this study through summative evaluation with a view to implementing similar role-play simulations in other foreign languages (Patton, 1990). In fact, the process has since been reviewed and improved through formative evaluation for a role-play simulation dealing with politics and conducted in a different foreign language.
METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodology

This study used a qualitative research approach and triangulation in order to answer the research questions. In particular, I observed the participants in the programme in order to produce data that highlighted the variables instrumental in promoting and encouraging interaction in the role-play. The triangulation involved questionnaires, the participants’ personal reflective journal and their input at the final debriefing as well as consultation with the academic support staff.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was conducted by means of a pre- and post role-play questionnaire, observation by the facilitator/moderator and technicians, and reflections of the students and facilitator throughout the duration of the role-play and the final debrief session.

Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were administered, one preceding the role-play and one after the role-play and prior to the final de-briefing. The purpose of the pre-questionnaire was to provide information about the demographics of the participants, their computer literacy skills and their attitudes towards participation in role-plays. The post-questionnaire aimed to provide information in relation to the participants’ own learning and the effect on their fluency and command of the French language as well as their feelings about the various aspects of the activity; their interaction with the other characters, the content, technology, and interaction with the moderator.

Weekly Journal

The participants were asked to submit their weekly reflective journal on what they felt their character had contributed to the role-play, how their participation enhanced their use of French language, what new learning had occurred (whether it be in
regard to French or computing), and an overall reflection on the process in that week.

Observation

The observation of social interactions took place online. As the facilitator/moderator, I was constantly observing what interactions took place between the various characters of the role-play and noting whether their action was collaborative in advancing the storyline. In order to keep a record of the students’ interactions, I downloaded their messages on to Microsoft Notebook, which is linked to WebCT. This information was used to review and analyse what interaction and collaboration had taken place.

Intervention

I view my role in the classroom as that of a facilitator of learning who guides the students through ‘cooperative processes’ (Hunter, Bailey and Taylor, 1994, p.8), while during the four-week online role-play I took on the role of moderator who is present to ‘help, suggest, and resolve technical problems’ (First Fleet website). As the moderator, I observed the interaction and communication that took place. If a problem arose or if the ‘action’ seemed to be going nowhere, then I was able to introduce a new incident that the characters were required to deal with. I also had the power to veto an action by a character that would have been inappropriate or harmful to another had the occasion arisen.

Debriefing

This took place after the conclusion of the simulation, giving the participants the opportunity to discuss openly how they felt about the role-play, their own role, the role of others and the events. At this point, the identity of the characters was revealed. The debriefing session, which was conducted mainly in English due to the presence of a member of the Academic Support Staff, provided an opportunity for the participants to review their learning and relate the feelings that they had during
the course of the role-play. It offered a sense of closure to the process which had demanded so much of their energy in the previous six weeks.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected was largely in the form of notes from observations, information from the questionnaires and transcripts from discussions in the role-play and the debriefing session. They were arranged chronologically within the patterns of behaviour that emerged. In this qualitative study, I made a series of judgements on the findings which I endeavoured to analyse through an interpretive approach.

Data triangulation was used in the analysis to minimise the occurrence of error in the evaluation of the process and the learning that took place during the role-play and also to increase validity. Observation of participant interaction and collaboration, data from the questionnaires and reflections of the students as well as their comments during the debriefing were rich sources of relevant information and the validity of the findings of each of these could be cross-referenced against the other methods employed. The technicians who set up the site for the role-play were interested in observing the process and gave their feedback on the project.

**OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

The introduction giving the background of the project is provided in this chapter. A literature review of work in the field of online, social constructivism, role-play simulation and foreign language learning is to be found in chapter two. Chapter three is concerned with the methodology that forms the theoretical basis for data collection and the interpretive research approach of the study. In chapter three, I also examined the input from the participants and the research design itself. The research content, how the role-play unfolded and the participants’ reaction in this innovative task are discussed in chapter four. The findings are discussed in chapter five through analysis and evaluation of the data gathered. In chapter six I discuss the research questions in view of the findings of the study. I will also provide an
overview of the whole process with its limitations and the significance it can have for future web-based online role-play simulations.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The nature of the study was outlined to all the participants and the Centre for Languages Program Manager prior to the commencement of the research project. The Program Manager gave her consent to the study being undertaken within the Centre for Languages at Central TAFE. The participants also signed a consent form indicating their willingness to participate. The consent forms for the College and Students guarantee the confidentiality of information gathered and the students’ anonymity, their right to view the findings as well as their right to withdraw from the study and any further involvement if they should so wish (see Appendices 2 & 3).
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW


The wise man is not he who provides the real answers; but he who asks the real questions, stated Claude Lévi-Strauss in true Socratic fashion, where questioning is instrumental in the construction of knowledge (Lévi-Strauss, quoted in Bérard et al, 1997, p.210).

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Social constructivism is a pedagogy in which the learner creates knowledge through social interaction (Breen and Littlejohn, 2000). The social constructivist approach to learning suggests that knowledge is constructed by the learners through social interaction (Hoover, 2003; Palloff and Pratt, 1999, von Glaserfeld, 1993). Hiltz (1998, para. 12) stresses that the learning that takes place through collaboration is more than active, it is ‘interactive”. Each member of the interactive group brings his/her own prior knowledge and experience to the community, thus enriching it and benefiting the other members.

The teacher’s role is not that of provider of knowledge but facilitator in the constructive process. Vygotsky (1978, pp. 121-2) viewed the acquisition of knowledge as being greatly influenced by the learning process itself. Development, according to Vygotsky, was not merely a collection of units of knowledge but a complex dialectical process, characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of one form into another, intertwining of external and internal factors, and adaptive processes.

In other words, Vygotsky (1978, p. 126) believed that development in humans is affected by reflection and the elaboration of their personal experiences, which he called the ‘social human process’. Adults bring a wealth of prior experience and prior knowledge to any situation and this influences how they relate to new information or actions. This constructivist theory does not conform to Piaget’s traditional cognitive theory (Vygotsky, 1978, p.124) where knowledge is learned and
stored in the brain without modification. Vygotsky (1978, pp. 40 & 56) theorised that the stimulus was processed through a ‘mediated activity’ or ‘tool’ by the brain before a reaction occurred.

Successful learning can be enhanced through teacher mediation which helps the students to join new information to their prior experiences and create new knowledge which can then be transposed to other areas of learning (Tinzmann, Jones, Fennimore, Bakker, Fine and Pierce 1990). The teacher’s role as mediator is to adjust the amount of information and support given to the students in order to provide them with an environment where they are responsible for their own learning.

An effective learning environment, according to Agostinho, Lefoe and Hedberg, (1997, para. 11), will provide:

\[ \text{opportunities to foster personal construction of knowledge by setting an appropriate context for the learning; and facilitating collaboration amongst learners, through the use of conversation.} \]

Thus, social constructivism does not rely on behaviours or learned skills as a basis for knowledge, but rather promotes learning as a process for building ‘meaningful representations’ of one’s world (Murphy, 1997c, para.11). Students are encouraged to create an understanding of representations and realities through authentic, real-world, problem-solving means. Murphy reminds us that, over 2400 years ago, Socrates’ approach to teaching philosophy was to steer his students through a series of questions until they formed a hypothesis. As he presented no facts, Socrates assumed that the students must have had the knowledge all along, however, it does illustrate that knowledge was constructed through his interaction with the students (Murphy, 1997a). Just as Socrates’ students made sense of their world through dialogue and discourse, so does the modern day constructivist learner through “an intensely subjective, personal process and structure” that he continuously modifies (Abbott and Ryan, 1999, para. 8). Thus, the knowledge is never static but is always being reviewed and reconstructed as new information and experiences come to hand.

Knowledge as truth and reality is replaced by viability in radical constructivism (von Glasersfeld, 1993, p.25). Knowledge is created on an individual basis as each person comes to a situation with a different background, and even though new
knowledge can be formulated through interaction within a community, there may be differences in the learning of each member of the community. Von Glasersfeld (1993, p.33) often reiterates that “successful thinking rather than correct answers” becomes paramount in social constructivism.

An ideal constructivist learning environment provides learners with authentic, relevant, context-rich tasks in which the learner can build his/her own understanding through problem-solving (Marra & Jonassen, 2001). The social world of the learner is not limited to his/her involvement within the classroom or online, but is affected by all the people with whom he/she comes into contact, thus expanding the effects of social collaboration (Dougiamas, 1998).

**SOCIAL INTERACTION AND COLLABORATION**

In order for social interaction and collaboration to take place, it is necessary to provide a space in which learners can “work in collaboration to solve and build new knowledge” (Oubenaissa, Giardina and Bhattacharya, 2002, p. 44). Maor and Hendriks (2001, p.6) highlight the importance of the facilitator’s creation of a ‘non-threatening and supportive’ environment in which an online community can flourish. Social exchange must be encouraged as an ‘ongoing and integral part of the learning process’ in order to create a feeling of inclusion in the online community (Maor and Hendriks, 2001, p.7). This is supported by social constructivism as an epistemology which promotes the development of understanding in learners through reflective collaboration (Maor, 2003). Construction of knowledge through ‘collective thinking’ and shared strategies of a heterogeneous group is significantly richer than that of segregated groups (i.e. groups of similar ability and knowledge base) where collaboration is weakened and classroom impoverished when students are not encouraged nor given the opportunities to learn from each other (Tinzmann et al, 1990).

In *Baudin’s Voyage*, the students were taken out of the classroom, metaphorically, to another environment (on board ship) in another time (200 years ago) where the only language used was French and workplace protocol and societal standing had to be adhered to by the characters. The action of the role-play could only advance through
the social interaction and collaboration of the participants. In this problem-based activity, the participants were able to influence the story-line in order to create a new social community through ‘negotiation, argumentation and restructuring’ (Oubenaissa et al, 2002, p. 42). The scenario was loosely outlined at the starting point and, even though the students were familiar with the historic facts, they had the ability to advance the play with realistic or imaginary events developed through interaction with other characters. Oubenaissa et al (2002) call this void which is to be filled by communication between the participants “learning spaces”. How these learning spaces are filled is influenced by what the participants bring to the process.

Master Yoshi, a 13th century monk, stated that a wheel is made up of twelve spokes but “it is the empty space between that makes them useful” (Linser, Ip and Jasinski, 2002, para. 1). A web-based online role-play simulation provides the participants with an outer shell and leaves the participants to fill in the empty spaces. In looking at the social dynamics that developed in the Baudin simulation, it was clearly evident which participants had, and those who did not have, a sound knowledge of the background of this period in history. Some were able to be inventive, even outrageous in the eyes of some participants, and yet, demonstrated an understanding of life in 1800. Regardless of how each participant chose to interact, the purpose was to improve his / her communication in French.

Curtis and Lawson (2001, para. 4) outline the benefits of collaborative learning but also remind us that in online learning “there is an absence of non-verbal cues, and text-on-screen is a very limited mode for what should be semantically rich exchanges”. They suggest “symposia, debates, role plays, case studies, discussion groups, brainstorming, and project groups” for more effective student-student interaction. Gold (2001) suggests that these forms promote a less content-oriented and more learner-centred learning environment. Communication and collaboration are vital in creating an information-object rich and socially meaningful forum for learning. Gold (2001) also points out in the same article that:

Knowledge is not separate from but rather embedded within experiences and interpreted by the learner. Knowledge then is about interpretation, and making meaning of the environment (Gold, 2001, para. 16).
This can be achieved through collaborative learning where the students build knowledge through interaction and dialogue (Breen and Littlejohn, 2000; Hiltz, 1998). Obviously discussion is more prolific when the context of the activity or simulation is challenging, engaging and authentic to the students themselves. For this reason, Baudin’s voyage was an obvious choice for the simulation as, not only did it reveal a lot about French culture which is presumably of interest to students of the French language, but, in addition to this, the voyage explained the occurrence of so many French names along the Australian coastline. The majority of the students were ignorant of the facts and were fascinated to learn more about the history of their own country through this role-play simulation. Many of them conducted extensive research into the topic and wove the information that they had gleaned into their conversations.

Naturally, to participate online, the students needed to have special skills required to facilitate online interaction. Tinzmann et al (1990, para. 2), suggest that successful learners (in any mode), need to be ‘knowledgeable, self-determined, strategic, and empathetic’ thinkers. Furthermore, students will learn more through involvement in authentic tasks where new information can be linked to prior knowledge, through effective interaction and collaboration among students and facilitators (Breen and Littlejohn, 2000; Bonk & Cunningham, 1998; Tinzmann et al, 1990). Keefe (2003), on the other hand, reminds us that interaction is a more important aspect of learning than technology that can take away the human contact. He feels that face-to-face interaction is superior to online simulation where ‘sophisticated technical support’ is essential, particularly for students who do not have the skills necessary to participate on the level that they would wish (Keefe, 2003, p.29).

ONLINE LEARNING

I wanted the students to become more at ease and more spontaneous at communicating in French, therefore I examined different strategies for teaching online. The ‘integrated’ or ‘blended learning’ approach is often cited in educational circles at the present time. One model of blended learning is described by Valiathan (2002, p.1) as “attitude-driven learning which mixes various events and delivery modes to develop specific behaviours”. One possible approach was online role-play.
In a web-based role-play simulation the content encourages the participants to develop attitudes through peer interaction in a non-threatening environment.

Literature on online activities, such as role-play in education, suggests that it is a more realistic method of conducting online teaching. Role-plays provide the participants with more flexible and interactive communication than other forms of online learning, such as quizzes where the learner only interacts with the computer or even online discussions where participants are restricted by the topic and, whilst they can express an opinion, they cannot be creative and nor control the direction of the conversation or action. Palloff and Pratt (2001, p. 47) stress the importance of online courses being “learner-focused”. They also point out that learners need to be “active, creative and engaged in the learning process” (Palloff and Pratt, 2001, p.107).

It is important to outline the differences in computer-based training (CBT) to web-based training (WBT). CBT has been used in a variety of ways for many years (Howard, 2002; Mosher, 2003). It is economical and portable as it can be loaded on a CD-Rom for the student to access at a time convenient to him/her (Mosher, 2003). However, it does have its limitations in that the only interaction that takes place is between the student and the content. Self-marking quizzes, multiple-choice exercises and the like often form part of such courses but offer no ‘evaluative support’ (Marra and Jonassen, 2001, p. 304). Any interaction between the facilitator and the student would have to be conducted by other means, such as face to face or by telephone or email, which is not always satisfactory as delays can occur.

The linking capability of a website makes navigation a powerful feature of WBT (Ericksen, 2001). With the simple click of the mouse, the user may “jump” from the display to another document or image at the same site or another Web document on the Internet (Ericksen, 2001, p.46).

In WBT there is the advantage of flexibility, however, one must have access to Internet and be online in order to be able to participate. This means that there has to be quite a commitment on the part of WBT role-play students, particularly those who do not readily have Internet access.
Interaction and communication in education occur between student-teacher, student-student, student-content and teacher-content (Anderson, 2002). In WBT, there is the added dimension of content-content interaction as technology and subject matter are integrated. The subject-matter is being explored in another medium and while the students are learning about Baudin’s voyage, they are also improving their technological skills.

Figure 1 represented by Anderson and Garrison (cited in Anderson, 2002), illustrates the relationships that occur during interaction in a course delivered by distance mode. Initial interaction is between teacher/student, student/content and teacher/content but in online delivery can progress to student/student, content/content and teacher/teacher interaction. The last of these occurs when teachers collaborate with staff from the language area, technical advisory staff or co-moderate with another staff member. However, Anderson (2002) does not propound a theory for measuring the amount of interaction between the various elements.

Figure 1: Modes of Interaction in Distance Education from Anderson and Garrison.
From many years of polling students about distance education, Anderson (2002, para. 9) has coined what he calls “an equivalency theorem of interaction”. He propounds that deep and meaningful learning will occur if there is a high level of interaction in one of the forms mentioned (student-teacher, student-student, student-content). If the student interacts with two or all three of these modes, then his learning will be even more profound.

“Asynchronous Learning Networks” (ALN) offer a means for students to discuss and respond to each other rather than “simply representing one way transmission of ‘knowledge’” according to Hiltz (1998, para. 7). She states that “The most basic premise from which all online teaching should begin is that the goal is to build a learning community and to facilitate the exchange of ideas, information, and feelings among the members of the community” (Hiltz, 1998, para. 32). The lack of spontaneity is not seen as a disadvantage by Curtis and Lawson (2001) but rather as providing the participants with the possibility of more time for reflection before responding. Participants should produce more enriching exchanges as a result.

Online support for courses is becoming more prevalent and there is much more literature available on this topic today. Fairholme (2001) discusses the practicalities of project management, scheduling and time management as well as the importance of involving the participants in self-evaluation as a means of improving their skills in analysis. McEuen (2001, p. 8) reminds us that students may not be as computer-literate as one often assumes the younger generation to be and, while the course may focus on encouraging critical thinking, there should be provision for improving their computing capabilities which are “central to this entire [learning] process in today’s world”.

As more and more courses are being offered in online mode, we as educators need to look critically at their effectiveness in providing a suitable learning environment. Bellgard, Murphy and Smith (2001), in outlining some of the advantages and disadvantages of acquiring knowledge through e-learning, state that online interaction can lead to higher participation rates due to greater equity between learners, while stressing that prior training should be provided for the participants. Alexiades and Gipson (2001, para p4) point out that the students can be taken to
‘where the learning is’ through the Internet and so the ‘classroom follows learning’. However, while many educators, including Alexiades and Gipson, stress that learning should take place in an authentic environment rather than on the Web, this is not possible for students learning a foreign language in Australia. In fact, taking part in a web-based online simulation seems to be a natural progression from in-class face-to-face role-plays where the students are often hesitant and awkward in front of their peers due to performance anxiety. Assuming a character with anonymity affords the students a freedom to express themselves, albeit in writing, as they never had prior to this experience.

Role-play simulation

The terms role-play and simulation have been used interchangeably in this dissertation as the participants were taking ‘roles’. However, a ‘role-play’ tends to be more structured, with clear guidelines of what is to be said, than a ‘simulation’ where the background and environment in which the participant must perform a task are reproduced to create a sense of authenticity (Sturtridge, 1981). The participants have more freedom to be innovative in their performance in a simulation and whilst they were playing ‘roles’ they had considerable control over the direction of the storyline.

According to Vygotsky (1978), learners in a social constructivist environment create knowledge and meaning through communication and dialogue which permits them to structure and restructure information and thus make sense of it. Role-play simulation provides the learners with a situation in which to form a social community in which dialogue, collaboration and cooperation form part of the learning process (Duffy and Cunningham, 1996). Duffy and Cunningham (1996, p.181) propound that knowledge and thus learning, through a “social, communicative and discursive process” is conceived in talk.

Role-play in the classroom is limited by time and is generally acted out during one class. The usual scenario for role-play is that students form small groups of three or four students and then take turns in presenting their role-play to the rest of the class in the space of about five minutes. While this is stimulating and permits students to
display their language ability, it is still limiting. One advantage of a web-based online role-play is that it can be carried out over an extended period – four weeks, in the case of the Baudin role-play – thus giving the participants an opportunity to expand their character and improve their communication skills through active engagement. The Baudin role-play was learner-centred and relied on the participants to develop the content in order to solve the problems with which they were presented. For the role-play to be effective, learners should be involved in ‘multiple problem-solving/critical thinking skills’ (Hanna, Glowacki-Dudka and Conceiçao-Runlee, 2000, p. 60).

Given the short span of time required for a classroom role-play, it is possible for students to commit their dialogue to their short-term memory, thereby taking a surface approach which may be adequate to pass the assessment task at hand. The advantage of undertaking an online role-play is that the learner interacts with the content over an extended period of time. The deep approach which may be adopted as a result of this prolonged interaction, is characterised by a desire to understand the dialogue more comprehensively, “theorising about the task, forming hypotheses about what might happen” thus giving it personal meaning (Biggs and Telfer, 1987, p. 149). The students had a longer time to think about their dialogue and commit the new knowledge to their long-term memory.

Acting in front of the class is daunting for all but the most confident of students and so performing online with a hidden identity allows the student a chance to be bolder, more innovative or even to create an alter-ego, so different from his/her own personality. In the Baudin role-play, each student was given a character and some details of his position and personality as well as a loose storyline but he/she had to compose and communicate his/her own dialogue in order to advance the action.

The written language was traditionally thought of as being a more permanent representation of communication and used primarily for writing cards, letters, reports, books and so on; while speech was for the present, for synchronous communication (Emmitt, Pollock and Komesaroff, 2003). Electronic communication has changed that concept as more and more people type out emails,
order goods over the Internet, and even ‘chat’ in Chat Rooms by means of the written word.

Both oral and online, thus written, role-plays improve the student’s communication skills through practical simulation and expose him/her to new vocabulary, language and cultural protocol. Clark (1980) also points out that role-play can also alert the teacher/facilitator where any gaps in the individual student’s learning have occurred. The advantage of this socioconstructivist approach is that the students will increase their learning through interaction with their peers. However, Howard (2002, p. 346) warns us that “successful transfer is not guaranteed”. The individual’s personal desire to construct knowledge will determine how much learning he will do within the knowledge-building community.

The role of the teacher/facilitator also changes to that of ‘moderator’ in a web-based online role-play simulation. Collison, Elbaum, Haavind and Tinker (2000, p.12), say that moderation is a craft that one can learn. Moderators are in place to watch over the interaction of the participants, perhaps prompt a character with a gentle question to get him/her back on track, to ensure that the community remains engaged, to answer questions as they arise, and to assist learners “as their own thinking evolves” (Collison et al, 2000, p.13).

In the case of an online role-play simulation such as Baudin, the moderator may have to introduce a new scenario for the characters to deal with should the ship become becalmed and the participants inactive. Alternatively, the moderator may also play the part of one of the characters, all of whom are anonymous, in order to advance the play when a thread of discussion on the bulletin board does not produce an outcome which will permit the continuation of the story line (Collison et al, 2000, p. 188).

Within the role-play simulation there exists a social structure which is formed by the social standing of the characters within the community and the design of the simulation (Linzer et al, 2002, para. 15). The moderator does not form part of this social structure, but is present in the background to answer queries, discourage monopolisation of the discussion by the more dominant students, encourage
‘quieter’ characters to participate more, stir up action between some characters, and watch over the appropriateness of language and online behaviour.

In the Baudin role-play, the participants were given their ‘stage of play’ through Le Déroulement des Faits (‘Course of Events’) on a weekly basis and through their reflective and critical thinking, followed by online interaction, the storyline was created by the participants. In face-to-face role-plays, one does not have the luxury of reading messages, reflecting upon them and the issues, and formulating responses in ones’ own time (Salmon, 2001). Another advantage of the time-lag is that students were also able to check their French and enrich their language usage by looking up words in the dictionary or grammar details in their course textbook.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA) is a complex and diverse process for which there is neither uniform nor predictable methodology that works for all learners (Ellis, 1985). Individual students learn in different ways and Ellis (1985) suggests that the influence of personality and cognitive style are potentially of vital importance in SLA. Effective learning and construction of one’s own knowledge occur when motivation and self-esteem are present (Kalantzis, Cope, Noble, and Poynting, 1990).

Self-access activities such as multiple choice, cloze exercises, and crosswords, to name a few, are often used to supplement FLA in the classroom (Tomlinson, 1998). These are generally self-marking and test specific and narrow aspects of language rather than encouraging the learner to use his prior knowledge and experience as well as his “brain’s potential learning capacity” (Tomlinson, 1998, p.320). In order to enhance learning in the classroom, the teacher/facilitator may find it advantageous to encourage small group interaction on topics that are of interest to the students (Hudelson, 1994).

Much of the literature on language acquisition refers to SLA, however, in relation to these students I will refer primarily to FLA as, for 20% of this group, English is not
their first language and, therefore, French is not their second language. The initial stages of foreign language acquisition in the classroom are concerned with the transfer of knowledge whereby the students practise oracy through repetition and rehearsal. Nevertheless, from the very first class, students should be encouraged to utilise what they have learnt through interaction with their peers for this is how the first steps towards fluency will be taken. Course materials should be relevant to the interests of the learners and the “focus on learning…[should be]…through student directed and maintained tasks, cooperatively performed” (Rivers, 1992, p.8).

The *communicative* approach to foreign language learning encourages interaction and collaboration through which the student will not only have to reproduce the words and ideas that s/he wishes to convey but also to comprehend what others are saying. Each student imparts his/her own previous learning and through interaction with others synthesises new knowledge as a result of the experience (Abbott and Ryan, 1999). Problem-solving is a useful, thought-provoking tool in the social constructivist pedagogy that encourages language acquisition (Ur, 1987).

Krashen, on the other hand, argued that acquisition only occurs subconsciously when, for example, children are becoming proficient in their mother tongue (Morgan, 2001). He stated that a foreign language is “learned” rather than “acquired” through conscious input of the data and structure of the new language. In making this claim, Krashen also underlined the fact that *acquisition* is more enduring than *learning* as the processes involved in language acquisition are subconscious and embedded in life experiences (Harmer, 1991). In regard to communication, Krashen stated:

> Communicative ability is usually acquired quite rapidly: grammatical accuracy, on the other hand, increases only slowly and after much experience using the language. The mistake the innovators have made is to assume that a conscious understanding of grammar is a prerequisite to acquiring communicative competence. (1983, p.16)

Krashen and Terrell (1983) assert that with sufficient comprehensible input, fluency will occur in its own time. Problem-solving is a useful, thought-provoking tool in the social constructivist pedagogy that encourages language acquisition (Ur, 1987).
Conversational interaction, according to Lightbrown and Speda (1993), through pair and group work within the classroom can result in greater fluency and proficiency in conversing in the target language. While it is important to have a sound understanding of the rules of the language, that is the grammar, ‘meaningful, comprehensible input through listening and/or reading’ can provide the learner with these structures through their understanding of the meaning, as is in evidence in the extremely successful French immersion programs in Canada (Lightbrown and Speda, 1993, pp. 88-90). Thus, Lightbrown concludes that it is not necessary to memorise structure in order to learn it. Ellis (1985), on the other hand, does state that learners do require some formal input on the structure of the language that is relative to their stage of FLA. This input is sifted by the learner and related to his/her prior knowledge and experience and processed internally (Ellis, 1985, pp. 12-14). How these internal processes function is still unclear, however, incidental learning does not indicate that there is no ‘conscious attention’ to the linguistic features of the second language (Ellis, 1997, p. 55).

Cook (1991, p.127) tells us that FLA is enhanced through “communicative ‘natural’ activities”. An environment which permits the learner to use the language in a real-life simulation, rather than ‘learning about the language’ will reach a higher level of fluency and proficiency in the second language (Lightbrown, 1993, p. 70). Effective fluency is the result of correct structuring and restructuring of meaning and form of the language, resulting in the foreign language becoming ‘automatised’ as opposed to ‘fossilised’ where the learner has wrongly processed the language input and consistently repeats certain faults which he/she finds impossible to unlearn (Skehan, 1996, p. 49).

While cognitivists do propound that making errors in the second language forms a valuable part of the learning process and offers the teacher/facilitator some clues regarding the way in which the learner is dealing with the new concept or rule, as well as an opportunity to facilitate understanding in a different way, it is ultimately the learner who must construct the understanding and knowledge (Nunan, 1991, pp.233-4). Nunan (1991) encourages the facilitator to create a learning environment which is learner-centred and conducive to the student learning through his own endeavours.
The learner is not an empty vessel expecting to be filled with knowledge supplied by the teacher, but rather an ‘intelligent, problem-solving person with an existing communicative competence in a first, or perhaps second or third language’ (Holliday, 1994, p.166). Holliday suggests a culture-sensitive approach in which the students learn to communicate in authentic tasks that are relevant to all the participants. Language cannot be separated from its ‘social nature of language learning and the social context of language use’ any more than language can be devoid of culture (Liddicoat, 1996, p. 6).

The language teacher/facilitator needs to prepare even advanced students for role-play with linguistic information on vocabulary, verb forms and idiomatic expressions that will be useful in the simulation (Allen and Valette, 1977). Students will then have the language tools with which to negotiate and collectively make decisions as to how the role-play simulation will progress (Breen and Littlejohn, 2000). Breen and Littlejohn (2000, p.243) suggest that students will learn as much from the ‘process of negotiation’ as from the content. The guideline and rules of the online role-play should be “loose and free-flowing and generated predominately by the participants”, according to Palloff and Pratt (1999, p. 18). Paulston (1990, p. 289) reminds us that communicative competence is a concept founded in ‘social interaction’.

In learning a foreign language, Milner (1990, p. 141) urges us to above all “take pleasure in the language”. The ultimate aim of the Baudin role-play simulation is to give students an awareness of their personal level of fluency in the French language and a sense of achievement in their own ability to express themselves and enter into discourse freely. Their sense of achievement in successful participation in the learning process resulted in a heightened enjoyment of the language.

This literature review discussed some of the current philosophies in respect to social constructivism, social interaction and collaboration within online communities, online learning, role-play simulation and foreign language acquisition. The next chapter, on the other hand, will outline how the content and methodology deployed in the Baudin website was created to provide a social constructivist environment for learning French.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY & CONTENT OF THE STUDY

The research study was underpinned by a constructivist epistemology where the individuals could build their learning through communicative, social interaction and could share their knowledge and prior experience. The focus of the study was on the process of learning through collaboration in the online community rather than the content or subject matter (Breen and Littlejohn, 2000).

Creative thinking as a means of going ‘beyond accepted knowledge to generate new knowledge’ was encouraged by the structure of the role-play and the way it was implemented (Jonassen, 1996, p.31). The students drew upon their personal skills and ability to communicate in French in order to advance the storyline of the role-play through imagination and elaboration from a very minimal description in the Déroulement des Faits (‘course of events’) of the point at which the voyage was. This could only happen through discourse with other characters as all the interaction took place online and in written form (see Appendix 4).

The loose storyline of Baudin’s voyage, was to be expanded through peer dialogue in which the characters proposed, ‘responded to ideas’ and furthered the online activity through continued discussion (Hanna, et al, 2000, p. 14). Whilst the ‘déroulement des faits’ was planned prior to the creation of the role-play, it was envisaged that not all aspects would be introduced and those that were would be dependant on the progress of the participants.

According to Patton (1990, p.186), the design of the study “should be flexible and emergent”. However, precise details of the size, time frame and rationale for these were clearly stated at the start of the project, even though some aspects changed as the study progressed. Size was initially envisaged as being seven or eight participants in each of the two role-plays – this allowed for the whole class to participate, including those mailpals, who were paired up with a partner with good computer skills, as they themselves are not computer-literate. The two mailpals discussed what to contribute to the dialogue and then the designated computer-literate partner posted the messages.
The study took place over 6 weeks, with four of those concentrating on the actual role-play simulation. In the first week the participants bid for their parts and learnt the ‘rules’ of the simulation. Each participant’s role was unknown to the others and kept confidential throughout the simulation. Once a student had been given a role, he was given details of his character and was required to post up an autobiographical introduction to the group. Then each week the participating characters were presented with a new event or problem that they had to work through. Events such as coping with disease, tensions of living at such close quarters, intrigues introduced by the moderator, power struggles and even a mutiny were considered had time permitted. There was flexibility in the storyline as the participants influenced the direction of the role-play and the moderator decided on the timing and types of interventions to introduce. Within a week the two groups were in different seas, heading in different directions!

In the sixth week, there was a debriefing session in which the students were encouraged to evaluate themselves as well as comment on how they felt about the simulation, their interaction with the other characters, the outcomes of the role-play simulation, and so on. This session was held in a face-to-face situation with the moderator, and the academic support officer.

In an online role-play such as Baudin’s voyage, the facilitator assumes the role of moderator, which has also been described as incorporating a ‘coaching’ role in which the moderator observes and ‘diagnoses how students are thinking’ in order to be able to guide them through difficulties in misconceptions or misunderstandings so as to achieve a successful, meaningful outcome (Jonassen, 1996, p. 262). The moderator is not part of the role-play but is ever present to give advice and encouragement and answer questions. In my role as moderator, I logged on to both sites (one for each group) two to three times a day so that I was able to answer any queries as quickly as possible.

Note ‘he’ will be used for all the characters as all, apart from one cat who chose to be female, were male.
There must be an opportunity for the students to become familiar with the technology and the site well before the start of the process. This was conducted two months before the role-play in three one-hour sessions in which our academic and technical support officer guided the students through a series of activities to instigate use of the site. The first exercise was called “Couper, afficher et attacher un fichier” (‘Cut, Paste and Post’, see Appendices 5 and 5a) in which the students had to use a search engine, copy the address of one that was of appeal to them, paste it into a message that they composed for the Discussion board and post it for all to read. This exercise was useful in giving us an indication not only of how computer literate each class member was – this ranged from not knowing how to turn the computer on to being highly skilled – but also of their interests.

Another exercise was called “Briser la glace” (‘Ice Breaker’ – see Appendices 6 and 6a) where the students again used a search engine, but this time had to post part of an article from the web-site and add their own commentary. In the final session, the students were introduced to the Chat Room which they really enjoyed.

After these training sessions, the academic officer awarded symbolic prizes to each participant so that, by the end of the three sessions, each participant had received a prize. The awards were for such accolades as being ‘the most philosophical’, ‘the most prolific online’, ‘the lurker’ and so on.

**COMPONENTS OF THE ROLE-PLAY**

This simulation was conducted exclusively in French and for that reason it was made part of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificate IV of Applied Languages (French) course. In designing an online web-based role-play simulation, there were many factors to be considered. The major ones were the storyline, the vehicle, the characters, the events, the participants, the site design, the role-play, the guidelines and the key elements of the role-play as discussed in the following section.
The storyline

At first, I had the idea of a single group of 16 people taking part in the simulation, but after consultation with experts in role-play simulation (Jasinski, 2002), I revised this to two groups of 8 – 9 people. Each week I researched details of the expedition, looking for incidents which would give impetus to the advancement of the simulation. Choosing the characters was easier than limiting the events or incidents that were to take place within four weeks of “play”. Even after plotting a reasonably simple sequence of events, a couple of incidents had to be omitted as time did not permit their inclusion or they were no longer relevant to the role-play, given the direction it had taken.

The vehicle

There are various software programmes available such as Fablusi ©, WebCT, Story Board; or even email for a more simple interactive activity.

WebCT was chosen as the vehicle primarily because it is already available to Central TAFE through a license. A member of Central TAFE’s Academic Support Group set up the site and produced graphics that suited the era and the theme of the simulation. We had weekly meetings for a term prior to the commencement of the role-play simulation to discuss the storyline so that the technician could create the site in WebCT. Often things were shelved or changed in later meetings.

WebCT is not normally designed for such an interactive high-powered simulation, however, when our technical support person investigated the possibilities of doing so, this is what he commented on his findings:
I’ve certainly found that WebCT’s functionality can be improved far beyond what they probably intended ;-).

It came from stepping back and not seeing WebCT as a web-based piece of software, where you are confined to their tools and rules and unable to really get it to extend to what you want.

Instead, you see it as it really is – nothing more than a series of webpages, HTML code and Javascript. It’s about realising that it’s no different to anything else on the net – it runs by net rules and guidelines. So instead of either conforming to these rules or trying to break them, you simply use the very rules they are based on to enhance the tool.

Because of this, I’ve found ways to go past WebCT’s norms and add my own rules and guidelines. Butchering code in, playing with settings, operating on its pulsing e-innards, I’ve managed to control the WebCT world rather than just be a player. Your own will and creativity is all that can limit you!

In taking up the challenge, the technical support person experimented with the web design and created an appealing and easy-to-use Baudin site in WebCT in which the characters could interact.

The characters

The storyline lent itself to a role-play as there was tension and conflict between the characters. It was deemed that eight or nine “players” would be adequate as more than that could become less manageable. They were selected in order to recreate a balance similar to that experienced on the voyage 200 years ago.

From the ship’s crew there were:

Commandant Nicolas BAUDIN: Capitaine du Géographe. It was he who had dreamt of exploring Australia’s coastline. He had previously led expeditions to the Antilles and Africa and it was on the basis of these successes that Napoléon agreed to mount this expedition.
Henri Desaulces de FREYCINET: 2nd officer on the Géographe. Henri was an aristocrat who liked to give orders but never stooped to lend a hand to the crew when it was needed. When the cartographer was lost (and picked up by another ship in the area), de Freycinet at first refused to take over his duties but later agreed.

François-Michel RONSARD: ship’s engineer. Ronsard had sailed with Baudin on other expeditions and was a competent and loyal crewmember.

François Étienne L’HARIDON de Créménéc: ship’s doctor. L’Haridon was also of noble birth. He was hard-working but did not like having to put up with the artists and scientists who were a burden on the ship’s crew and did not treat him with the respect that he was accustomed to as a senior officer.

Thomas Timothée VASSE: sailor on board. Vasse was lost overboard near the coast where Busselton now stands. There were later reports that he lived with local Aboriginals in the Wonnerup region (Saby, 1993). They said that he spent his days on the beach looking out to sea for the ship to return for him.

From the scientific members of the expedition, there were:

François PÉRON: hired as assistant zoologist. He was soon promoted as many of the ship’s passengers and crew abandoned ship in Île de France (now Mauritius). Baudin even gave him the title of “Officer of Human Society” but later realised that this was a mistake as Péron did not appear empathetic towards mankind. [Baudin himself was very interested in indigenous groups and wrote to Governor King imploring him to treat the original inhabitants of this new land with respect and dignity (Horner, 1987).]

Nicolas-Martin PETIT: hired officially as an assistant gunner. Baudin had seen Petit’s drawings and really wanted him onboard to illustrate his personal journal. Petit was particularly talented in drawing portraits and his impressive collection drawings of indigenous people can still be seen in the museum in Le Havre in France. When the official artists left in Île de France due to ill-health, Petit was promoted to the post of official artist of the expedition.
Charles-Alexandre LESUEUR: hired officially as an assistant gunner. Lesueur lived in Le Havre where the ships were rigged up for the voyage over a period of several months. Lesueur visited Baudin and asked to be taken on as an extra. He showed Baudin his drawings and Baudin also wanted him to illustrate his personal journal, “Journal de la Mer”. When the official artists left the expedition in Île de France, Lesueur was also promoted to official artist of the expedition.

Le Chat: No ship would be complete without a cat! This character was added quite by accident and proved to be extremely popular with all the characters as it added frivolity and humour to the scenario.

La Mouette: ‘The seagull’ (one of the academic support staff) made a brief visit to the Chat Room during the first session and had a lively dialogue with L’Haridon 2, the ship’s doctor.

NB: As previously stated, all the characters, apart from the cat in Group 2 who introduced herself as a female cat, are male, they will be referred to as ‘he’ throughout this dissertation.

The events

The expedition two hundred years ago lasted almost four years. In order to condense this into a four-week simulation, only a few occurrences could be introduced as background for the participants’ interaction. Prior to consulting with the technical support staff, I conducted my own research into the history of the expedition and the key people involved in the voyage by initially reading Horner’s (1987) account in *The French Reconnaissance* and then Toft’s (2002) *The Navigators*. I followed this up by viewing all documentaries and accounts of this historic event from various sources, including Internet (‘biographies’ on abc website, Bonnemains, from the Musée de la science naturelle, Le Havre). The students were also encouraged to carry out their own research prior to the commencement of the role-play and they could do through the links on the website in “Ressources” (‘Resources’, see Appendix 7) or at their local library.
In week one, the role-play started off the coast of Western Australia with the ships sighting land. It was then up to the Captain to take charge and issue orders for the scientists and artists to explore and record details of the flora and fauna in the coastal region. It was at this point that Vasse fell overboard.

In week two, the ships were to sail to Timor where a large number became ill with dysentery and many died, due to contaminated water. While in week three, the ships sailed back around the southern part of the continent to Port Jackson where they were to receive a warm welcome from the English Governor King, a francophile. On the way there, they met Matthew Flinders, an English seafarer, in what is now called Encounter Bay.

By week four, they were to quickly visit Kangaroo Island and commence the long journey back to Île de France. Baudin’s illness was apparent to all by this time and final decisions had to be made regarding leadership of the expedition, presumably with François Péron, the zoologist, taking a prominent role.

The historic events were investigated by the students prior to commencement of the role-play in order for them to be familiar with the storyline and the context of the voyage. The students were given a reading comprehension in French on an account of the possible survival of Vasse (Saby, 1993). During the induction sessions, they were encouraged to use the links provided to find out more about Baudin’s voyage (see Appendix 7 for the links provided). The students were also encouraged to use their local library and many of them did read books on the background of this exploration. As the designer / moderator of an online role-play simulation, however, I did not have control over the course of events and could only suggest them. Ultimately, it was the participants who controlled the way in which the story unfolded. In this simulation they had the option of following history closely or becoming inventive and changing the course of history.
The participants

A third year class of French students from Central TAFE were the participants of this web-based online role-play simulation. At the start of the term, there were 22 students in the class. This number tends to fluctuate as working adults often have to go interstate or overseas on business. However, attendance is always high and, being an enthusiastic group, they were prepared to take on the challenge of this project. As only eight or nine participants were required for a role-play, it was decided to conduct two role-play simulations at the same time. The students not only did not know who the other characters in their role-play were but I intentionally kept them ignorant as to which class members were in their particular group. This kept the suspense and enthusiasm in the groups.

Not all of these students were computer-literate so it was decided that those who could not use a computer or access the internet would become a ‘mailpal’ to another participant with whom he / she would work and have some input into the development of one character, thus permitting all students to participate in some capacity.

The students aged from their twenties to retirees in their seventies with several university students and professional people, so there was quite a cross-section of the population. What the older members of the class lacked in computer know-how, they made up for in commitment to the task at hand.

My role as moderator was to keep the role-play on track, ensure that they fulfilled their role but, most of all, encourage the correct use of the language by modelling appropriate expressions when there was a knowledge gap or when the wrong expression was used.

Site design

The site was a standard WebCT shell which was transformed to suit the era of the simulation by James Taylor from TAFE’s Academic Support Group. The home page was parchment yellow with a sailing ship and this design was carried through
to all the areas of the play (see Table 2 below, or Appendix 8 to for the complete Home Page).

Figure 2: The Home Page was designed to suit the era.

Erickson (2001) suggests that easy navigation with as few clicks as possible necessary to take the user to the required window or back to the home page is desirable. WebCT has a user-friendly navigational facility which it calls “breadcrumbs” that lead the user back along the path that they have taken (see Appendix 9).

Prior to participating in the role-play simulation, the students were given three hours (1 hour per week) of induction in the use of WebCT. The technician took them through all the procedures and components of the Baudin site. At that point, only the ‘Activities’ and ‘Resources’ icons were visible to the students. The Activities icon led to the exercises called “Pour briser la glace” (Ice Breaker) and “Couper, afficher et attacher un fichier” (Cut, paste and attach a file – to an email) which
were written in French as was everything on the Baudin site, but for the purpose of this dissertation, all the names will be referred to in English in brackets where necessary (see Appendices 5a and 6a for French versions).

The following are the different functions and sites in the WebCT that were available to the participants:

**Déroulement des faits:** (‘The course of events’) This icon led to what was happening each week. The previous weeks were still legible, but greyed out, so that the participants could scroll down and revisit the previous events.

**Discussions:** (‘Bulletin board’) This was where participants were able to leave messages of a general nature. This lit up in red on the home page when there were new notices to be read.

**Courrier Éléctronique:** (‘Email’) The participants could send private emails. This also appeared in red when there were new messages to be read. The students were asked to delete all emails prior to the start of play as their emails would then appear with their character name for all to see and old messages may have given clues as to their identity.

**Activités:** (‘Activities’) The students were given a few simple exercises in order to become familiar with WebCT. The exercises were used during the induction sessions to teach students how to post notices, send emails, conduct online research and then cut, paste and post interesting facts that they had found for others to see.

**Ressources:** (‘Resources’) Links to useful resources were to be found in this section. It included sites on information on the historic voyage, the biographies of the principal players, an interactive site to a sailing ship, as well as several links to French grammar and information sites (see Appendix 7 for a complete list).

**Portraits:** (‘Profiles of the characters’) This is where each character posted a notice introducing him/herself to the group.
Le Pont: (‘The deck’) Communication between all the characters could take place in this area of the ship.

La Passerelle: (‘The bridge’) Only the officers and naval crew were able to interact in this area. Here they could work out their strategies.

La Coquerie: (‘The galley’) This is where the scientists, artists and non-commissioned sailors could meet to discuss and plot their next move without the knowledge of the officers.

La salle de causerie: (‘The chat room’) This is where participants could discuss matters in a fairly synchronistic fashion and these sessions proved to be very lively. All communication in the other areas was asynchronistic, allowing the characters to reflect upon what they were going to say and suggest in order to further the action.

Only the areas that were accessible to the individual character were visible. For instance, the captain, officers, doctor and engineer did not have access and could not see the icon for the galley, just as the scientists and artists could not see the bridge. As the simulation progressed, the participants became aware of the fact that some negotiations must be taking place out of their ‘earshot’.

Following the initial introduction to the site, the students completed the “Icebreaker” exercise where they were required to search the net for a site that they liked and then post the details on the bulletin board. This proved to be quite a challenge for those students who were not computer literate but we were pleasantly surprised by the results as the majority did successfully perform this activity.

During the Easter break the students were encouraged to conduct some further research of their own, either by accessing their library, through the sites on the ‘Resources’ icon of WebCT or search engines that we had suggested to them. From the ‘Resources’ icon, the technicians had prepared links to various sites of historical interest, including an interactive site where students could visit parts of a sailing ship by clicking on the part of the vessel that they wanted to view more closely (see Appendix 7 for a list of sites in Resources). In addition, there were French language
sites where the students could discover more information about the French language or do grammar exercises to improve their own language skills.

Some interesting facts were discovered by the students in using the search engines to research various aspects of life in the early 1800s. For instance, it was believed in those days that physical exercise could prevent scurvy and so the doctor used that in the role-play to order the sailors to dance on the deck (abc website; “Advice for the Crew of a Ship” cited in Household Cyclopaedia, 1881).

The role-play

The first step in the role-play was taking on a ‘character’. This was done by reading the list which included the name and the role of the character, e.g. Nicolas Baudin, Captain. The students were then required to email the moderator with their choice and the reason for the selection. The majority of participants were given their first choice, however, a number of people chose Nicolas-Martin Petit, the artist, but two (one for each group) were given the other artist, Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, instead. A couple of people wanted to be Thomas Timothée Vasse but we had introduced his character as we knew that one class member would miss the middle two weeks of the role-play due to a prior commitment. Vasse was a perfect choice as this tied in with his falling overboard and later being found living with Aboriginals. The students had previously undertaken a reading comprehension exercise of a reported account of Vasse’s last days with an Aboriginal tribe near Wonnerup (Saby, 1993).

Once the characters were chosen by the moderator, each person received notification of his character and some relevant information about his persona (see Appendices 10a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,I for profiles of all characters, in French). This initial introduction of each character included: name, main characteristics, social standing, the circumstances, public agenda and private agenda. The cats were given freedom to create their own character and had access to all parts of the ship. These introductions were written by the facilitator based on historical documents (“Biographies” - abc website; Bloomfield and Barnes, 1995; Bonnemains; Horner, 1987; Nisbet, 1985; Saby, 1993; Toft, 2002).
The following example represents the notification from the facilitator received by Nicolas Baudin before the role-play simulation commenced. This was written in French (see Appendix 10a).

**My characteristics:** The fifth child of a family of merchant seamen, I was born on Île de Ré and so naturally chose life in the Navy. Several years later, I resigned from the French Royal Navy and started to sail commercially – not only for French companies but also for the Emperor of Austria.

I also have liberal ideas far in advance of the period. As a lateral thinker, I am readily able to resolve problems. I am a good strategist. I am loyal to those who deserve it. However, despite being tolerant, I am resolute once I have made a decision.

**My social standing:** I am captain of the corvette, *le Géographe*, and Commandant of the expedition to Terres Australes. As commander of this expedition I insist that everyone obeys me. My decisions are final. I am a humanitarian and a member of the *Société des Observateurs de l’homme* (*Society of Observers of Man*) thus, I am very interested in indigenous people and believe in treating them as equals and respecting them as custodians of their land.

**The circumstances:** In 1798, I submitted a proposal to the French government to organise an exploratory voyage to Terres Australes. Napoléon Bonaparte, the First Consul, chose me as commander of the exploration given my experience and reputation.

We are still at war with England. On this voyage we have already suffered much illness on board and many of the crew, scientists and artists abandoned the ship in Île de France. However, I have had much experience in handling varied situations on board ship, even with the large numbers of sick and those who are insubordinate.

**My public agenda:** The purpose of this voyage is uniquely for scientific exploration and mapping new coastline.

**My private agenda:** the First Consul has entrusted me to inform myself of the possibility of colonising the west of Terres Australes before the English.

**Guidelines**

Students were given clear guidelines of how to participate in the simulation in a document called “*Prenant la mer*” (‘Setting Sail’, see Appendix 11) which was posted in *Discussions*. In this document, they were advised on how and where to post their profile and well as other criteria important to the simulation, such as learning outcomes and a guide for effective participation in the role-play.
The learning outcomes form part of the VET Certificate IV of Applied Languages and are as follows:

- Communicate in French with your subordinates and superiors in a manner appropriate to your workplace,
- Search the Internet and report your findings through the discussion group
- Collaborate with others on the site,
- Conduct a self-evaluation on language, interpersonal and technical skills displayed in the role-play.

The rules of participation:

- Post between 2 and 10 messages each week,
- Visit the site each day if it’s possible (but at least two to three times a week) to see what has changed and who has replied to your messages,
- Send an email to your moderator, if you need information or advice on any aspect of the role-play. You can be assured that the moderator will contact you and to let you know how you are progressing in the simulation,
- Use the Chat Room for important and private discussions with other characters. If you want to invite someone to chat, send him/her an email with the time, day and name of the Chat Room in which to meet.

It was vital to give clear guidelines to the participants prior to commencing the role-play so that they had an understanding of the workings of the simulation. The purpose of the induction was to provide the participants with the online skills needed to function in the simulation. They learnt how to post a discussion, how to send an email, how to attach a file to their postings, as well as how to contribute to the dialogue in the Chat Room.

The students also knew that they were at liberty to either follow the historical events faithfully or to be entirely inventive. Each character was given similar background details from which he had to flesh out the ‘personality’ of his character and prepare an introductory presentation. This was then posted in the section called “Portraits” for all the other characters to read.
A date was set for the actual role-play to take place over a four-week period during term two. Each student was aware of the expectations of the moderator and declared him/herself prepared to log onto the site several times a week. In addition to that, characters could go to the Chat Room by accessing the site in a classroom for an hour after class for each of those four weeks, but were also encouraged to instigate some intrigue by forming alliances and setting up meetings in the Chat Room at other times, predetermined by the parties involved.

The groups were simply named Group 1 and Group 2 by the moderator and each character was identified by the role that he played. The students were playing on the same site with the same User Name and password but only their character name was visible to others.

Leading up to the selection of characters, five students were to be paired with another to work as mailpals. However, two decided to try to do it themselves – one of these was an elderly member of the class who had only just learnt how to turn on a computer. After one week, another mailpal decided to take on a role by himself and was made the cat in the second group.

In addition to the new meeting places on the site, the technician had added “Exprîmer” (‘express’) where participants could share new findings, such as new expressions in the French language, and also “Mes pensées privées” (‘My private thoughts’) for personal journal entries which could not be seen by others.
Key Elements of the Role-Play

The key elements of the design, along with their function and factors to consider are outlined in the table below. This table was adapted from a similar design template in *Fabulous Illusions* (Jasinski, 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Element</th>
<th>The Play</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>The Voyage of Nicolas Baudin to Terres Australes in 1800 – 03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Options considered** | *Major production:* The interplay of the characters who undertook this voyage.  
*Minor production:* the struggle and tension between certain players as situations arose. |
| **Influencing Factors** | *Learning Outcomes:* Demonstration of the ability to communicate in French with superiors and subordinates in a manner appropriate to the workplace (in this case, on board ship). The ability to conduct (online) research on relevant topics. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Element</th>
<th>The Cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Function** | Certificate IV VET Central TAFE students of French (third year).  
Two simultaneous role-plays were conducted to allow each member of the class to participate. |
| **Options considered** | Students have had extensive experience in conducting face-to-face role-plays in French. 75% of these students are computer-literate and instigated communication through a class email group in the previous year. Five mature age students were computer illiterate and were to be assigned a ‘mailpal’ so that they would be able to participate through pairing with a computer-literate student. |
| **Influencing Factors** | Students were given direct guidelines of the assessment criteria. Participation was obligatory to the course, however, participation in the research study was voluntary in line with the ethics regulations of Murdoch University. Preparation and familiarisation with WebCT was conducted in Term 1, 2003. The role-play took place in Term 2, 2003.  
*Learning Outcomes:* Demonstration of the ability to write notes, messages and narrative passages in French at an appropriate level. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Element</th>
<th>The Playwright</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>Andrée Vanda Hartley, French lecturer, with the technical advice and design assistance of Victoria Alonso, and members of the Academic Support Group from Central TAFE. <strong>Scenario:</strong> On board the corvette “Géographe” which was setting out to map the remainder of the Australian coastline. <strong>Characters:</strong> Members of the ship’s crew and some scientists and artists who were on board the vessel (7 – 8 people). <strong>Sets:</strong> The course of events, the officers’ mess, the deck, the galley, the bridge. <strong>Props:</strong> Map of the voyage, links to useful sites on details of diet, disease, ship-building, grammar, historic sites (previously researched in preparation for the role-play).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Options considered</strong></td>
<td>A team-approach was used in developing a new web-based role-play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influencing Factors</strong></td>
<td>Facilities: Central TAFE provided the facilities and the project was conducted with the normal third-year class. Funding: Learnscope provided the funding for the site creation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Key Element</th>
<th>The Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>The initial WebCT site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Options considered</strong></td>
<td>Communication tools: forum, bulletin board, chat room, email, personal journal. WebCT platform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influencing Factors</strong></td>
<td>All participants were able to participate in conversation on deck, but only officers on the bridge, and scientists / artists in the galley. The cat was able to eavesdrop everywhere.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Element</th>
<th>The Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>Moderator: Andrée Vanda Hartley who was present online in order to guide the participants throughout the role-play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Options considered</strong></td>
<td>Needed to be readily available and supportive online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influencing Factors</strong></td>
<td>The design was kept reasonably simple for this first role-play. It is expected to become an annual event in third year with the theme changing as new events present themselves. [This was the bi-centenary of Baudin’s voyage.]</td>
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<tr>
<th>Key Element</th>
<th>The Critic</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function</strong></td>
<td>Discussion – between the facilitator, the technicians, other lecturers and the students – was conducted in order to form an evaluation of the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Options considered</strong></td>
<td>Reflections and self-assessment of the participants (3rd year students) were considered in the evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influencing Factors</strong></td>
<td>Andrée Vanda Hartley contributed to a final evaluation report for Learnscope as well as a more detailed masters dissertation for Murdoch University. The students’ answers to pre- and post-questionnaires, their online contributions, personal reflective journals, and comments at a debriefing session formed part of the data analysis in evaluating the success of the research project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Audience

Function
The audience was participatory. Those who were not computer-literate remained very much involved as their input was still required.

Options considered
There was provision for the students to comment on how they felt and how they felt others performed in the final questionnaire and at the debriefing session.

Influencing Factors
There is no passive audience in a web-based online role-play.

Moderation

In an online community the role of facilitator is very different from that of teacher in a classroom, or as Collison et al (2000, p. 35), suggested: “it’s important to shift to ‘Guide on the Side’ … rather than being the ‘Sage on Stage’”. The facilitator, or moderator, must learn not to impede interaction by being too dominant, but to remain in the background in a supportive and advisory capacity.

The expectations of the moderator regarding student participation need to be clearly outlined prior to commencement of the role-play (Palloff and Pratt, 1999). Students knew details of the duration and amount of time and input required to partake in such an activity.

The moderator must be willing to step in and gently stimulate conversation if it is waning or re-direct it if it is heading the wrong way (Palloff and Pratt, 2001). This could be done by highlighting comments that are going in the right direction but should not take the form of criticism nor praise singling out a particular character as this can act as a deterrent to further interaction from all participants (Collison et al, 2000). For students who are lurking around but not contributing to the dialogue, the moderator should invite them in although, I found that this was not necessarily successful as one participant in particular became defensive and, despite insisting that he was involved and planning to continue, did not participate again. I did offer the inactive participants an excuse for non participation by having the ship’s doctor declare that they were over their bout of malaria, for example, and were again fit and able to resume duties. Although this was implemented in a warm and friendly manner, it did not always work and indeed, it seems that students who did lapse and
later return to the role-play provided their own excuses pertinent to the voyage upon resuming communication.

The following example of a message from *Hercules*, the cat, illustrated the dynamics of the interaction on the website. The cat gave a long and comprehensive explanation of his disappearance for several days. Firstly, he had a sore paw for which Péron gave him some medicine. Unfortunately, he was scared by thunder and jumped on Péron’s head. A second bolt of thunder caused him to flee from the cabin. He then went ashore, happy to be on land, and described seeing an animal which he named ‘Kanga-Roo’ after a friend whom he had eaten. Returning to the ship, he saw someone taking a siesta on the shore (allusion to Vasse who was missing). The imagery of this complex message was very effective in explaining his absence but also in opening the possibility for comment from the other characters.

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**Message no 189**  
**Posted by** Chat Le **on Thu May 22, 2003 23.00**  
De nouveau, bonjour à tous!

Je suis très heureux d’être ici et de vous rencontrer encore. Je suis vraiment désolé d’avoir disparu pendant une semaine. J’ai passé une semaine très intéressante. Vous ai-je manqué ?

Après être présent la semaine dernière, je suis allé dans le bureau de Monsieur Péron ; espérant qu’il regarde ma patte qui était très douloureuse. Il était très professionnel et gentil avec moi. Mais quand il était en train de préparer une médecine pour moi, le tonnerre éclata. Et, quelle HORREUR !!! J’ai crié et j’ai sauté sur la tête de M. Péron. Quand le tonnerre frappa pour la deuxième fois, j’ai paniqué et suis parti du bureau sans dire à M. Péron que j’étais désolé !

Quelques jours après, j’ai débarqué et visité la Nouvelle Hollande. Quelle joie de voir la terre ferme ! J’allais prendre alors une sieste quand soudain il y a eu un GRAND animal qui a sauté vers moi. Il sautait vite et fort avec deux jambes. Il avait la fourrure brune, la bouche longue et deux petits bras. J’ai été très surpris, cet animal a l’air d’être un très grande version d’une amie à moi (que j’ai apprécié comme dîner aussi !). Son nom est Kanga et prénom Roo. Je vais appeler cet animal Kanga-Roo à partir de maintenant. C’est un joli nom, n’est-ce pas ?

Enfin, quand en train de revenir au bateau ; j’ai vu quelqu’un allongé près du bord de la mer, peut-être en train de faire une sieste… je ne suis pas sûr. Mais je ne sais pas qui c’était.

Et voilà, mes amis.

Hercule
This reminded me that it is important to give the characters space in which to exit and re-enter the simulation on their own terms. When they take responsibility for their own learning it is more meaningful and rewarding for them. In the role of moderator, there is a fine line between being supportive and encouraging, and letting go enough for the participants to take the initiative in instigating the action of the role-play simulation. On moderation, O’Mallon stated:

When you feel the need to step in (as a moderator) don’t. Try nudging other characters to do the work you need to do on the ‘needy one’. Remember ownership of the role-play by the players deepens their commitment and their learning experience (learningdesigns.uow.edu.au).

This chapter outlined the context of the study. It included the components of the role-play simulation – the storyline, the vehicle, the characters, the events, the participants, site design – as well as more details about the historical background of the role-play itself, guidelines for participation and the moderation of the online activity. The research content and social interaction of the students will be discussed in the next chapter.
As the commencement date of the role-play simulation approached, the students became anxious and asked many questions in class. They had researched the historical facts and some found it hard to comprehend that the role-play may not be historically accurate, depending on the interaction between the characters. Others were concerned about their level of French.

To the first concern, one student said that he didn’t mind if they ended up in the Antarctic. He said he was looking forward to communicating freely in French and felt that he would get more out of sending messages online than doing prescribed activities and exercises from the textbook.

To the second concern, one student said, “Didn’t you say, this will be fun?” after which a lot of tension disappeared. It was to be an enjoyable experience but there was also the requirement of commitment.

Despite starting out from the same point, the two groups soon diverged and were on different courses and storylines within two weeks. One group had a slower start than the other and possible reasons for this will be discussed more fully in the data analysis.

What actually eventuated as far as the storyline was concerned was a meshing of historic and imaginary details of the voyage as different characters injected their imagination into the play and made it a dynamic simulation.

**ORGANISATION OF THE ROLE-PLAY SIMULATION**

**GROUP ONE**

This group started to interact as soon as the characters were assigned and, apart from the unexpected withdrawal of two characters, made a good start to the voyage. One
character, the ship’s doctor, was immediately replaced and the disappearance of the other was dealt with in a plausible way by the captain. Within a very short time, a variety of topics heralded the inception of several lively, collaborative discussions.

The educational background and genders of the two groups were comparable with the only discrepancies which came to light later were the facts that Group One’s approximate average age was 41, as opposed to 58 for Group Two, and that their computing skills were far superior to that of Group Two.

Week One
The following excerpts from the facilitator’s first messages posted in the Déroulement des Faits (‘Course of Events’) during the first week (see Appendix 4 for complete French version).

We left Île de France in April 1801 and the seemingly endless voyage continued. Many of the crew remained behind for various reasons. Petit and Lesueur have been promoted to the status of ‘official artists’ as the artists could not continue due to ill-health. Péron was also promoted by Baudin and made the official representative of the “Society of Observers of Man” of which Baudin himself was a member.

In May, we saw New Holland for the first time. What a joy to see terra firma!

[The present] The two ships weigh anchor and some sailors, scientists and artists go ashore in boats. Péron sets about looking for samples in this unknown land. He is absent-minded and gets lost so Baudin assigns a sailor to watch him, which Péron does not appreciate.

A few hours later there is a storm. An officer, Milius, from the Naturaliste sends out boats to bring the crews back to the corvettes. Vasse is swept overboard and disappears.

Group One soon got into the swing of things although, as moderator, I had to remind them to send private messages by email or use the Chat Room. All of the characters posted their profile in the first few days and then commenced communicating with each other.

Captain Baudin made a lively start by immediately taking command and issuing orders to one and all. Péron went ashore and returned with some scientific specimens and the cat wanted to know if there were any tasty new species to sample. Petit was not impressed by Baudin’s naming this new land, New Corsica, and
repeatedly reminded him that it was to be ‘Terra Australis’: two strong characters in class were now displaying equal strength in the role-play!

*Baudin* tried to remind *Petit* of his lowly standing by asking the second officer to pass on this message, in which he asked *de Freycinet* to thank *Petit* for his opinion on the name of their destination and to inform him that Emperor Napoléon had created the new name prior to the departure of the expedition.

*Baudin* added, “Afterwards, perhaps ask *Mr. Lesueur* to start a sketch of his wife and the other passengers before they go ashore on New Corsica.” [A further slight for *Petit* as he was more renowned for his portraits and *Lesueur* for drawing nature.]

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**Message no. 151 [New thread]**

Posted by **Nicolas Baudin** on Sun. 20:14

Merci à vous M. de Freycinet si vous donnez mes remerciements à M. Petit pour l’avis du nom de notre destination. L’empereur Napoléon a créé un nouveau nom pour notre destination avant notre départ : « Nouveau Corse ».

Et après, peut-être demandez à M. Lesueur de commencer à faire une esquisse de ma femme et les autres passagers avant qu’ils débarquent au Nouveau Corse.

*Lesueur* challenged *Petit* as his hidden agenda was to become more famous than *Petit* and he thought he’d tackle the problem from the start by trying to intimidate *Petit*, but after a fiery start, *Lesueur* faded as the pressures of exams in other studies loomed. *Petit* had a similar hidden agenda, but chose to take a different approach in trying to curry favour with *Captain Baudin* by offering to produce sketches and paintings for him. There was soon considerable interaction between the various characters. *Péron’s* posting about ‘new discoveries’ had reactions from several other characters. Here *Péron* displayed knowledge of his character beyond the initial profile that he was given and the reference to him in the *Déroulement des Faits*. He asked *Lesueur* to help him with classifying the specimens that he has found.
Bonjour !

Pendant mon entreprise courte sur le nouveau continent j’ai découvert beaucoup de nouvelles plantes et animaux. Je me suis perdu un petit peu mais pas vraiment. Ce n’est pas nécessaire d’attacher un marin à moi !!! Je sais ce que je fais !!!

Maintenant, je pense à commencer à classer ces nouveaux plantes et animaux. Peut-être vous, M. Lesueur, puissiez m’aider avec ceci. J’ai besoin de quelqu’un qui fait des schémas pour le catalogue. J’ai entendu que vous faites d’excellents schémas

François Péron.

Péron’s message resulted in two new threads: one from the cat who was interested in sampling new animals for food, and another in which the two artists, Lesueur and Petit competed with each other in regards to their artistic abilities.

Le Chat (cat) responded the next day to Péron’s message with this posting, asking for any exotic specimens to add to his diet.

Purrrrrrr….. oh cher Monsieur Péron…de nouveaux animaux ?! .. peut-être un où deux des petits animaux seront bons pour manger pour un chat avec un goût de l’exotique ?....

J’ai faim et j’en ai assez de manger des restes !....je suis prêt pour un changement dans ma nourriture que compose essentiellement de tête de poissons…. Qu’est-ce que vous pensez Monsieur Péron ?.. vous pouvez m’aider ?

And Lesueur responded with this, expressing his interest in sketching these creatures for the Captain. He also adds a Post Script thanking Péron for choosing him instead of the other artist who is lacking in talent.

Nouvelles plantes et nouveaux animaux, c’est intéressant ! J’irai avec vous M. Péron dessiner ces créatures pour Capitaine Baudin. Peut-être demain matin ? Lesueur

P.S. Merci pour m’avoir choisi, au lieu de cet artiste sans talent, M. Petit !
Petit was not about to let Lesueur get the upper hand and sent this message, suggesting that he also be involved in classifying the samples and pointing out that, as an artist, he was capable of illustrating flora and fauna as well as people.

Message no. 163  [Branch from no. 156]
Posted by Nicolas-Martin Petit on Wed. 20:00

Je crois que ce serai une bonne idée si M. Lesueur et moi travaillerons ensemble sur le projet de vos schémas. Qu’est-ce que vous en pensez, Lesueur ?

Je crois que les spécialités de M. Lesueur sont les animaux, le paysage et la flore indigène, mais ma spécialité est les personnes, particulièrement les indigènes d’un pays. Cependant, comme tous les artistes, je peux illustrer les plantes, les flores, les animaux, les personnes – tout !

Petit then must have noticed the postscript and sent this posting, saying that Lesueur may think that he (Petit) has no talent but that he was trained by the famous Jacques-Louis Davide in Paris. This further demonstrated the background research that was carried out by the participants prior to the commencement of the role-play.

Petit pointed out that Baudin had also promoted him to status of ‘official artist’ on board. Despite Lesueur’s open hostility, Petit assured him that they would be friends before the end of the voyage.

Message no. 164  [Branch from no. 162]
Posted by Nicolas-Marin Petit on Wed. 20:20

Eh bien ! Désolé Lesueur que vous ne pensez pas que j’ai un talent. Savez-vous que j’étudiais les arts graphiques et je recevais ma formation sous Jacques-Louis Davide à Paris !

Comme vous, d’abord j’étais embauché comme canonnier aide. Et, aussi comme vous, le Capitaine Baudin m’a promu à l’artiste officiel pour illustrer son journal de bord.

Je vous assure que nous serons amis avant la fin du voyage !
A few minutes later, Petit wrote this to Le Chat (cat), suggesting rabbit instead of indigenous animals for dinner.

Message no. 165 [Branch from no. 160]  
Posted by Nicolas-Martin Petit on Wed. 20.24

Nous sommes en route aux Terres Australes. Aimeriez-vous un lapin ? Il y en a des millions là-bas je crois !

Le Chat responded the next day, explaining that he had eaten lots of rabbit in his day and would welcome something more interesting. Don’t be niggardly, he said to Petit.

Message no. 169 [Branch from no. 165]  
Posted by Le Chat on Thu 16:17

Très gentil monsieur ☺ mais je mangeais beaucoup des lapins chez moi….j’espère que vous pouvez m’offrir quelque chose plus intéressant ! …je crois que vous avez découvert de petits animaux qui feraient un morceau de choix bien succulent pour moi …

Ne soyez pas pingre !..d’ailleurs ..je suis un chat extraordinaire…je vois tout et je connais les secrets de l’équipage entier ;-)…ronron…ronron…

Lesueur could not resist further baiting Petit into a little competition.

Message no. 167 [Branch from no. 164]  
Posted by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur on Wed 21:04

Ah, M. Petit ! Vous vous êtes effrayé d’une petite compétition ?

Bonne chance, camarade.

Petit was not going to be cowered by Lesueur and retorted that he was not afraid of ‘good’ competition and asked where it could be found.

Message no. 174 [Branch from no. 167]  
Posted by Nicolas-Martin Petit on Fri 20:17

Non, jamais ! J’accueillis la bonne (j’ai dit ‘bonne’) compétition. Vous savez où je peux trouver de la bonne compétition ?

A final message on that thread was again from Petit, this time to Le Chat informing him that he (Petit) is not ‘niggardly’ and that, when the cat gets to know him better, he’ll find out that he is indeed a good fellow. He signed off by inviting the cat to
visit him after his foray on this unknown land and promised to have a delicacy for him.

Message no. 176 [Branch from no. 169]
Posted by Nicolas-Martin Petit on Fri 20.58

Je ne suis pas pingre avec vous mon ami. Quand vous me connaîtrez mieux, vous me trouverez un mec amical, quelqu’un qui est toujours heureux à accueillir des visiteurs, comme vous-même. Vos secrets sont en sûreté avec moi!

Rendez-moi visite après mon retour de la terre inconnue. J’aurai un délice pour vous. Je ne sais pas ce que ça sera, mais un délice néanmoins.

At the same time as this discourse was unfolding, there were other threaded dialogues taking place: Baudin was still asking for reports on various duties of crew members; the doctor complained to Baudin about the lack of respect he was shown by the artists and scientists; Petit offered to do sketches of all aboard for the Captain; Ronsard informed the Captain of the state of the ship; and there was a debate about the naming of newly discovered animals.

Some challenges were experienced in that first week. De Freycinet, the second officer, emailed the moderator to say that he would not be taking part after all. This was disappointing as an incident was to be a vote by the crew to choose between de Freycinet and Ronsard for promotion to the newly vacated position of first officer (a most revolutionary idea by Baudin, previously unheard of in those times) (Horner, 1987).

I emailed the captain to inform him of this development and suggested that he inform the crew that de Freycinet was missing so that a search party could be mounted. However, he had a better idea. In the second week he announced that de Freycinet was to be left behind in New Corsica with a view to establishing a French colony.

L’Haridon, the doctor, had also disappeared from class and, when contacted by email, stated that he too had to withdraw. Fortunately, a co-moderator who is a class-member and IT lecturer, had not been assigned a role and was able to step in and play the part of the doctor at short notice.
The chat session at the end of the first week was tentative at first but the conversation soon flowed more rapidly once the participants lost their self-consciousness about writing spontaneously and synchronously in French. After the second week, the chat session was better apart from the fact that not all the participants were in the same Chat Room which proved frustrating for some. In subsequent weeks, I made it very clear in which room the characters should chat. Weaker students found it extremely challenging to ‘chat’ synchronously and had difficulty in making themselves understood in the flurry of getting down what they wanted to say. As the chat sessions only lasted for an hour, there seemed to be a frenzy of typing from those who chose to participate from the college computer laboratory as they tried to have as much input as possible. As several of the students did not have ready access to Internet at home, we found it worked well to allow them access for a formal chat session from within the college after class on Saturday afternoons. At other times, some students took a bus and train to avail themselves of the TAFE’s library computers, while others accessed the site from Cybercafés in order to participate in the Baudin simulation.

Week Two

In the Déroulement des Faits : semaine deux (‘Course of events: Week Two’), this is what was posted by the facilitator at the start of the second week.

The commander is becoming anxious about the advancing winter in the south of the continent and wants to head in the direction of East Timor, but wants enough samples of flora and fauna of the region to be collected and, of course, wants to continue searching for Vasse. Péron keeps disappearing in the scrub. Vasse is believed to have drowned but no body has been found.

Setting sail for the north, much of the unknown coast is mapped. The crew members suggest names for these new sites but it is the Captain who has the right to decide on the names.

There is still a lot of illness on board but, arriving in East Timor, there is an epidemic of scurvy, malaria and dysentery.

The Discussion was not simply a place to post one’s messages – it was much more complex than that. For the participants to collaborate, it was necessary for them to
firstly understand the postings that others had written in French and respond to them appropriately. Twice we were able to access the computer room half an hour prior to the Chat session, giving the participants time to check their messages beforehand. The participants flicked through their dictionaries and verb books to decipher some messages and then composed their own. As they became more familiar with the relevant vocabulary associated with this topic, there was less need for this. Constant and intense involvement with the terms and vocabulary through interaction and collaboration with the other characters over a period of four weeks resulted in deep rather than surface learning of the subject matter (Biggs and Telfer, 1987).

This week mostly involved the characters getting to know each other better and the beginning of relationships being formed. Baudin was very active giving orders and interacting with the officers and the artists. Lesueur was determined to outwit Petit who was not interested in a confrontation with Lesueur but preferred a more subtle approach to achieving his hidden agenda of becoming better known than Lesueur through interaction with all of the characters and, in particular, Baudin. L’Haridon concerned himself with the health of all on board and posted some interesting messages on medical issues as well as asking the crew and passengers to come to him for medical examinations.

Week Three

In the Déroulement des Faits : semaine trois (‘Course of Events: Week Three’), the following message was posted at the start of the week to advise the students of their position on the voyage.

We are following the southern coast of this vast land heading for Van Diemen’s Land. One day a ship appears on the horizon. We are astonished to see that it is English. Captain Baudin gives the order to weigh anchor.

After communicating by signal, the two captains meet. Baudin names this place Encounter Bay. The English captain is Matthew Flinders. Baudin and Flinders exchange details of their exploration to this point. Relations are cordial and Flinders escorts us to Port Jackson where we are welcomed by Governor King.

We remain there for six weeks repairing our corvettes and restocking supplies for the rest of our expedition. Baudin buys another ship from the English, the Casuarina.
The scientists and artists continue their research and meet Aborigines not far from the English port.

The encounter with Matthew Flinders caught the imagination of the players and quite a lot of interaction ensued. Baudin said that he found Flinders to be courteous. He invited the English crew to join in a football match. As the football is no longer spherical, he modified the game and called it Australian Football. The English were to be invited over to the Géographe after the match and Baudin urged his crew to be courteous towards them.

Message no. 206
Posted by Nicolas Baudin on Tues 20:14

A tout l’équipage :

J’ai discuté le nouveau jeu avec Capitaine Flinders. Ça lui a fait une bonne impression, le football australis.

Nous sommes arrivés à Baie des Rencontres et j’ai parlé avec Capitaine Flinders, vraiment un homme courtois.

Nous sommes d’accord que deux équipes feront du foot demain. Malheureusement, parce que notre ballon est un petit peu mal (il n’est pas sphérique mais un peu comme un œuf, nous avons modifié les règles. Nous appelons le nouveau jeu « Foot d’Australis ».

Après le jeu, nous organiserons une réception ici pour l’équipage du bateau de Capitaine Flinders.

Je vous demande d’être très, très gentils aux Anglais.

Baudin then sent another message asking Péron, L’Haridon and Ronsard to question the English about the existence of safe harbours and availability of fresh water along the coast between Encounter Bay on the southern coast and Botany Bay on the eastern coast of the known land mass.
Message no. 209
Posted by Nicolas Baudin on Wed 09:14

Péron, L’Haridon, Ronsard

Quand l’équipe fait du foot, parlez avec les Anglais au sujet de la côte d’ici à Botany Bay. Est-ce qu’il y a des ports de sûreté en route avec d’eau potable?

Cherchez l’information que nous utiliserons en voyage.

Petit was never slow to join any discourse and, as soon as he heard about the football match, he expressed an interest in meeting and sharing information with the English artists.

Message no 212 [Branch from no. 206]
Posted by Nicolas-Martin Petit on Wed 20:32

M. le Capitaine, je m’attendrai avec impatience à rencontrer l’équipe anglaise demain, particulièrement les artistes. Je voudrais discuter avec eux ce qu’ils ont vu, ce qu’ils ont fait et ce qu’ils ont peint depuis leur départ de l’Île de France.

Le jeu serait un divertissement !

Later that day, Baudin reported that he had had further discussions with Flinders. The “Foot Australis” had made a good impression and Flinders had suggested naming the English part of the continent after the game. A nice fellow, said Baudin, but strange! To name a place after a game! How bizarre!

Message no. 215
Posted by Nicolas-Martin Baudin on Wed 21:51

A tout l’équipage

J’ai discuté le nouveau jeu avec Capitaine Flinders. Ça lui a fait une bonne impression, le football australis, et il n’a dit qu’il proposera d’appeler la région anglaise de ce continent comme le jeu : australis.

Une bon homme mais inconnu, n’est-ce pas ? Appeler une région comme un jeu de football. Bizarre !
*L’Haridon*, the doctor, responded by pointing out that the health of the men is not good and suggesting morning exercises on the deck.

Message no. 216 [Branch from no. 215]
Posted by François Étienne L’Haridon on Thu 17:54

M. Baudin, Capitaine, je pense que le nouveau jeu de foot avec le Capitaine Flinders est une idée fabuleuse. Certains d’entre nous ne sont pas assez en bonne santé encore parce que nous avons eu un long voyage. Je propose de renforcer notre santé en faisant des exercices chaque matin sur le pont.

Péron endeavoured to bring the dialogue back to a more serious note, saying that while football is entertaining, one should consider more pertinent issues such as the colonisation of the continent and the fate of the indigenous people.

Message no. 217 [Branch from no. 215]
Posted by François Péron on Thu 18:27

Bonjour Capitaine Baudin

Un jeu du football est une idée gentille. Tout le monde l’appréciera. C’est une bonne distraction.

Mais il y a sûrement les sujets très sérieux à traiter : Comment les entretiens avec le capitaine anglais se sont-ils passés? On doit commencer la colonisation du nouveau continent. Que faisons-nous avec les indigènes?

To this Baudin replied that this continent is sufficiently large for us (the French), the English and the Aborigines.

Message no. 219 [Branch from no. 217]
Posted by Nicolas Baudin on Fri 20:03

Péron, Nos colonistes sont prêts à faire une bataille comme Capitaine Flinders. Et ce continent d’Australis est suffisamment grand pour nous, les Anglais et les indigènes.

Interestingly, since the participants discovered that not everyone could enter the *Passerelle* (‘bridge’) and the *Coquerie* (‘galley’), those areas were hardly ever used. The *Pont* (‘deck’) was frequented almost exclusively. I tried to remind the characters of the existence of those areas by sending an email suggesting that they
must have no secrets and (tongue in cheek) that, as a result, there would be little risk of a mutiny.

Message no. 218 [Branch from no. 205]
Posted by The Moderator on Fri 10:38

Mon Capitaine,

Il paraît que les officiers n’ont pas de secrets ! Ils parlent toujours dans l’entrepont.
C’est assurant, car comme ça on ne risque pas d’avoir une mutinerie d’après tout !

At this point, Péron was to commence his tactics in undermining Baudin and work on how he could gain all the glory for himself upon returning to France. However, Péron had been so tireless in contributing to the simulation that Baudin seemed to have quite a soft spot for him and even promoted him by giving him a standing equivalent to that of a naval officer!

The captain announced that Vasse had been picked up by an English vessel off the coast of New Corsica and brought to Port Jackson, where the French ships were picking up provisions.

Vasse’s reappearance in the Chat Room caused quite a stir but he was too overwhelmed by all the attention (and trying to type after a two-week absence) and failed to respond (see short, two-page extract of script in Appendix 12). Baudin was the first to comment: “What a surprise! Vasse has come back to us.” This lead to questions being fired at Vasse and when there was no reply, the conversation turned to ghosts, ventriloquists, mediums, medical and psychological check-ups which expanded the participants’ vocabulary and language usage in the most surprising and unexpected way. This dialogue took place at a very fast pace indicating that the participants were at ease with the technology and more importantly that their conversational fluency and ease in communicating in French had improved considerably. This was in sharp contrast with Vasse who had been absent for two weeks and had not experienced the same intense interaction.
Vasse did, however, post an excellent journal in the Discussions for all to read (see Appendix 13). It detailed his adventure living with the Aboriginals and conveyed a feeling of desolation as he waited on the beach, looking for a rescue boat. Thus, he had not been idle during his absence.

Week Four
In the *Déroulement des Faits : semaine quatre* (‘Course of Events: Week Four’), the following was posted at the start of the fourth week in preparation for the ‘end of the voyage’ which was posted a few days later.

The *Géographe* and the *Casuarina* leave Port Jackson after six weeks of well-earned rest. All the crew is in good shape, well-fed and in good health.

The two ships are at anchor off Kangaroo Island when an English ship arrives. The French know some of the officers from Port Jackson and are surprised to have been followed so closely. The English waste no time in raising the British flag.

The cold attitude of the English does not resemble the warm reception that the French had received in Port Jackson and Baudin is troubled by this change.

Who has been indiscreet in speaking to the English? Surely not the officers … but who? Who is interested in his own glory? Who thinks that he is a superior human being who has more information than he has ever been privy to? (The inference is that it is Péron who has been talking about things of which he knows little.)

This week started as usual with the moderator sending out messages to all the participants suggesting their play. A group email also went out to the whole class reminding them about keeping up their Weekly Thoughts reflective journal and including any challenges experienced.

The doctor was worried about the captain’s health which was deteriorating. Baudin, having what is now called tuberculosis, couldn’t face returning to the cold, damp climate of France and opted to be put ashore in New Corsica where the warm weather may lengthen his life. He requested ‘*Chat à l’orange*’ (cat served in orange
sauce) for his farewell dinner! All of the characters sent him messages of condolence. *Ronsard* soon got over his sadness, however, and set his mind to inventing a surfboard which he thought would be useful in the seas around this continent.

The idea of an outright mutiny had been shelved due to time constraints. Group One in particular had expressed a desire to decide its own fate, however, the following was posted in the *Déroulement des Faits* (*Course of Events*) to initiate some of the decision-making that was required in order to complete the virtual voyage.

The End of the Voyage approaches …

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Our noble and courageous Commander is gravely ill. He tries to evade the grip of death by staying in New Corsica where the climate is milder and warmer than in France.

He writes a final letter to Governor King imploring him to be just with the indigenous people, the real owners of this colony – a revolutionary idea at the time!

Will *Nicolas Baudin* have the place that he deserves in history?

But now … it is time for those who remain to decide what will happen at the end of the voyage and the eventual return to France of this extraordinary expedition.

Much of the end was decided by *Baudin* as he had decided to leave the ship in New Corsica and the *Déroulement* reflected the postings that he had already sent out. In his farewell to all the characters, *Baudin* had a special message for each of them: to *Péron*, gratitude for his enthusiasm and a prediction that he would be the director of Marie-Antoinette’s zoo (again indicating that he was cognisant of the historical facts – Napoléon divorced Josephine soon after the return of the expedition and married Marie-Antoinette); to *L’Haridon*, acknowledgement of his care of the crew’s health; to *Ronsard* wishes of good luck for his invention (surfboard); to *Vasse*, a thank you for his gaiety and his cooking and a suggestion for a restaurant in Paris specialising in the cuisine of New Corsica; to *Petit*, acknowledgement of his artistic ability and devotion to his drawings – a future guardian of the Louvre, perhaps? He enquired about the whereabouts of *Lesueur* and *de Freycinet* and wished them well on their return voyage to France. A final mention was reserved for *the cat* to look after his remaining six lives!
Message no. 244
Posted by Nicolas Baudin on Fri 10:43

A tout l’équipage

Demain nous partirons : vous pour la France et moi, je reste ici.

Péron, merci à vous pour votre enthousiasme vers les animaux. Je suis sûr que vous serez le directeur du zoo de Marie-Antoinette.

L’Haridon, merci à vous pour votre dévouement à la santé de l’équipage. A vous nous devons nos vies.

Ronsard, bonne chance à vous avec votre invention. Peut-être vous la prenez à Hawaii tout de suite ?

Vasse, merci à vous pour votre joie de vivre et votre cuisine. Je pense que vous aurez un restaurant très cher à Paris spécialisé en cuisine du Nouveau Corse (‘kangourou au vin rouge’, et cetera).

Lesueur et de Freycinet, vous êtes où ? Bon voyage de retour à la France.

Et le chat. Garde le reste de tes six vies !

Au revoir

Baudin

The remaining characters also signed off on the Discussion board expressing regret at leaving this new land but also excitement about returning to France. Péron’s final message came as a reminder of the role bestowed on him by Baudin as the official “Observer of Man” in the first week – in it, he urged the colonialists to respect the original inhabitants of this land.

The final act for the web-based online role-play simulation was a session in the Chat Room where again the dialogue was lively. It lasted longer than the prescribed hour and the characters stayed as long as they could, and many looked regretful when they had to leave at the end of the designated hour due to prior commitments.
GROUP TWO

The demographic characteristics of Group 2 were similar to that of Group 1 in that the students’ educational backgrounds were very similarly distributed. However, when I later looked at the statistics (see Data Analysis in the next chapter), I realised that this group was considerably older had few students with good computing skills and these were to prove to be obstacles to their participation.

Week One

Déroulement des Faits : première semaine (‘Course of Events: Week One’ – see Appendix 4a for complete French version). Both groups were given the same situation in Weeks 1 and 2.

Group Two started off slowly with seemingly no direction. There was no word from the captain who was overwhelmed by the role-play requirement. I realised when he rang me that he wanted to withdraw from the French course completely. I had been unaware of how afraid he was of working on the computer but had been surprised that he had also decided not to be a mailpal, which would have provided him with support. It transpired that a friend had offered to help him to work online but had withdrawn the offer at the last moment.

However, due to help offered to him by another friend he decided to stay and participate in the simulation. I offered him a less demanding role, but he said that he had researched Baudin extensively and would retain that role. I was glad to have Baudin 2 back but it did create some initial technical problems as the technician had already removed him from the site and was in the process of reinstating him when he tried to post his profile. The result was that his profile had to be sent by email – an action that drew some criticism from his officers! Nevertheless, the captain was soon issuing stern orders and played his character very well.

The chat session at the end of the week resulted in Lesueur 2 and Petit 2 asking the doctor for advice as well as “la Mouette” (seagull), one of the academic advisors, having a lively conversation with the doctor. This group seemed much less inhibited.
in the chat room with synchronous interaction than in their asynchronous communication at other times of the role-play.

Week Two
Group 2 again had the same Déroulement des Faits : semaine deux (‘Course of events: Week Two’) as Group One. The main participants in the second were de Freycinet, the second officer; Petit 2, the artist; Le Chat 2, the cat, and Baudin 2 who started to issue orders to one and all.

De Freycinet had already taken a leadership role. After having little response from his subordinates and captain initially, the second officer could see that he needed to take charge and so asked not only the crew but the scientists and artists for reports on their findings to date in this new land. He also sent out an order for all the crew: “Follow the doctor’s instructions: To prevent scurvy, all the sailors must dance, play games and play musical instruments. This is an order to be carried out between four and five o’clock each afternoon.”

Message no. 152
Posted by Henri Desaulces de Freycinet on Fri, 22.54

Équipage, écoute bien ! Ici, les instructions de notre médecin :

D’empêcher le scorbut, tous les marins devraient danser, jouer aux jeux et jouer des instruments de musique.

Vous accepterez ça comme l’ordre entre quatre et cinq heures chaque soir.

Le second, de Freycinet

The doctor, L’Haridon 2, was ill, having just finished chemotherapy in real life. Time for another personal phone call from the moderator, after receiving a letter of withdrawal from the doctor. After an hour of conversation, it was decided that the moderator and the doctor would be mailpals with the moderator posting the doctor’s messages and sending the latest messages to the doctor through the postal service as he didn’t have a computer. He had tried the local library but found that with two-finger typing he only managed to post one message before his money ran out – not a very user-friendly system. The fact that this student was not able to cope with the task due to health and lack of computer literacy raises some equity issues that I
should have been more aware of in the preparation of the role-play. The intensity of the role-play simulation is something for which many of the students were not prepared and they had perhaps not fully understood what their commitment would entail.

The second chat session was better than the first with Baudin 2 coming to grips with the operation of the computer. With L’Haridon 2, the doctor, and Péron 2 missing, it was left to de Freycinet, Petit 2 and the cat to do most of the conversing. There was a bit of a problem in that the intensity of the ‘chat’ caused the system to slow down and block Petit 2’s contributions for several minutes at a time. The mailpal 2 was also a bit frustrated at the length of time that it took for his contribution to appear but this appeared to be due to the fact that it was a shared role. It’s something that the technician will look at for future simulations.

Group 2 appeared to be considerably more at ease with synchronous interaction in the Chat Room than in asynchronous communication at other times during the week. What they had to say did indicate that they had read the messages in the Discussion during the week even though they had not necessarily responded. For instance, to cover Ronsard 2’s absence, the doctor had implied in the Discussion that he might be a heavy drinker. He brought this up again in the Chat Room by suggesting that Ronsard 2 may be below deck, drinking again. [He said: “Où est Ronsard ? Il descend dans l’entrepont et il boit de nouveau, je crois.”]

De Freycinet came to Ronsard 2’s defense by saying that he is a serious fellow who doesn’t drink too much alcohol, except in port: [“Ronsard est sérieux. Il ne boit pas trop d’alcool, seulement en port”]. L’Haridon 2 himself (and not his moderator-mailpal), seized on that comment and, using a play on the word “port” retorted that he meant a port (wine) or five! [This was his comment in the Chat: “Un porto ou cinq, vous voulez dire !”] The ability to employ a play on words, joke or tease, is an indication of a high level of fluidity and fluency in the foreign language according to Morrow (1981).

De Freycinet commented as he left the Chat session that their captain is so inept as to have sent his profile by email! I immediately sent a private email to Ronsard 2,
the engineer, asking him to post a notice in the Discussion telling the captain that the communication system on board was now functioning properly and that he, Baudin 2, should no longer have any problems.

Week Three

The ships of the two groups were in two different seas so the first paragraph of Déroulement : semaine trois (‘Course of events: Week Three’) has the ship departing from East Timor. Otherwise, the incidents were similar in that the ships were to meet the English ship of Flinders. However, this group displayed little interest in Flinders and did not develop that particular incident.

There have been many deaths in Timor and so we leave East Timor with sorrow. The crew tries to console the Captain who is depressed after the cruel loss of one of his closest friends, a gardener who has often sailed with him [NB: gardeners were on board to look after the flora].

We follow the south coast of this vast land heading for Van Dieman’s Land because summer is approaching. One day see a ship on the horizon and are surprised to see that it is an English ship. Captain Baudin drops anchor.

After communicating by signal, the two captains meet. Baudin names this place Encounter Bay. The English captain is Matthew Flinders. Baudin and Flinders exchange details of their exploration to this point. Relations are cordial and Flinders escorts us to Port Jackson where we are welcomed by Governor King.

We remain there for six weeks repairing our corvettes and restocking supplies for the rest of our expedition. Baudin buys another ship from the English, the Casuarina.

The scientists and artists continue their research and meet Aborigines not far from the English port.

Each week I contacted the participants and tried to keep the momentum going. In the case, of group two it was more a case of trying to get any action. I sent out messages to everyone suggesting and encouraging personal interaction.

This was followed up later in the week, asking those who seemed to be inactive if they were still able to participate or, in the case of a couple of characters, if they would prefer that someone else replace them in their role. Péron 2 who had
responded to only one email, but felt that he had participated as much as anyone else, took great exception to the email but insisted that he would continue to play rather than have anyone else take his part … he was never heard of again!

At this point, Péron 2 was to commence his tactics in undermining Baudin and work on how he could gain recognition for himself upon the return to France. However, with no word from Péron 2, it was largely de Freycinet who tried to find willing collaborators amongst the participants.

The student who had committed to playing Ronsard 2, the engineer, was suddenly offered a place in France in which to complete his doctorate and so had to withdraw for very genuine reasons. “La Mouette” from the academic staff stepped in to take his place.

In the meantime, de Freycinet had been trying to engage the other officers with little response and acted immediately to a suggestion from me, as moderator, that he engage the artists in communication. His messages indicate a deep understanding of de Freycinet’s personal qualities and of the historical and cultural nuances of the day. For example, he made it clear that he was an aristocrat and not interested in the problems of those whom he considered to be peasants.

On the Wednesday of this third week, there had been no postings in either group since Sunday and the ship appeared to be becalmed. However, by five o’clock that evening there had been quite a bit of activity and the play had resumed. Throughout the role-play, there was very little threaded dialogue in this group where the characters responded to each other and collaborated on any part of the process. Baudin 2’s postings demonstrated a great deal of thought and attention to historical fact. I very much enjoyed reading them but I wonder if anyone except de Freycinet and Petit 2 recognised their significance. Baudin 2 issued many orders. It is not known if they were ever carried out as there was no direct response to them from the crew and passengers.

De Freycinet desperately tried to engage others. I suspect that his initial impression of Baudin 2 dictated his attitude towards him for the remainder of the role-play and
as Baudin 2 had been unreachable in the first week, he dismissed him as a possible collaborator. At first he tried to form relationships with the other officers and when this did not work, he asked the artists and scientists to send him reports on their work. Petit 2 also tried to form alliances and met with little response.

In week three, there was a long threaded dialogue which seemed to be a good omen for the future (see Appendix 14 for threaded dialogue). However, we did not know what technical hazards lay ahead in week four.

This long exchange all started with the doctor, L’Haridon 2, endeavouring to engage Péron 2 in dialogue by asking him to assist him in the surgery. The doctor even suggested that he might learn some more modern methods in medicine from Péron 2, given his recent studies at medical school.

Message no. 186
Posted by François Étienne L’Haridon on Wed 12:36

Monsieur Péron,

Je sais que vous avez commencé des études en médecine avant d'être embaucher comme aide zoologiste pour cette expédition. Peut-être vous pourriez m'aider dans le cabinet quand vous avez le temps ? Ça sera très gentil de votre part. En plus, je pourrais apprendre des méthodes plus modernes.... et vous pourriez apprendre le système de soigner les marins.

J'attends votre réponse,

L'Haridon

Out of courtesy and protocol, L'Haridon 2 sent a message to de Freycinet stating that, as there are many sick people on board and that, as Péron 2 seems to be doing very little, he could help in the ship’s surgery.
Message no. 187
Posted by François Étienne L’Haridon on Wed 12:38

Monsieur de Freycinet,

Vous savez qu’il y a toujours beaucoup de malades à bord. Je suggère que M. Péron pourrait m’aider car il me semble qu’il ne fait pas grande chose maintenant que nous sommes sur la mer.

Qu’en pensez-vous ? L’H

De Freycinet was outraged and sent L’Haridon a stern message reminding him that Péron is absent-minded and accident-prone. He warns L’Haridon not to entrust his patients to Péron.

Message no. 190 [Branch from no. 187]
Posted by Henri Desaulces de Freycinet on Wed 21:41

Docteur Haridon, Monsieur Péron a l’air du professeur distrait. Il est sujet aux accidents et il s’est perdu plusieurs sur la terre. Il se rend compte de l’heure qu’il est ? Non, jamais ! Vous lui faites confiances – avec les malades ? Je ne pense pas. A votre péril ! H de F.

L’Haridon accepted the advice of his superior and conceded that he was wrong, adding that the sailors themselves don’t have confidence in Péron.

Message no. 197 [Branch from no. 190]
Posted by François Étienne L’Haridon on Thu 10:32

Monsieur de Freycinet,

En réfléchissant, je crois que vous avez raison. En plus, les marins n’ont pas confiance en lui. L’H.
De Freycinet reminded L’Haridon 2 that Péron 2 is not organised. He is young and has a lot to learn.

Message no. 206  [Branch from no. 197]
Posted by Henri Desaulces de Freycinet on Fri 20:36

Péron ne s’organise pas. Il est jeune et il doit apprendre beaucoup.

Ronsard 2 responded to this by voicing his lack of confidence in Péron 2 and warning that he is not to be trusted.

Message no. 210  [Branch from no. 206]
Posted by François-Michel Ronsard on Sat 12:29

Aussi…je ne lui ferais pas confiance du tout…j’ai peur qu’il est un faux jeton ! …qui n’est pas fidèle à notre Capitaine … ne le quittez pas des yeux !

De Freycinet replied quickly, asking if Ronsard 2 was speaking about the same person, Péron 2. He said that he doubts his ability to do the work. He doesn’t know what samples to look for (on land) and he brings back all that he sees. Who chose Péron for this expedition, asks de Freycinet.

Message no. 213  [Branch from no. 210]
Posted by Henri Desaulces de Freycinet on Sat 13:37

Nous parlons de la même personne, n’est-ce pas ? Je parle de François Péron. Et vous ? Je n’ai pas la confiance de sa capacité de faire le boulot. Il ne sait pas quels échantillons de chercher. Il apporte tout ce qu’il voit. Qui l’a choisi ?

This discourse continued into Week Four and the results can be seen in the following account.
Week Four

The *Déroulement des Faits : semaine quatre* (‘Course of Events: Week Four’) was once again similar to that of Group 1. This week started with my sending out messages to all the participants suggesting possibilities for their interaction with the other characters. A group email also went out to the whole class reminding them about keeping up their Weekly Thoughts reflective journal and highlighting the inclusion of any challenges experienced. Those who had not participated in the past week, namely Péron 2 and Lesueur 2, were told that their absence had been covered by minor illness in the role-play in a general statement.

It was also suggested to the doctor that he report to the captain that Péron 2 and Lesueur 2 were well again and could resume their duties. The latter two did not respond to the doctor’s messages. In private messages, de Freycinet and Petit 2 were encouraged to conspire. The idea of an outright mutiny had been shelved due to time constraints.

*L’Haridon 2* responded to de Freycinet’s question asking who had chosen Péron 2 as a member of the expedition. He said that he was present with the captain when Péron 2 had delayed the departure of the ships due to his late arrival at the port of Le Havre, France. The captain had indicated that he had not chosen nor known the assistant zoologist prior to this but did, however, always endeavour to be just in his treatment of Péron 2.

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**Message no. 218  [Branch from no 213]**

*Posted by François Étienne L’Haridon on Mon 15:07*

Péron doit avoir les contacts. Je sais que ce n’était pas Capitaine Baudin qui l’a choisi, car on était ensemble quand Péron est arrivé à bord au Havre, plusieurs heures en retard.

Le Capitaine était furieux, mais il a essayé d’être toujours juste avec Péron.
By then de Freycinet felt that he was forming some relationships and could advance his plan for the future of the expedition. He replied to L’Haridon 2 by suggesting a secret meeting the following evening.

Message no. 219 [Branch from no. 218]
Posted by Henri Desaulces de Freycinet on Mon 23:08

Merci L’H. J’ai besoin de parler avec vous en secret mardi soir. Je vous enverrai un email.

He sent a similar message (no. 220) to Ronsard 2 who replied that he would await his message as this most urgent matter needed to be discussed. He then suggested that perhaps this person (Péron) who creates such havoc could .. perhaps .. meet with a serious accident.

Message no. 221 [Branch from no. 220]
Posted by François-Michel Ronsard on Tue 11:13

J’attendrai votre message Monsieur ! .. je crains qu’il faut que nous discutions cette affaire de la plus haute importance…si nous identifierons cette personne qui sème la discorde…peut-être il aurait un accident grave..

And so the scene was set for some collaboration to take place in plotting the overthrow of Péron 2 who was a threat to the good name of Captain Baudin.

The end of the voyage approaches …

Our noble and courageous Commander is gravely ill. He writes a final letter to Governor King imploring him to be just with the indigenous people, the real owners of this colony – a revolutionary idea at the time!

Will Nicolas Baudin have the place that he deserves in history?

But now … it is time for those who remain to decide what will happen at the end of the voyage and the eventual return to France of this extraordinary expedition.

De Freycinet did try, firstly, to rally the officers and then the artists, to throw Péron 2 overboard and take command of the ship when Baudin 2 died. He then planned to sail the ship to a remote island which they would inhabit rather than return to France. Sadly, due to technical failures of the system beyond our control (or perhaps lack of
computing skills of the participants) and lack of response from the other participants, 
de Freycinet was frustrated in his efforts. This was a great shame as he had been the 
most active participant of either group and had played magnificently throughout. In 
the future, I would extend the time frame of the simulation in order to permit the 
students to finalise their activities.

The two groups experienced such diverse circumstances, making any collaborative 
learning that took place much more satisfying for Group One than for Group Two. 
The possible explanations for that will be discussed in the following chapter where I 
will evaluate the findings from the two questionnaires, the participants’ reflective 
journals and the comments from the debriefing session.
CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

To answer the research questions of whether a social constructivist approach can enhance foreign language acquisition and whether an online role-play simulation can affect communication skills and fluency in FLA, interpretive data analysis was used to assess the findings. Analysis of this study was performed primarily through observation of the students’ participation in the role-play and interpretive analysis of the students’ responses to two questionnaires and their weekly reflections as well as their input at the debriefing session. An account of the events observed are outlined chronologically in the previous chapter and critical events, individual participation, processes and issues are discussed more fully in the following section.

STRATEGIES FOR OBSERVATION

The third year TAFE students of French in the web-based online role-play simulation came from various backgrounds and a range of age groups. What they had in common from my personal observation was an enthusiasm for French language and culture which can be evidenced in their giving up their Saturdays to attend a 4-hour class. Although somewhat nervous at the prospect of working online, most of the students applied themselves with undiminished commitment.

From the class of twenty students, we eventually had seventeen students who started on Baudin’s voyage. These were divided into two groups at random.

As the moderator, I logged on to the site two to three times each day to observe what interaction was taking place and to see if there were any questions directed at me. It was my aim to respond to any queries in the shortest time possible so that any emerging problems could be solved and not impinge on the flow of communication.

Observation of the amount of individual ‘hits’ on the site, the tally of discussion messages read and posted, and the number of emails sent provided a useful indication of the personal involvement of each participant.
Observational data, particularly through my own involvement as moderator in the simulation, gave me greater insight and understanding of the process than I may have had, had I simply interviewed the participants after the completion of the role-play.

**INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS**

Interpretive analysis ascribes meaning to the participants’ words and interaction (Wadsworth, 1997, p.81). In this study, I was concerned with the students’ ability to interact and communicate effectively rather than solely evaluating their grammar and spelling. So long as the meaning was evident, I felt that this constituted successful communication within the Baudin community.

Data was collected from the students by means of pre-simulation and post-simulation questionnaires, four weekly questions reflecting their learning, and the debriefing session conducted after the conclusion of the voyage.

**QUESTIONNAIRE 1**

This questionnaire was administered prior to commencement of the web-based online role-play simulation in order to ascertain what the students’ expectations of the study were as well as the demographics of the group (see Appendix 15 for Questionnaire 1). This information helped in answering the first research question regarding the students’ demographics, attitudes towards role-plays, personal perceptions of online activities and individual computing abilities.

The Demographics

It is common in Central TAFE language classes to have a wide range of backgrounds and this class is no exception. The students varied greatly in age and were tertiary students, professionals and those in retirement. This made for a wide range of interests and sensibilities but we found that camaraderie soon existed within
the class despite the age differences. This third year French class was predominately female, with only four male students. With five of the seventeen students being over 65 years of age, and four between the ages of 25 and 34, over half of the students belonged to these two categories (see Figure 3, below). From the age ranges given and information that I had gleaned in the classroom, I calculated that the average age of students in Group 1 was 42 years of age while that of Group 2 was 58 years. In fact, once I took the only member of Group 2 who was under 50 years of age out of the equation, the average age was 62 years, with these participants ranging between 50 and 73 years of age.

Gender and Age

![Demographics: Gender and Age](image)

Figure 3: Distribution of students by gender and age group.

Education

The students had varying educational backgrounds but this is never a drawback as they had an obvious interest in the French language and enlarged their French vocabulary by learning about each other’s professions and interests in French. In this particular group, we had a teacher, a consultant, an occupational therapist, a secretary, an information technology technician, an accountant, and an office manager, two tertiary students, one high school student, five retirees and two who do
home duties. Whilst nine of the seventeen students had completed university qualifications, six students had other tertiary qualifications and only two named high school as their highest qualification (see Figure 4). The distribution between the two groups as far as levels of education was equitable and did not disadvantage either group in any way.

Figure 4: Highest level of education reached by each student.

Computing Skills

As previously stated, the groups were chosen at random and it was not until the data was being analysed that I realised that Group 1 consisted mainly of participants who feel very confident about their computer skills (See Figure 5). Group 2 was less fortunate with only one member who had superior computing skills. However, this member did not contribute greatly to the community.
Confidence in Computer Skills

Figure 5: Students’ own perception of their computer literacy.

Only four of those who were university-educated rated themselves as having high level computer skills. Only three of the university-educated students were under the age of forty-five which would indicate that they probably did not use computers during their studies. Therefore, there seems to be no correlation between educational standing and computer literacy skills.

Students’ attitudes towards role-play simulation prior to their participation

The students were also asked to evaluate a series of statements in relation to their personal feelings towards participation in an online role-play simulation in order to give me some indication of their current perceptions of role-plays in the French classroom as well as their understanding and expectations of their performance in the impending online activity (see Appendix 15, question 6).

This questionnaire was administered after the induction sessions and prior to the actual participation in the role-play simulation so that the students had experienced some interface with the WebCT website. In the following tables where students rated their personal feelings about their impending participation in the online role-play and role-plays in general, ‘1’ meant ‘strongly disagree’; ‘2’, ‘disagree’; 3, ‘not
sure’; ‘4’, ‘agree’; and ‘5’, ‘strongly agree’ (see Table 1 for Group 1, and Table 2 for Group 2). There were nine students in Group 1 and eight students in Group 2.

Table 1 presents the individual groups and the total of the two groups. The majority of the students (eleven out of seventeen) seemed unsure of any enjoyment to be found in participation in classroom role-plays while five definitely did not enjoy role-play conducted in front of other class members (see Table 1, a). The students were fairly evenly spread out on their opinion of whether role-plays are fun (see Table 1, b). All but two of the seventeen students felt that being able to communicate in French gave them a sense of achievement (see Table 1, c).

Again most of students (ten out of seventeen) were unsure about their confidence in voicing their opinion in class. Only one person in Group 1 declared that he confidently voices an opinion in class and three people in Group 2 (see Table 1, d). As facilitator in their classroom, I found these statements puzzling as there were several outspoken students, often giving rise to lively debate, in that class.

Twelve students agreed that the online role-play will give them time to think about what they are going to say, indicating that they comprehended the benefits of asynchronous communication (see Table 1, e).

The majority (thirteen out of seventeen) felt that playing a historic character would give them a sense of French culture (see Table 1, f). Only three students were unsure and one strongly disagreed. This may reflect the class’s enthusiasm in researching the background of the expedition which most of them conducted in their own time in term one. A few were less motivated to undertake extra research.

Almost half of the students (eight out of seventeen) were unsure as to whether they would be less shy online (see Table 1, g). I feel that this reflects their uncertainty about what was about to unfold in this role-play which was a totally new experience for all concerned.

Eight people strongly disagreed and three disagreed (totalling eleven of the seventeen) that they were anxious about dealing with online technology, while only
one agreed and only two strongly agreed, indicating that the majority of students were comfortable in using the technology (see Table 1, h).

Students were concerned about their ability to communicate in French with eight students agreeing and seven being unsure (see Table 1, i). Here I felt that some self-doubt is natural prior to embarking on a new experience.

The students in Group 1 were split between strongly agreeing, agreeing and being unsure that the moderator would be online to help them during the simulation (five strongly agreed, five agreed, five were unsure, and two disagreed) (see Table 1, j).

Overall the two groups felt that it would be easy to interact with others whom they could not see. Six of each group did not anticipate having difficulty in such interaction, while two of Group 2 strongly agreed that interaction would be difficult (see Table 1, k).

Ten of the students felt that they would be able to express themselves openly, given their anonymity, while five were unsure and two Group 2 students strongly disagreed on this point (see Table 1, l).

In examining the two groups, a feeling of greater confidence and preparedness for the role-play simulation is evident in Group 1. The participants in Group 2 expressed more reserve and uncertainty about their abilities to perform well and their expectations of the role-play. It must be remembered that the roles had been assigned a few days prior to administering Questionnaire 1 and, at that stage, I was not aware that there were fewer computer-literate participants in Group 2.
Table 1: Personal feelings of students prior to participation in the role play.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) I enjoy taking part in role-plays in my French class.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Role-plays are fun.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Being able to communicate in French gives me a sense of achievement.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I am confident in voicing my opinion in class.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Online role-play will give me time to think about what I am going to say.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Taking the part of a historic character will give me a greater sense of French culture.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) I am less shy in an online role-play than I am in class.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) I am anxious about dealing with online technology.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Thinking of what to ‘say’ / communicate in French will be difficult.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>j) I am happy that the moderators will be able to help me online.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>k) I think it will be hard to interact with people that I can’t see.</td>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ON-SITE ACTIVITY

The students’ commitment and involvement in the role-play can be seen in the amount of discussion postings that they read (see Figures 6 & 7) and posted (see Figure 8) as well as the number of emails that they sent to other characters (see Table 2). Apart from the mailpals who relied on their partners to inform them of the direction of the storyline, and L’Haridon 1, who as co-moderator could read the postings from the Designer View of WebCT, the number of read messages gave us an indication of who was actively engaged in the simulation.

Péron 1 and de Freycinet (2) read all the messages. Baudin 1 had to go overseas on business at the end of the role-play and did not see the last two messages. Petit 2 read all but five messages and faithfully faxed all the messages to his mailpal throughout the four weeks which was a huge commitment. Petit 1 reported a problem in having ‘read’ messages still tagged as ‘unread’ and was most indignant to see fourteen unread messages indicated when he insisted that he has read all the messages – the technical support person is looking into this glitch. Vasse was away for the middle two weeks of the role-play and participated well upon his return, but was not able to read all his messages in the remaining time.

The level of participation between the two groups was highlighted by the overall level of activity of Group 1 over that of Group 2. The characters in Group 1 read a greater number of messages and were more engaged within the community than Group 2.

Group 1 had a higher level of activity with around 95 postings to each character (Le Chat was moved from Group 2 to Group 1 after the first week, thus the discrepancy in the total), while, apart from three keen participants, Group 2 averaged around 73 postings. This is indicative of their lower level of activity, possibly due to low degree of computer literacy (see Figure 4), and highlights the frustration felt by de Freycinet who tried so hard to instigate collaboration with the other members of the community.
It is interesting to note that Baudin, Péron, Petit and Lesueur received fewer messages than de Freycinet, L’Haridon and Ronsard. These last three characters were attempting to increase collaboration in the later stages but did not manage to bring de Freycinet’s plan to fruition, mainly due to technical problems. Petit was in fact very active and did read more messages than all the other participants except for de Freycinet. However, de Freycinet started his efforts at engagement with the ship’s crew before endeavouring to initiate communication with the artists, thus his interaction with Petit did not commence until the third week of the simulation.

![Group 1 Postings Read](chart)

**Figure 6:** Number of postings read and unread by each character in group 1.
Figure 7: Number of postings read and unread by each character in group 2.

The number of messages posted is perhaps not consistent with the number of messages read (see Figures 6, 7 and 8). In Group 1, Baudin and Petit sent the largest number of messages and did demonstrate a high level of interactivity within the community of learners. Péron read all of the messages but did not post as many himself. However, those messages by Péron indicated that careful reflection had taken place prior to posting them.

Group 2 struggled to form any sense of ‘community’. They sent 126 postings as opposed to Group 1’s 143; moreover, most of Group 2’s postings did not result in threaded discussions where others responded to the initial message. De Freycinet tried to initiate interaction, firstly with the officers and then with the artists. Petit 2 was very active and did contribute, not only to his own character but on behalf of his mailpal and also Baudin 2, for whom he entered many messages when he had problems of access. L’Haridon 2’s contribution cannot be included in the equation as the moderator submitted many of the postings on behalf of L’Haridon 2. Whilst these figures do not appear to vary too greatly from Group 1, there was no cohesion in this group as nearly all of de Freycinet’s attempts at interaction, collaboration and collusion met with silence. Yet again, this would suggest that the participants’ lack
of confidence in interfacing with computers detracted from their experience and hindered the development of a meaningful community.

Figure 8: Number of postings sent by each character in Groups 1 and 2.

It is interesting to note that the active members of Group 2 used the email facility considerably more than Group 1 (see Table 2). Baudin 1 used email often to contact the moderator to check on details of the Déroulement des Faits (‘Course of Events’) and Vasse was absent for most of the month so had several questions to ask of the moderator upon his return. The use of email for the rest of Group 1 was negligible.

Baudin 2 used email a lot to issue orders to various individuals on the ship. The three other active participants of Group 2, de Freycinet, L’Haridon 2 and Petit 2 used the email to try to plot to overthrow Péron 2, after the Captain’s demise in order to take the ship to an island instead of returning to France (where Péron was to claim all the glory of the expedition for himself). The outcome of this interaction could have resulted in some meaningful collaboration had there been more follow-up messages, however, the site access was sporadic during the final week of the role-play making communication almost impossible for this group.
Table 2: Emails received and sent between students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Emails</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Emails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unread</td>
<td>Rec’d</td>
<td>Sent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baudin 1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronsard 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon 1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasse</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mailpal 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Chat 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**QUESTIONNAIRE 2**

In the post-simulation questionnaire, students were asked to answer questions using a scale where ‘1’ equals “strongly disagree”; ‘3’, not sure; and ‘5’, “strongly agree” in regards to their preferred experience and their actual experience (see Appendix 16). The preferred experience asks them about how they would have liked the experience to be while the actual experience related to their personal experience in this situation.

Students were asked to answer questions on their own learning, interaction with other characters, the technology, the content and the moderator. The questionnaire design was modelled on the Constructivist On-line Learning Environment Survey (COLLES) questionnaire, designed by Maor & Taylor (2000). The COLLES (Taylor & Maor, 2000) is based on previous learning environment instruments that were used and validated such as the Constructivist Learning Environment Survey (CLES) for use in school science (Taylor, Fraser & White, 1994), and the Constructivist Multimedia Learning Environment Survey (CMLES) for use by teachers in school trailing innovative multimedia programs (Maor & Fraser, in press). A further two open-ended questions were added asking the students to state which aspects of the process they liked most and least and their reasons.
French Language Skills

In regards to their own learning, the students’ perception was that they had improved their French language skills and were able to express themselves more freely (see Table 3, Items 1 and 3). Sixteen of the seventeen students would have liked to increase their ability to communicate in French, however, only twelve found this to be true (see Item 1). Most felt that they would have liked the events of the role-play to stimulate their thinking (see Item 2). Four students who strongly agreed and seven agreed that their research prior to the commencement of the role-play was useful and this was evident as they wove historic facts into their dialogue (see Item 3). But six were unsure if their research prior to the commencement was helpful in developing their character.

Fourteen of the students would have preferred to influence the course of events but only four felt that they had any influence at all (see Item 6). Not unexpectedly, those four participants were in Group 1 (see Appendices 17 & 18 for a breakdown of the individual groups).

Table 3: Students’ perception of their own learning during the role play.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Preferred experience</th>
<th>Actual experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I found that my ability to communicate in French improved.</td>
<td>1 9 7</td>
<td>2 3 9 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The ‘events’ of the role-play stimulated my thinking.</td>
<td>1 8 8</td>
<td>1 1 1 10 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I found that I was able to express myself more freely in French.</td>
<td>1 5 9</td>
<td>1 1 5 3 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The role-play added variety to the French course.</td>
<td>1 3 5 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The research that I had carried out prior to the role-play was useful in developing my character.</td>
<td>1 9 7</td>
<td>1 5 7 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I was able to influence the course of events through collaboration with some of the other characters.</td>
<td>3 8 6</td>
<td>6 7 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interaction with other characters

In their interaction with the other characters, the students, particularly those in Group 1 (see Appendices 17 & 18 for a breakdown of the individual groups), found that their confidence grew over the 4-week period and they also appreciated having the time to formulate their answers due to the asynchronous nature of the site (see Table 4, Items 7 and 8). Seven students would have strongly preferred their confidence to grow but only three found this to be so in their actual experience (see Item 7). This may have been due to their impatience to improve more quickly or, as in the case of some, a lack of realisation of just how much they had improved during the period of the role-play simulation. According to Items 10 and 11, fourteen of the seventeen students expected to find it easier to converse in the Chat Room as the role-play progressed while, in reality, only eleven experienced this. However, the majority of the students found that they could communicate more easily as time went on, both asynchronously through the discussion board and by email, and synchronously in the Chat Room. The students’ expectations and actual experiences in responding more quickly, conversing spontaneously in the Chat Room, and others’ empathy with them were fairly equitable. The three people who found it difficult to communicate in the Chat Room were from Group 2, again highlighting possible problems of those with low level computing skills.

Seven of the students weren’t sure if they wanted other students to empathise with their attempts to communicate which could indicate a lack of anticipation of relationship building. Interestingly, there were only two in each group who were still uncertain and eleven who felt that there was empathy from others (see Item 12).

One student chose not to answer this section nor the next section on technology.
Table 4: Students’ perception of their interactions with other characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Preferred experience</th>
<th>Actual experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Over the course of the role-play, my confidence in interacting with others grew.</td>
<td>1 3 5 7</td>
<td>3 4 7 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I liked having time to work out my responses to the other characters (rather than having to respond immediately).</td>
<td>1 1 7 7</td>
<td>1 1 8 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I found that I was able to respond more quickly as the role-play progressed.</td>
<td>3 4 9</td>
<td>3 5 5 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. It became easier to ‘converse’ in French in the Chat Room.</td>
<td>2 2 12</td>
<td>3 2 8 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I found it difficult to be spontaneous in the Chat Room.</td>
<td>6 3 2 1 2</td>
<td>2 6 3 4 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I felt that the other participants empathised with my attempts to communicate.</td>
<td>4 4 7</td>
<td>1 7 6 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The technology

Fourteen of the sixteen respondents would have preferred to find the induction to be useful to them in the actual role-play simulation. Only ten found the introductory sessions to be helpful (see Table 5, Item 13). Four people expected to find the computer and internet difficult to use and six students discovered that they had difficulties (see Item 14). Four participants foresaw internet access as a problem and seven experienced this (see Item 15). Nine students had no difficulty in using the computer or accessing Internet while seven did have access problems. All but two of the respondents expected and experienced a growth in confidence in using the technology during the course of the simulation, which was a positive outcome (see Item 16). However, four of the participants found that their confidence did not increase to the degree that they would have preferred. Ten students hoped that online discussions would be preferable to face-to-face classroom discussions and fourteen found this to be a reality, demonstrating their improved ability in employment of the technology (see Item 17). In fact, fourteen of the students stated that they became more confident in using the technology over the four-week period. Only two people expected their lack of computer skills to hinder their participation, while four found
that to be their actual experience (see Item 18). The two students who were aware that their computing skills were not adequate become ‘mailpals’ and I realise that I should have encouraged the others more forcibly to become mailpals as well so that they could have had a more rewarding experience.

Table 5: Students’ perception of their interface with the technology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Preferred experience</th>
<th>Actual experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. I found that the introductory sessions using WebCT prior to the role-play were helpful.</td>
<td>2 4 10</td>
<td>1 2 3 7 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I found the computer and internet difficult to use.</td>
<td>11 1 2 2</td>
<td>9 1 2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I found it hard to have adequate access to the web-site.</td>
<td>8 2 1 1 3</td>
<td>7 2 2 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I became more confident in using the technology over the 4-week period.</td>
<td>2 3 11</td>
<td>2 7 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I found it easier to participate in online discussions than face-to-face classroom discussions.</td>
<td>2 4 3 7</td>
<td>1 1 9 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I felt that my lack of confidence in using computers hindered my participation.</td>
<td>10 2 2 1 1</td>
<td>9 1 2 1 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The content

The students for the most part anticipated and felt that they gained an insight into the conditions experienced by French explorers, the conventions of their social standing on board as well as the French involvement in the exploration of the Western Australian coast two hundred years ago (see Table 6). All confirmed that their preferred experience in relation to these statements (see Items 19 – 24) was positive apart from three who weren’t sure and one who didn’t feel the online interaction should be fun (see Item 22). Most of the participants stated that they found it easy to remember to communicate in a tone appropriate to their standing on board ship, thus displaying an affinity with the persona that they had embraced (see Item 20). Sixteen of the seventeen respondents would have liked to have learnt more about the social conventions of French culture of the day, but only seven deemed that they had had
this experience (see Item 21). This may have been due to the fact that many of the participants were engaging primarily with relevant vocabulary and did not graduate to a higher level of involvement during the short span of the simulation period. Not everyone wished to change history and, while ten stated that they enjoyed the experience of manipulating history through their online interactions, others found this irritating, as presented later in the ‘least favourite aspects of the role-play’ (see Item 22). All of the participants wished to expand their knowledge of the French language and culture through this experience but only thirteen considered this to be the case (see Item 24). There was one person in each group who did not feel that he had made progress. Having reviewed the individual responses, I would say that one of the two negative assessments is due to harsh self-criticism and the other to lack of participation.

Table 6: Students’ interaction with the content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Preferred experience</th>
<th>Actual experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19. Taking part in a historic role-play gave me a greater insight into the conditions experienced by explorers in 1800s.</td>
<td>1  5  11</td>
<td>2  11  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I found it easy to remember my social standing on the ship and express myself appropriately.</td>
<td>1  9  7</td>
<td>1  4  9  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I became more aware of the social conventions of the day in French culture.</td>
<td>1  11  5</td>
<td>1  3  6  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. It was fun to be able to change the (historic) course of events through our own interactions.</td>
<td>1  3  5  8</td>
<td>3  4  7  3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I learned more about French exploration and its contribution to W.A.</td>
<td>4  13</td>
<td>1  7  9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I expanded my knowledge of the French language and culture through this experience.</td>
<td>5  12</td>
<td>1  1  2  12  1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The moderator

The moderator was mainly asked questions by the two captains who wanted to know when and if they could change course or instigate some action. Captain Baudin 1, for instance, kept asking if non-playing members could be raised from the dead or if he could introduce new characters. I decided that this could potentially result in chaos and so disallowed it. He was also keen to resurrect Vasse earlier than was possible so I had to break a cardinal rule and tell him in a private email that Vasse was unable to communicate online for two weeks. These events suggest an interesting scenario between the virtual world and the real world which we could not ignore. It is the role of the moderator to be sensitive and aware of what is occurring in both worlds so that any incidents arising from either situation can be dealt with appropriately.

The participants’ expectations of the moderator appeared to closely resemble what actually took place. Twelve of the seventeen students felt that their questions were understood and thirteen thought that they were answered to their satisfaction (see Table 7, Item 25). Eleven didn’t feel frustrated at the response time from me as I logged on two or three times each day (see Item 27).

Fourteen felt that their comments were responded to adequately (see Item 28). As fewer than fourteen actually asked anything of the moderator online, I assumed that they may be referring to queries that came up in the classroom where normal French classes were continuing and some comments about the role-play and the process did occur, particularly in the first fortnight.

Four people indicated that they would have preferred to have needed to ask the moderator for more guidance, while seven actually found that they needed to ask for guidance (see Item 29). This seems to be a fairly true self-realisation as the moderator was approached mainly by Baudin 1, Baudin 2, de Freycinet, Vasse, Petit 1 and Petit 2.
The respondents were divided on the issue of whether they wanted to influence the action themselves rather than have the moderator making suggestions. Nine people expected to want to influence the course of events themselves, with only four disagreeing. However, in the actual role-play, eight people were in disagreement with this statement (see Item 29). This suggests that the participants came to a realisation that despite having a lot of latitude in the direction of the storyline, they did need some guidance from the moderator. Those students who were most active online, indicated a willingness to take on a more innovative role in directing the conclusion to the storyline. They indicated this in their reflective journals and vocally during the regular class.

Table 7: Students’ interaction with the moderator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Preferred experience</th>
<th>Actual experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I found that the moderator understood my questions.</td>
<td>2 2 13</td>
<td>5 4 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. The moderator was able to answer my questions to my satisfaction.</td>
<td>1 4 12</td>
<td>4 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I felt frustrated because it took too long to get a reply to my comments.</td>
<td>6 4 2 3 2</td>
<td>6 5 2 3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I felt that my comments were responded to adequately.</td>
<td>1 1 7 8</td>
<td>1 2 10 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I didn’t feel the need to ask the moderator for any guidance.</td>
<td>1 3 3 4 6</td>
<td>3 4 3 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I liked to try to influence the course of events myself rather than have the moderator make suggestions.</td>
<td>1 3 4 5 4</td>
<td>3 5 2 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final section of Questionnaire 2 asked the students about what they liked most and what they liked least in relation to their participation in this online role-play simulation.
What the students like most:

The students liked the historical aspect of the study as well as the enjoyment and fun of the interaction. Some displayed imagination and inventiveness at creating situations that deviated from the real story, but added to the role-play. Several relished developing their ‘character’ and others tried to work out who the other participants in their group were.

Interaction in the Chat Room was also appreciated with several students mentioning that they felt that they became more fluent as the weeks went by. Many, particularly the Le Chat 1 had this to say:

_In the chat room – it wasn’t easy to start at first, but as everyone entered the chat room, conversations began to develop. I enjoyed it because it encouraged me to think what I would like to say in French and I began to converse in French simultaneously with the other participants. Whether my sentences were correct or incorrect, I felt encouraged to say (or type) more French and I felt happy that I was able to converse in French._

(Questionnaire 2, p.4., see Appendix 19)

Le Chat 2 enjoyed teasing others in the Chat Room and reported the following:

_In once given a new character (formerly a ‘mailpal’), I found myself able to ‘chat’ quite quickly to the others. I enjoyed teasing them in my role_ (Questionnaire 2, p.4, see Appendix 19).

Overall, there was a sense of achievement expressed by the students, particularly in improving their fluency in French.

What the students liked least:

Student frustration at technology failures was obvious. Many made reference to the fact that they could not always logon when they wished to for no apparent reason. Often they were entering the correct name and password but could not gain access for a few hours. Others mentioned a lack of understanding of the process and the use of WebCT, even though we had several induction sessions. There was a feeling that personal time constraints inhibited further development of the community as their other workplace commitments prevented adequate interaction online.
Those who had conducted extensive research leading up to the role-play were disappointed when others did not seem to be aware of the historic facts. For instance, at the end when *Baudin 1* left the ship, *Petit* asked who would take over as Captain – would it be M. Milius, indicating that he knew the real story but no one else commented on this.

Message no. 238 [Branch from no. 230]
Posted by Nicolas-Martin Petit on Wed. 14:12

M. le Capitaine,
Je suis très désolé d’entendre de votre mauvaise santé, et j’espère que le climat au Nouveau Corse vous aidera.

C’est avec regret que nous vous perdrons comme le capitaine. Qui sera le nouveau capitaine – M. Milius ?

Bonne chance !

(See Appendix 19 for an overview of what the students liked most and least.)
REFLECTIVE THINKING

The nature of this extended role-play dictates that while much of the student’s production of the written French language can be assessed, their actual learning cannot be accurately evaluated as it is ‘open-ended’ (Harasim, Hiltz, Teles and Turoff, 1996, p.168). Collison et al (2000, p.13), remind us that “the goal is to help learners as their own thinking evolves”. As we cannot quantify what each individual student has learnt from the process, I attempted to analyse their reflection based on what they wrote in their Weekly Thoughts reflective journal. Each week the participants were asked to answer these four questions pertaining to their own learning (see Appendices 20, 20a, 20b and 20c for a summary of their responses):

1. What did your character contribute to the role-play this week?
2. How do you feel that your participation in the role-play is enhancing your use of the French language?
3. What new things have you learnt this week (whether it be in regard to learning French or computing technology)?
4. Reflect on your experience this week.

What did your character contribute to the role-play this week?

From the very beginning, Group 1 was quick to enter their individual profiles and commence interacting with the other characters. Baudin contacted much of the crew and scientists, promoted two gunners to official artists, named the new colony “Nouveau Corse” and announced that de Freycinet (who had withdrawn from the role-play) would be left there to govern the colony.

Petit and Lesueur, the two artists set about their private agenda which was to become more famous than the other. Lesueur set out to challenge Petit whose strategy was more subtle in trying to gain the favour of the captain.
The doctor, *L’Haridon 1*, took over the role of a student who withdrew from the course and only had time to post his profile in the first week. However, he was soon an active participant and made the following contributions in the subsequent weeks:

**Week 2:** *Active role-playing – replies on the discussion board – follow ups.*

**Week 3:** *Provided advice and suggestions. Promoted exercise as a tool for well-being. Communicated with higher and lower level crew. Tried to have fun.*

**Week 4:** *Provided information to crew about the ill-health of the Captain. Encouraged good health – promoted indigenous cooking (L’Haridon’s reflective journal, see Appendices 20a, Q1; 20b, Q.1; and 20c, Q.1).*

By week four, *Baudin 1*, was relatively relaxed about his participation and related this:

* Tried to eat the cat. Spread tuberculosis to the Aborigines. Resurrected someone from the dead – the usual! (See Appendix 20d, Q.1.)

Some had difficulties with the technology. *L’Haridon 2* was advised to be a *mailpal* but for some reason decided to participate on his own. His reflections became more despairing as the weeks passed:

**Week 1:** *Very little I am afraid due to my lack of computer knowledge. I do not have a computer (but was generously offered one). I do not know how to use one. It is obviously something which cannot be learned overnight.*

**Week 2:** *This week is the same. I feel isolated from the rest of the class. Of course, computer access is the problem. [The moderator did offer to meet before class to enter his messages but this occurred only once.]*

**Week 3:** *What can I add? Let’s face it, I’m floundering.*

**Week 4:** *Nothing. [The moderator did enter postings on his behalf, using his ideas.]*

(See Appendices 20, Q.1; 20a, Q.1; 20b, Q.1; and 20c, Q.1.)

Despite having his ideas submitted by the moderator, *L’Haridon 2* felt more and more isolated from the group as he did not have a “hands on” experience and the main topic of conversation during the class break was the role-play simulation.
**How do you feel that your participation in the role-play is enhancing your use of the French language?**

All the characters felt that they were using their dictionaries and verb books more and writing a lot of dialogue. Their vocabulary and practice of sentence structure is increasing. There was generally a feeling that their use of the French language improved.

By week three, there was a marked sense of achievement amongst those who participated regularly. The cat, *Hercules* (Group 1), said:

_I joined the Chat for the first time. I really enjoyed it and was very surprised to learn that I could actually converse more in French than I thought I was capable of._ (See Appendix 20c, Q. 2.)

The aim of the study was to foster successful and meaningful communication, rather than having faultless spelling and grammar, but it was interesting to note how pleased and confident the participants felt as their written dialogues improved. As Ronsard 1 reflected in his *Weekly Thoughts*:

_[…] I notice sometimes other class members have made spelling and sentence mistakes which I learn not to do._ (See Appendix 20d, Q. 2.)

**What new things have you learnt this week (whether it be in regard to learning French or computing technology)?**

Some felt that they learnt more vocabulary related to shipping and became more familiar with verbs and verb tenses, while most of the participants commented on their use of the technology: how to send an email, how to change the colour of the script, how to insert French accents into a Word document.

Many students mentioned their continued research into *Baudin’s voyage* and the benefits to their understanding of the French exploration as well as their personal improvement in reading the French language. *Baudin 2* wrote this in the third week:

_Because I’m following the story by reading a book of Baudin and Flinders’ trips, my vocabulary is increasing as well as (improved) translation from English to French. And I’m feeling more confident on the computer._ (See Appendix 20d, Q. 3.)
Reflect on your experience this week.

Generally the students made positive comments about their contribution, new aspects of WebCT that they had learnt, but also some frustrations at the workings of WebCT, particularly when the site would not permit them to logon, as happened several times during the four weeks.

*Petit 1, mailpal*, said in the third week:

*Chat Room was very amusing – great repartee!* (see Appendix 20d, Q.4).

In the final week, *Petit 1, mailpal* said:

*Unfortunately the chance to re-write history has perhaps detracted from a history learning experience. As to a ‘fun’ experience, it has been very good.* (See Appendix 20d, Q. 4.)

*[Petit 1 and mailpal had tried from the start to curb their captain’s imagination but, despite being strong characters themselves, were unable to deter him as he also had a strong personality.]*

*Pieron 1* had this to say:

*Chat (session) was really good (last week) - up to 8 characters in the Chat Room. Still can’t remember accents, skipped them. Learnt to react more spontaneously in French. Chat was really funny. Less embarrassing to say something wrong, because nobody knows who I am.* (See Appendix 20d, Q. 4.)

*Le Chat 1* (cat) felt that some of his goals in learning French were being met by the role-play and said:

*Being able to “converse” simultaneously (synchronously) in French (in Chat Room) has given me a very good practice in having a normal conversation with someone in French. And being able to have a normal simultaneous conversation with people in French is one of my main goals in taking this course.* (See Appendix 20d, Q. 4.)

These reflections suggest that the students were gaining more confidence in communicating in French. Their increased vocabulary and more diverse use of relevant expressions demonstrated an improvement of their fluency in French.
The lack of activity in Group 2, brought out many negative comments in the last week. There were some technical difficulties in logon on which understandably caused some frustrations. Here is what some characters had to say:

**Baudin 2**, who previously appeared to be gaining confidence with the interface, concluded:

*The computer does not help me in verbal communication at all! I feel as if I’ve lost all the gains I made but I don’t care if I’m no good at role-play. Being myself is enough to get through life* (see Appendix 20d, Q.4).

**de Freycinet**: *I have been frustrated this week because I wanted to put into place a plot to alter history. However, I have not had the contributions from others I tried to involve in the plot, so it stalled – the computer problems did not help* (see Appendix 20d, Q.4).

**Petit 2**: *Can be a fun way to learn. But Discussion area is confusing. Get stuff posted which is to one person only (for reply) but unless receiver’s name is first in message – not sure whether it’s for me or to whom. People don’t use email, I did but feel now I should have put it on Discussion as did most others. Sharing role didn’t work well. I couldn’t read what Barbra sent & vice-versa* (see Appendix 20d, Q.4.).

[There was some confusion caused by the *mailpal* entering the Chat Room when really only one character can be there at a time. The objective in being a *mailpal* was to be relieved from having to work on the computer. The Group 1 *mailpal* worked really well as he only joined the chat once when his partner had to leave early.]

**Péron 2**: *I gave up last week. It was going nowhere, was hard to understand and on top of that we had a talking cat. Funnily enough he/she was the easiest to understand. I think the person playing that character should get top marks, the messages were amusing and well-written* (see Appendix 20d, Q.2).

[This was a surprise as this character only contributed during the first week. Péron 2 did not participate in the Chat sessions where Group Two interacted well.]

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3 A pseudonym – none of the participants are referred to by their real name.
Le Chat 2 could always be relied on to provide a positive note and here is what she said:

*I also learnt to have a sense of humour with it and enjoyed my character* (see Appendix 20d, Q. 4.).

The general feeling within Group 2 was that there was a lack of response from the other characters. There was little cohesion in the communication, as characters sent out messages to which they received no reply. This was evident in the lack of threaded dialogues. Those who did try to engage the process and interact with others were frustrated in their efforts, which was very disappointing for them. *De Freycinet* and *Petit 2* in particular contributed a lot to the group but, being from different milieu (officers and artists) on the ship only started to communicate with each other when they had exhausted all other attempts at social interaction with others. It was at this point, in the final week, that we had some technical failures which denied access to most of the characters and even I, as moderator, experienced some difficulties in logging on.

Group 1, on the other hand, indicated through their reflections that their experience was positive and worthwhile. This was again reinforced at the debriefing session held a week after the final week of the simulation.

**DEBRIEFING**

A week after the completion of the role-play, a *debriefing* session was held during normal class time so that the students could share their experience and find out who the other characters were (see Appendix 21 for script of dialogue). It was very evident that those who were active participants were very keen to find out with whom they had been interacting, and possibly those who had not responded. The session was conducted in a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere in a staff area, where cake and coffee was served.

I started the proceedings by congratulating the students on their participation, their enthusiasm, their knowledge of the historical facts and their ability to contend with
the computer glitches that occurred. Group 1 couldn’t wait to find out who was who and say, “It was you who….!”

The members of Group Two were quite quiet at first but soon thawed out and participated. They explained some of their difficulties in handling the computer access problems that they encountered. *Baudin* 2 took buses into the college in order to use the computers in the library, *Le Chat* 2 used Cybercafés whenever possible and *L’Haridon* 2 struggled to type out a message at the local library, only to have his money run out and the message disappear before he could post it. This suggests that in order to experience successful participation, the basic technological skills need to be mastered prior to online involvement in the role-play simulation.

Lack of familiarity with the site was another common theme as the students explained that it took them over a week to work out where to post public messages, how to send private messages, who could enter *La Passerelle* (the bridge) and why there were no crew members in *La Coquerie* (the galley). From this we concluded that a pre-Baudin mini role-play would be a good idea for future simulations as this would provide students with the opportunity to become familiar with the website and its functions. The additional practice would reduce anxiety regarding use of the technology once the actual role-play commenced. Another addition to the website could be an online dictionary as the students were constantly referring to their own dictionaries in order to understand the other messages and to compose their own postings.

The debriefing should also assist the students in recognising *how* they learnt so that they would be able to transfer these skills into other areas of knowledge construction. If they don’t have this awareness, then the facilitator should guide them towards this realisation (Howard, 2002).

Would the students be prepared to participate in a web-based online role-play simulation again? The majority of the French students answered in the affirmative. The three students who chose not to be *mailpals* even though they had low computing skills, declared that they would not like to partake in another online
simulation. One student qualified that he would like more practice prior to the role-
play such as the ‘pre-Baudin role-play’ that had been discussed in the debriefing.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Using a social constructivist approach to teaching, the traditional assessment
methods of reproducing knowledge cannot be called upon to evaluate what learning
has taken place, although they can give an indication of learning. Oral assessment
tasks were administered to the class prior to and after the role-play simulation (RPS)
as part of the normal TAFE ‘continuous assessment’ programme. It was interesting
to note that, based on the results, several students greatly improved on their result of
the first oral assessment that was prior to the RPS (see Table 8). Despite the fact
that the RPS was conducted in written form, their oral skills improved in
pronunciation, increased vocabulary, improved grammar usage, ability to improvise
and personal confidence.

Table 8 gives the students’ results of two classroom role-plays where the students
were assessed for their oral skills. One was conducted prior to the online RPS and
one within one week of the completion of the RPS. The third column indicates the
percentage of change in each candidate’s result. Those who already had a high
standard of spoken French did not deviate much. The remarkable changes were in
the students with low competence who had a high level of participation in the RPS.
However, four students did perform less well in the second oral assessment.
Table 8: Results of Oral Assessments prior to and after RPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student code</th>
<th>Pre RPS Result (out of 100)</th>
<th>Post RPS Result (out of 100)</th>
<th>Change %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>(17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>(5)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>88</td>
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<td>+20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>+24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were three participants who increased their oral performance by 16 to 24% and two whose results dropped by 16% and 18%. While this is not the intention of the research, and it would require further investigation, I thought that it would be of interest to look at the students’ language achievement change in relation to their computer competency before and after the RPS (see Figure 9) as it would indicate that those with high computer competence were more likely to have a positive
change, and more likely to have a large positive change. This diagram indicates the students’ change in level of achievement in their oral performance after the RPS as well as placing them in the matrix according to their computer competency. It is interesting to note, though not conclusive, that the greater improvements were to be found in the high computer competency. The only student with high competency (Student code 16) who did not achieve as well as before also had one of the lowest levels of participation in the RPS. It is a possibility that the intensive interaction of the students in using French for the RPS did improve their vocabulary, grammar and ability to communicate more fluently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Change</th>
<th>Computer Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High +</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low +</td>
<td>06 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low -</td>
<td>12 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High -</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9: Language Change in relation to Computer Competence after participation in online RPS.

It would appear that people with computer confidence can benefit from a computer language programme and further develop their language skills. However, it seems unrealistic that people will have computer competence within the context of the unit and they will have to improve both computer confidence and computer competence. It suggests that pre-training needs to be built in.
Some studies suggest that students’ success in computer-driven classes is significantly correlated with prior experience (Lee, 1986). Others found no relationship between experience and student performance (Fulcher, 1999). However, these seem to apply to conventional measures of learning. According to Hoag et al (2003), the incorporation of relevant computer technologies within a course can provide positive benefits, as was the case in this study.

Palloff and Pratt (1999, p.16) point out that “collaboration, shared goals, and teamwork are powerful forces in the learning process”. These aspects of building knowledge on an individual and personal level cannot be easily assessed through normal testing so other means of assessment needed to be given careful consideration.

The means of assessment in the RPS was discussed with the students prior to the commencement of the role-play and the consensus was that self-assessment and reflective analysis would be used to measure their learning. In addition to answering the four questions in the Weekly Thoughts reflective journal (discussed in this chapter), the students were asked to evaluate their own performance by giving themselves a score out of ten as they felt that they understood a numeric value rather than ‘competent’ or ‘not yet competent’ which is the new standard for competency-based training at TAFE.

In addition to evaluating student performance, it is also vital to evaluate the success of the web-based online role-play simulation as a whole and to consider which components necessitate change or improvement.

In future online role-plays, peer assessment as well as self-assessment may be used but as this is the first foreign language role-play attempted at Central TAFE and the students were cautious about evaluating each other, I decided not to use this means in this instance. Nonetheless, a peer assessment on team performance would also have provided an interesting insight into the dynamics of group interaction.

Observation of the process by the moderator also gave valuable clues as to whether the skills and knowledge that the participants were constructing were ‘valuable and
meaningful’ (Hanna et al., 2000, p. 39). The effectiveness of the course methods and subject matter was also constantly evaluated through observation of student participation and interest.

In this chapter I have studied the data gathered in order to make meaning of it through interpretive analysis of the research study and in the following chapter I will summarise my observations and then draw my conclusions by relating the findings to the research questions.
As all the available documentation on web-based online role-play simulations conducted to date appears to have used the English language, I was interested to know what benefits this mode of learning could hold for learners of other languages. To answer the research questions, I integrated the results of the pre-simulation and post-simulation questionnaires, observations of the online interactions, the students’ reflective journals and comments during the debriefing session. In the first question, I attempt to answer how social constructivism can benefit foreign language acquisition, and in the second, how language is enhanced through engagement of the process in a role-play simulation.

**Research Question 1: How can the use of a social constructivist epistemology enhance language acquisition for learners of foreign languages?**

Baudin’s expedition to Terra Australis provided a loosely fabricated situation within which the characters were able to don their persona and participate in the voyage through social interaction with the other characters. Each week the *Déroulement des Faits* (‘Course of Events’) provided an indication of the position of the ship and a few details of the voyage that formed the framework of the spaces that the participants could fill through their social interaction (Linzer *et al.*, 2002). The storyline could only be advanced through collaboration, negotiation and conflict resolution within the community. Several incidents were introduced during the four-week role-play simulation but only those that caught the imagination of the participants were acted upon and these formed the basis for the construction of learning within the groups.

The asynchronous nature of an online conversation permitted reflection so that each participant could think about a suitable response, opinion or suggestion before composing and posting a message. The exploratory initial interaction led to alliances being formed and collusion leading to the manipulation of the final outcome of the arising conflict. Saeger (2003, para. 3) stated that:

*Connections and tensions are a way to explore issues from a more holistic perspective and generate a deeper discussion about the topic.*
Conflict soon arose in Group 1 when the captain named the new colony ‘New Corsica’. This was met with howls of disapproval and reminders that it was called historically ‘Terra Australis’ by the French. The argument was finally settled when the captain declared that Napoléon himself had chosen the name.

Being exposed to the situation, the associated vocabulary, the history of the voyage and the ship’s protocol, made this a more memorable activity that took place over a longer period of time, allowing for acquisition of the language and, therefore, enabling deep learning to take place (Biggs and Telfer, 1987). The extended exposure to the subject matter promoted greater understanding and retention of the learning that had occurred.

The most effective way in which to influence the direction of the play was through collaboration with other participants in the learning community. The participants constructed new knowledge through the collaborative activities of reading each others’ messages and formulating their own ideas, opinions or suggestions in order to respond and add to the dialogue. Collaboration, is defined by Hathorn and Ingram (2002, p.33) as the ‘interdependence of the group participants as they share unique ideas and experiences’. For the groups to complete the voyage and create a satisfying end, they had to cope with the hardships of poor health, collect scientific specimens in harsh landscapes, and compete with the English, through acting as a cohesive group. Lack of collaborative behaviour can produce frustration, as was evidenced in Petit 1’s comment that emails to the captain remained unanswered. He added, “I wonder if he is receiving them as he is a good communicator” indicating that some good interaction with the captain had already taken place (see Appendix 20b, Q.1).

Von Glaserfeld (1993, p. 30) tells us that “language is learned in the course of interaction with other speakers”. Students acquire their learning through interaction with others – whether it be by collaborating, conspiring, debating or arguing, to name a few possibilities. This is a fluid, emerging engagement that is built on the combined experience and prior knowledge of all the interacting participants. Therefore, the practice of creative, imaginative written discourse did enhance the students’ fluency and learning of the French language. Face-to-face role-plays do
have an important function in the classroom but do not provide the opportunity for the depth of learning that is to be found in a social constructivist online simulation.

**Research Question 2: To what extent does participation in a web-based online role-play simulation affect communication skills and fluency in learning a foreign language?**

It takes most students several years to master a foreign language and yet learning all the components and structures does not guarantee fluency in the language. How often do facilitators encourage spontaneous conversation in small groups or pairs in class only to find that the conversation has dried up and the students have reverted back to their mother tongue? This is understandable because the topic of the conversation, generally revision of what has already been learned in class, is usually nominated by the facilitator in order to give the students some direction. The stronger students will usually have a larger repertoire and be able to communicate with each other for longer than weaker students.

The anonymity of students participating in the web-based online role-play simulation offered them the freedom to experiment and express themselves in the foreign language without fear of being identified. Their accent and mispronunciations could not be heard in the written dialogue and so the students were able to direct their energies into being creative and imaginative in their contributions to the dialogue. Apart from the rules of the role-play, the participants were able to stretch the boundaries in any way they wished. Only their imagination could limit them. For instance, a discourse between several characters at the point when the English and French ships met in Encounter Bay off South Australia, started with the suggestion of a game of Australian Rules football between the two crews and culminated with Baudin reporting that Flinders had decided to name the colony after the game! He further commented that Flinders was a nice, albeit strange, fellow. Here the students took the language with which they were already familiar and wove it into the story before extending it and using it in new ways. This happened through interaction with others, with each participant building on the knowledge contributed by the others.
The students had to learn to think above the sentence level in order to actively participate in the conversation. Their fluency became more evident when they were able to joke, and tease each other as well as demonstrate flexibility in their word usage and expressions (Morrow, 1981). An ability to imitate what others had written and correctly model their own production on what they had read further displayed a sound cognition of the language.

As communication is the primary aim of any role-play, any deviations from standard language structure can indicate the level of an individual learner’s knowledge construction and competence development (Littlewood, 1984). As the moderator, I was able to observe any aberrations in language structure or usage and comment in such a way as to model the correct form or expression.

The nature of the Baudin voyage did not encourage copying materials directly from online sources, but rather the weaving of relevant facts into the dialogue as it was conversational in form. Any repetition of expression took the guise of clarifying information, just as one would in a normal face-to-face conversation.

The synchronicity of dialogue in the Chat Room was meaningful and realistic as, just as in real life, one didn’t know what the people with whom one was interacting were going to say next, giving rise to flexible engagement with the introduced topics. Over the four-week period, the discourse in the Chat Rooms became more creative and varied as the language was extended more and more. The pace of the conversations also increased as the participants became more confident and adventurous. In the third week, Le Chat 1 recorded in his reflective journal:

[I learned to think and “speak” faster in French in order to keep up with the conversations in the Chat Room (see Appendix 20c, Q. 4).

Group 2 had considerably fewer students who were computer-literate and the average age (58 years) of the group suggested that these students would not be expected to have had as much exposure to computers as the younger members of the class who were predominately in Group 1. Hanson (2001) suggests that older people may have difficulty in navigating complex websites and in understanding the page layouts, particularly those with distracting banners. Many of the older participants
did express fear at using a computer. They commented on the doubts that arose once they opened the website and were confronted with several different icons as they became unsure of what to do next.

It was interesting to note that synchronous participation in the Chat sessions was very similar in both groups, while Group 1 was far more successful in asynchronous interaction. I feel that this is due to the fact that the chat sessions were held in a computer laboratory on the TAFE campus and I was always present to correct any technical problems which arose. Off campus, the members of Group 2 experienced many difficulties in logging on and found this very discouraging.

Although some students expressed a perception of not having improved much in their interaction with others using the French language to communicate (see Questionnaire 2, Items 7 – 12), students who participated well and contributed frequently in the online role-play, then achieved a higher standard in an oral role-play assessment held after the completion of the online role-play. Two students, who generally achieved low results in oral assessments, increased their performance level by around 20% after the online role-play simulation (see Table 8 and Figure 9). Their ability to express themselves more freely clearly demonstrated a new-found confidence that they had not displayed prior to their involvement in the simulation. Students who were already high achievers did not display as much fluctuation in their oral production. The same students who showed improvement in oral skills, also improved in their written skills.

However, students who did not participate much, and this may have been due to lack of the necessary computer skills, did not appear to improve in their performance in other classroom activities. Some of those were already good at writing in French but very hesitant in speaking the language. There was no improvement in oral skills for students who manifested a low level of engagement in the role-play simulation.

One student commented on how much he preferred this activity – the Baudin role-play simulation – to some of the classroom tasks such as letter-writing, discussing workplace literature and completing exercises. This, he felt, was much more
relevant and more useful to him in his own (real life) business relationships with French and Swiss speakers of French.

The use of the online simulation enabled students of a second language to experiment with the language structures that they already knew and adapt them to new situations, to become more flexible and adventurous in their language usage and thus to increase their fluency in the other language. There was an indication that those who participated the most by reading and composing messages, demonstrated a greater degree of improvement in their language competence.

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

The role-play simulation

*Baudin’s Voyage* was my first foray into a web-based online role-play simulation in a foreign language. I learnt a lot from the experience of planning, writing and moderating the activity. My first attempt at writing a scenario was complicated and unwieldy but fortunately I had very good advice from various sources which encouraged me to keep the simulation simple with a loose storyline and a small group of characters. I had more ‘incidents’ waiting in the wings in case they could be incorporated but, as the participants have considerable control over the direction of the scenario, not all of them were implemented. However, it was good to have these extra possibilities prepared in advance so that I was cutting the story down rather than having to be inventive during the course of the simulation.

Moderation

Once the role-play simulation commenced, all my energies were devoted to observing and moderating the interaction of the characters. I went online two to three times a day in order to answer any questions as quickly as possible. Most of the questions came from the Captains who often checked that their commands were in order. *Vasse* who missed the middle two weeks also had lots of questions for me.
upon his return. The other characters seemed to be happy to take the lead of their
captain and to interact with each other.

Palloff and Pratt (2001, p.33) remind us that “engagement in a collaborative learning
process forms the foundation of a learning community. Lack of collaboration often
results in low participation and result in queries to the moderator instead of active
dialogue. Apart from some initial queries, mainly regarding the site itself, from the
captains and officer, the moderator was ignored and there was engaging dialogue to
the very end. Thus we can feel that the interactive communication in Baudin’s
voyage was a successful process.

Moderation was an enthralling, all-encompassing and exhausting activity. It took
over my life for the four weeks. I would wake up in the morning thinking, “I must
tell Baudin that Vasse is back … or the doctor that Lesueur is better … or de
Freycinet that it might be advisable to collaborate with the artists as there has been
no response from the other officers.” It was consuming but also invigorating.

Lessons to be learnt

Naturally, there were lessons to be learnt which will be implemented in future role-
play simulations. For instance, it would be advantageous to have a mini-role-play
after the induction period and prior to the actual role-play as there was some
confusion as to when to use the various areas of the site. It was one thing to follow
instructions that were provided during the induction, but quite another to have the
freedom to venture out on one’s own and find out where the other characters were
posting information in order to make contact with them. The first week or so was
slowed down by the uncertainty that some of the characters felt in not knowing the
best place to post a message. Some, for instance, did not realise that Discussions
can be viewed by everyone and that private messages should be sent by Courrier
Électronique (email). This pre-role-play was implemented in other role-play
simulations which followed the French one and the benefits were evident in the
debriefing sessions where the participants focused on their language acquisition and
personal performance rather than technical problems that some of the French students tended to dwell on.

Why was one group more successful than the other? This is a difficult question to answer. The demographics of the two groups seemed to be fairly evenly spread except in two areas: the average ages of the two groups (42 years of age in Group 1 and 58 in Group 2) and those with high computer literacy skills. Closer investigation revealed that university education did not impact on computer literacy as many of the students completed their university studies prior to computers becoming commonplace. Oliver and Herrington (2001) suggest that students do not need to be highly computer literate but can learn while participating in the process. McEuen (2001), on the other hand, warns us not to assume that our students have the skills to perform adequately in online activities.

Limitations to participation in the role-play

One of the main constraints to participation was lack of computer skills. Perhaps if I had chosen students who were comfortable and more versed with the technology, the findings may have been different. Access to computers and the Internet was another issue that hampered the active engagement of several students. Understandably, many students, and not only the mature age students, displayed a resistance to using the technology. The reasons for this were mainly due to lack of easy access and lack of computing skills while, for at least one student who uses computers at work, there may have been some resistance to further interface with the technology out of working hours.

Personalities can also play a part as, despite the anonymity and assurance of confidentiality of identity, some students were not comfortable in engaging with the process. I did not find, as did Minnis (2003), that shy students participated more freely online.
Possible Applications of the Findings

In the future, I would insist that those with low computer literacy skills take the role of a mailpal and share a role with a more confident computer user. The mailpals in Group 1 expressed enjoyment at building the character together through their own interaction which took place outside the community before submitting their contribution to the dialogue. Being a mailpal would prevent frustration with the interface, as well as a feeling of isolation from the community, that was experienced by those who lacked confidence and became more despondent as the process progressed without them. As previously stated, a pre-role-play will be introduced. It may also be advantageous to conduct this pre-role-play in English for those who are not computer-literate so that they can become confident in using the website before they face the added challenge of interacting with others online in a foreign language.

In addition to these measures, I intend to introduce the use of WebCT in the second year of French studies. Activities such as quizzes and games would familiarise the students with the use of WebCT and give them more confidence in the online role-play simulation in third year.

The future of online role-play simulation in foreign language learning

The traditional means of imparting knowledge from teacher to student is no longer acceptable in western education. More and more knowledge is anchored in authentic, relevant contexts in which the student can construct his own learning in a ‘meaningful and purposeful’ way (Bonk and Cunningham, 1998, p.27). Online role-play simulations offer students a means of practising the language that they have previously acquired over an intense, sustained period of time, during which they can put together all their prior learning of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structures and through interaction with and learning from others, increase their own personal learning and fluency in their use of the foreign language.
The participants of such activities need to progress beyond reflecting on the medium to engaging with the process (Curtis and Lawson, 2001). For effective learning to take place, the students need to reach a point where there is conflict requiring a decision to be made (Carrier, 1987), or as Curtis and Lawson (2001, para. 40) term it, ‘the challenge and explain cycle’ where the participants collaborate with each other in order to find a solution to a problem. This is the value of social constructivism where students interact with each other, question, give feedback to each other and engage with the process in order to further their own personal learning.

Online role-play simulations were conducted in other languages the following semester after the French one. The facilitators were able to learn from my experience and implement the changes that I suggested. Probably the most important of these was a mini pre-role-play to familiarise them to the site. This worked extremely well and, at the debriefing, I was impressed by the fact that the comments were largely on their personal language acquisition and learning as well as their interaction with the other participants rather than the technology.

A final thought…

Will the increased fluency in French, demonstrated in the oral assessments (discussed in Chapter 5), that some of the students have gained, be maintained over time? I suspect that it will be only if there is continued social and meaningful interaction with other speakers of French. However, that is beyond the scope of this research and only time will tell.

*Ronsard 1* summed up his learning experience in his reflections with this comment:

*I learnt new [French] vocabulary and phrases. I learnt more about the computer and the TAFE website ... and I had a lot of fun.* (See Appendix 20d, Q. 4.)
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Biographies: (http://www.abc.net.au/navigators) is an informative site for information regarding the members of exploratory voyages to Australia.


* All references followed by an asterix (*) are written or spoken in the French language.


Health and disease: (www.abc.net.au/) is an excellent website for current and historical information on health and disease issues.


Nisbet, A. (1985). *French Navigators and the Discovery of Australia.* Sydney: School of French, the University of NSW.


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STATEDMENT OF DISCLOSURE AND INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Ms Glanville

As part of my Masters of Education degree I am conducting a research project into the advantages and disadvantages of online learning on foreign language students’ ability to improve their French language skills. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of what aspects of this means of learning can augment the participants’ confidence and fluency. The study hopes to provide information on ways to improve the skills of French language learners.

The data for the study will be collected over 4 - 6 weeks, by means of:

a) two written questionnaires that you will be asked to complete
b) an initial briefing on the mechanics of the role-play and how it will be conducted
c) an online role-play depicting the voyage of Nicolas Baudin to Terres Australes in 1800
d) a de-briefing session which will be recorded and in which students will be able to give in-class observations of the simulation.

The questionnaires (a) will only take students a few minutes to answer and the role-play participation (c) can be undertaken at any time that suits the students within the four week period of the actual role-play. Regular participation would be desirable and will be encouraged for the eventual resolution of the role-play, over which the participants will have control. Observations will be conducted by the researcher during the role-play.

Should you agree to students’ participation, can you kindly sign the attached consent form. As the role-play is online, students will be able to participate even if they are absent from the class as it will be conducted outside of class time.

The participation of third year French students in the study is important because the information that it provides will be useful in helping teachers conduct more effective online classes so that future language students can benefit.

If you need any additional information before you make the decision to take part, I will be happy to meet you to discuss your concerns with you. My telephone number is 9427 1613, and my email address is HartlV@Perth.training.wa.gov.au

If you have any concerns about the project or would like to talk to an independent person, you may contact Dr Dorit Maor on 9360-7257 at Murdoch University, Faculty of Education. You may also contact the Ethics Office at Murdoch University on 9360 6677/6170 if you are unhappy with the conduct of the research.

CONSENT FORM

Project title: **Web-based online role-play: Who is Baudin?**

I agree to this research project taking place with the cooperation of third year French students within Central TAFE.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided the students are not identifiable.

Penny Glanville: ................................................................. Date: .................................
Program Manager
Centre for Languages
Central TAFE

Investigator: ................................................................. Date: .................................
Andrée Vanda Hartley

Consent Form  Appendix 2
STATEMENT OF DISCLOSURE AND INFORMED CONSENT

Dear student

As part of my Masters of Education degree I am conducting a research project into the advantages and disadvantages of online learning on foreign language students’ ability to improve their French language skills. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of what aspects of this means of learning can augment the participants’ confidence and fluency. The study hopes to provide information on ways to improve the skills of French language learners.

The data for the study will be collected over 4 - 6 weeks, by means of:

a) two written questionnaires that you will be asked to complete
b) an initial briefing on the mechanics of the role-play and how it will be conducted
c) an online role-play depicting the voyage of Nicolas Baudin to Terres Australes in 1800
d) a de-briefing session which will be recorded and in which students will be able to give in-class observations of the simulation.

The questionnaires (a) will only take a few minutes to answer and the role-play participation (c) can be undertaken at any time that suits you within the four week period of the actual role-play. Regular participation would be desirable and will be encouraged for the eventual resolution of the role-play, over which the participants will have control. Observations will be conducted by the researcher during the role-play.

Should you decide to participate, you will be asked to be available for the duration of the study, or for the full 4 weeks. As the role-play is online, you will be able to participate even if you are absent from the class as it will be conducted outside of class time.

Your participation in the study is important because the information that you provide will be useful in helping teachers conduct more effective online classes so that future language students can benefit.

If you need any additional information before you make the decision to take part, I will be happy to meet you to discuss your concerns with you. My telephone number is 9427 1613, and my email address is HartlV@Perth.training.wa.gov.au

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CONSENT FORM

Project title: Web-based online role-play: Who is Baudin?

I, _____________________________ (print your name) have read the information above / have been informed about all aspects of the above research project and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this activity, realising I may withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identifiable.

Participant: ___________________________ Date: ________________

Investigator: ___________________________ Date: ________________

Andrée Vanda Hartley
Le Déroulement des Faits

Semaine 4

*Le Géographe* et *le Casuarina* quittent le Port de Jackson après six semaines de repos bien mérité. Tout l’équipage est en pleine forme, bien nourri et en bonne santé.

Les deux bateaux sont à l’ancre à l’Île de Kangourou quand un bateau anglais arrive. Les Français connaissent certains officiers qui étaient au Port de Jackson. Baudin est étonné d’avoir été suivi par les Anglais qui, tout de suite, lèvent le drapeau britannique.

Les Anglais traitent les Français avec froideur. Les relations au Port de Jackson semblaient chaleureuses et Baudin est troublé par ce changement d’attitude. Il se demande ce qui aurait pu se passer après son départ.

Qui a dit des choses indiscrettes aux Anglais ? Sûrement pas les officiers … mais qui ? Qui a un intérêt à se glorifier ? Qui croit qu’il soit un être humain supérieur ?

Semaine 3

Nous suivons la côte au sud de cette vaste terre en route en route pour la *Terre de Van Diemen* car l’été s’approche. Un jour un bateau apparaît à l’horizon et nous nous sommes étonnés de voir que c’est un bateau anglais. Le Capitaine Baudin donne l’ordre de jeter l’ancre.

 Après avoir communiqué par signaux, les deux capitaines se rencontrent. Baudin appelle cet endroit la *Baie des Rencontres*. Le capitaine de l’expédition anglaise s’appelle Matthew Flinders. Baudin et Flinders échangent des détails de leur exploration à ce point. Les rapports sont cordiaux et Flinders nous escorte à Port Jackson où nous sommes accueillis chaleureusement par Gouverneur King (un homme qui est très francophile).

Nous y restons pour six semaines en réparant nos corvettes et nous réapprovisionnent en nourriture pour la suite de notre expédition. Baudin achète un autre bateau, le Casuarina.

Les scientifiques et les artistes continuent leur recherche. Ils rencontrent des indigènes pas loin du port anglais.

Semaine 2

Le Commandant de l’expédition s’impatiente à l’égard du commencement d’hiver au sud du continent. Il veut mettre le cap sur le Timor Oriental mais d’abord il faut collectionner assez d’échantillons de flore et faune de cette région et, bien sûr, il faut chercher de nouveau pour l’officier, Henri de Freycinet, et le marin, Tim Vasse. Henri de Freycinet a débarqué avec des marins et Péron. Comme Péron est inconscient de tout autour de lui quand il cherche de nouveaux échantillons, il n’a pas rien vu l’officier après avoir quitté le canot. S’est-il perdu dans la brousse ?

On croit que Tim Vasse s’est noyé mais on n’a pas trouvé de cadavre.

Alors, les scientifiques et les artistes organisent et fichent la collection d’échantillons en attendant les ordres du commandant.
En prenant la mer vers le nord, on dessine la côte inconnue. Les membres de l’équipage suggèrent des noms convenables mais c’est le capitaine qui a le droit de choisir le nom. Souvent, on choisit les noms de l’équipage ou de l’entourage mais aussi des noms du Premier Consul, Napoléon ; sa femme, Joséphine ; ou des personnages d’influence en France.

En a toujours des malades à bord, mais en arrivant au Timor Oriental, la malaria, le scorbut et la dysenterie font rage.

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**Semaine 1**

Nous avons quitté l’Île de France en avril 1801 et le voyage sur ce vaste océan semblait interminable. Beaucoup de membres de l’équipage sont restés à l’Île de France pour des raisons diverses.

Petit et Lesueur ont été promus après le départ car les artistes officiels ne pouvaient pas continuer pour cause de santé. François Péron, lui aussi, a été promu pour la même raison et Baudin le donne l’honneur d’être le représentant de la *Société des Observateurs de l’Homme* dont Baudin était déjà membre.

En mai, on a enfin vu la Nouvelle Hollande pour la première fois. Quelle joie de voir la terre ferme !

Les corvettes *Géographe* et *Naturaliste* ont levé l’ancre et certains marins, scientifiques et artistes ont débarqué en canots.

Péron cherche des échantillons scientifiques de cette grande terre inconnue. Il s’absorbe tellement dans ce travail qu’il se perd et on a du mal à le retrouver. Alors, Baudin attache désormais un marin à lui pour les incursions suivantes – cela agace Péron qui préfère être seul et indépendant.

Quelques heures plus tard on s’élève par une tempête. Les canots avec le personnel et leur équipement sont échoués à terre. Milius, un officier du *Naturaliste*, prend la décision d’aller les chercher avec des marins, Tim Vasse inclus, dans un autre canot. Leur canot se renverse juste au moment où Milius met le pied sur la berge. Vasse disparaît et on ne le retrouve pas.
Le Déroulement des Faits

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Qui a dit des choses indiscrettes aux Anglais ? Sûrement pas les officiers … mais qui ? Qui a un intérêt à se glorifier ? Qui croit qu’il soit un être humain supérieur ?

Semaine 3

Plusieurs membres de l’équipage sont morts des maladies au Timor. Alors, nous quittons le Timor Oriental avec beaucoup de chagrin. L’équipage essaye de consoler le capitaine qui est déprimé à cause de la perte cruelle d’un de ses plus proches amis, un jardinier qui a souvent voyagé avec lui.

Nous suivons la côte au sud de cette vaste terre en route en route pour la *Terre de Van Diemen* car l’été s’approche. Un jour un bateau apparaît à l’horizon et nous nous sommes étonnés de voir que c’est un bateau anglais. Le Capitaine Baudin donne l’ordre de jeter l’ancre.

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Cut, Paste and Attach a File

1. Open a Word document and save it to the desktop as Movie.Doc
2. Minimize this document
3. Go the archives section of the SBS Movie Show Site
4. Find a review of a movie you have seen
5. Copy and Paste a section of this review into your document
6. Add a few comments of your own to the review
7. Save the document
8. Go to the 'Coffee Break' topic in the discussion
9. Compose a message with the title of your movie as the subject line.
10. Type 'see attached' in the message box
11. Attach your document to the message and post it
Couper, afficher et attacher un fichier

2. Réduisez le document.
3. Visitez la section d’archives du site de SBS Movie Show Site
4. Trouvez une critique d’un film que vous avez vu.
5. Copiez et affichez une section de cette critique à votre fichier.
6. Ajoutez des observations personnelles à votre fichier.
7. Sauvegardez le document.
9. Composez un message qui s’est intitulé avec le nom du film comme sujet.
11. Envoyez le message avec le document attaché.
Icebreaker

1. Minimise WebCT
2. Go to one of your favourite web sites, if you don’t have one yet, choose one of the options listed at the end of the activity
3. Copy the web address (URL)
4. Go back to WebCT and find the discussion
5. Go to the topic called ‘Shared Resources’
6. Compose a message in which you paste the URL and write a statement about why you chose this website
7. Post your message
8. Open someone else’s message and visit their web site
9. Reply to their message with a comment about the site

Interesting Websites:

The SBS Movie Show Site
Netlingo
Dilbert
Pour briser la glace

Voici une activité pour vous aider à empoigner WebCT et à se connaître mieux comme collaborateurs en cyberspace.

1. Réduisez WebCT.


3. Copiez l’adresse (URL).

4. Retournez au WebCT et trouvez la discussion.

5. Visitez le sujet appelé « ressources partagés ».

6. Composez un message auquel vous afficherez le « URL » et écrivez une exposition donnant les raisons pour avoir choisi ce web-site.

7. Affichez le message.

8. Ouvrez le message de quelqu’un d’autre et visitez leur web-site.

9. Répondez au message en faisant des observations sur leur web-site.

Des web-sites intéressants :

The SBS Movie Show Site

Netlingo

Dilbert
Online Role Play Resource Site

Marie Jasinski developed this site with a select group of colleagues for a recent online conference entitled ‘The Student Experience in Online and Hybrid Courses’. The conference was hosted by Kapalana Community College in Hawaii.

Information about Baudin and the voyage

**Bicentenaire de l’expédition Nicolas Baudin**
- Alliance site compiled in Melbourne on Baudin’s voyage.

**Nicolas Baudin**
- A biographical note on Baudin.

**Encounter 2002**
- A site celebrating the bicentenary of the expeditions of Matthew Flinders and Nicholas Baudin in 1802.

**The Encounter - Postcards Special Feature**
- A lovely site describing the encounter between Baudin and Flinders and talking generally about sea voyages of the period.

**The Opening of the Baudin Memorial - Speech**
- The speech to mark the official opening of the Baudin Memorial in Western Australia – a good, brief historical account.

**The Navigators - Captains - Nicolas Baudin**
- Easy to read interesting biography and background to the voyage.

**The Australian - Voyage to the Depths**
- Review of ‘Ill Fated Captains’ – A biography of Baudin and Flinders.

**2001 Journal**
- Journal Article on Baudin’s expedition has some interesting incidental details about politics and shipboard life!

**From France To Freycinet Festival**
- Bilingual newsletter of the ‘France to Freycinet’ Festival.

**Exposition des oeuvres de Lesueur et Petit**
- Promotional site in French for an exhibition at the Australian Embassy in Paris.

Life Aboard the Ship

**The Navigators - The Ships - Explore the Investigator**
- Interactive tour of a sailing ship of the period.

**The Navigators - The Art of Navigation**
- Describes navigation practices of early explorers.

**Glossem on Historical Events, Conditions and Movements: Scourv**
- A truly gross description of scurvy – a disease that afflicted many sailors of the period.
Il était une fois un Français qui avait un rêve. Il voulait naviguer autour de la Terre Australis en bateau et découvrir les côtes de cette terre immense et inconnue. Cet homme s'appelait Nicolas Baudin.
Discussion
1. NICOLAS BAUDIN

Mes particuliers :


J’ai souvent des idées libérales bien en avance de l’époque. En plus, j’ai la pensée latérale qui m’aide à résoudre des problèmes. Je suis bon stratège.
Je suis fidèle à ceux qui le méritent. Néanmoins, je suis tolérant mais résolu quand il le faut.

Mon standing :


Les circonstances :

En 1798, j’ai proposé au gouvernement français d’organiser un voyage d’exploration aux Terres Australes. Napoléon Bonaparte, le Premier Consul, m’a choisi comme commandant de l’exploration étant donné mon expérience et ma réputation.

On est toujours en guerre avec l’Angleterre. Sur ce voyage on a déjà souffert des cas de maladies à bord et beaucoup de membres de l’équipage marin et des scientifiques et des artistes ont déserté le navire à l’Île de France. Cependant, j’ai eu pas mal d’expérience en dirigeant l’administration à bord, même avec les malades et les insubordonnés.

Le but public :

Notre voyage est uniquement pour l’exploration scientifique et de navigation.

Le but privé :

Le Premier Consul m’a confié de me renseigner auprès de la possibilité de coloniser l’ouest des Terres Australes avant les Anglais.
2. **Henri Desaulces de FREYCINET**

**Mes particuliers :**

Je suis né à Montélimar qui se trouve à l’intérieur de la France, cependant, ainsi que mon frère, Louis, j’ai choisi la vie dans la marine comme carrière. Je suis aristocrate, alors, je peux me permettre de garder toujours ma place sociale élevée. On dit que je suis arrogant (et j’en ai bien le droit !) mais je suis plutôt ambitieux.

**Mon standing :**

Je suis troisième en rang sur la corvette *Géographe* et mon poste est sur – personne ne peut me déplacer.

**Les circonstances :**

Le Capitaine Baudin est de la vieille école et de temps en temps il a l’audace de me demander de m’attaquer au boulot avec les marins – une telle chose n’arrivera jamais ! Même en cas d’urgence, je ne ferai que donner des ordres. Je n’ai pas de rapports avec les classes inférieures.

**Mon but public :**

C’est d’établir et maintenir l’ordre sur la corvette et surtout, mon propre rang de hiérarchie.

**Mon but privé :**

Je veux avoir plus de succès que mon petit frère, Louis, et de le surpasser et maintenir ma supériorité à tout prix.
3. **François-Michel RONSARD**

**Mes particuliers :** (My characteristics)

J’ai la tranquillité d’esprit et j’aide les autres à ne pas troubler l’ordre public. Je me charge de faire ce qu’il faut pour le bien de la morale à bord.

**Mon standing :** (My social status)

Je suis ingénieur (mécanicien) à bord le Géographe et je suis fier de ce que je fais.

**Les circonstances :** (The circumstances)

Ce n’est pas mon premier voyage avec le Capitaine Baudin et je suis fidèle à lui. Pas comme d’autres membres de l’équipage, je ne fais pas ribote et je ne cours pas les femmes quand on débarque. En effet, je suis troublé par le niveau bas de moralité à bord et je crois qu’on perd le sens des valeurs.

**Mon but public :** (My public agenda)

C’est à moi à maintenir les moteurs en marche pour la continuation du voyage s’il n’y a pas assez de vent.

Je garde la paix entre les personnages divers de l’équipage. Je suis discret et on me voit comme neutre car je ne prends pas parti pour ni l’un ni l’autre.

**Non but privé :** (My hidden agenda)

Je veux protéger le Capitaine Baudin et conserver sa bonne réputation. Je lui confie ce qui se passe et le Capitaine a confiance en moi. Je fais semblant de rester neutre dans les discussions avec les autres membres de l’expédition.
4. François Étienne L’HARIDON de Créméne

Mes particuliers :

Je suis compétent, autoritaire, patriarcal, durci, cynique dédaigneux et en plus je manque d’humour.

Mon standing :

Je suis médecin de bord et ainsi j’ai un standing supérieur. J’ai fait partie de l’équipage de Capitaine Baudin au cours d’autres voyages. Notre voyage aux Caraïbes a été un grand succès mais nous n’avions pas autant de civils que cette fois.

Les circonstances :

Ce voyage est particulièrement dur car les scientifiques, les artistes et même les marins sont souvent très malades. Alors, je suis surchargé de travail et, bien sûr, épuisé.

Le but public :

Je dois m’occuper de la santé et le bien-être de tout le monde à bord.

Le but privé :

Je n’aime pas les civils. Les artistes, surtout, sont arrogants et entêtés. Je les trouve insupportables.
5. Thomas Thimotée VASSE

Mes particuliers :

J’ai la réputation d’être bon marin, forte tête et excellent nageur. Je suis jeune, plein d’énergie et j’adore l’aventure. Je ne fais pas les choses à moitié.

Mon standing :

Je suis marin tout simplement mais je suis très populaire avec mes camarades et même les officiers.

Les circonstances :

Si on veut s’amuser, j’y serai ! J’adore boire et chanter avec mes camarades.

Le but public :

Je fais tout pour avoir une vie pleine de vin, de hilarité, et de courir après les femmes quand l’occasion se présente.

Le but privé :

Je m’inquiète car il y a une faiblesse génétique dans ma famille ou plusieurs sont morts dans leur jeunesse. Alors, je persuade tout le monde que je suis fort et en pleine forme – c’est pour cela que je me divets avec élan !
6. François PÉRON

Mes particuliers :

On me trouve excentrique même un peu dingue, et souvent distrait, mais je suis érudit et habile. Je manque du bon sens dans certaines situations mais ça ne me gêne pas car je suis égocentrique, et obsédé par moi-même – un vrai poseur.

Mon standing :

J’étais soldat dans l’armée mais, après avoir démissionné, j’ai étudié la médecine. Dès que j’ai entendu parler de ce voyage, j’ai décidé de trouver un moyen d’être embauché. Ainsi, j’ai accepté le poste modeste d’aide zoologiste.

Les circonstances :

J’en suis sur que le Capitaine Baudin voit que j’ai du valeur. Quand le géographe a pris la mer à l’Île de France, le Capitaine m’a nommé le représentant de la Société des Observateurs de l’Homme.

Le but public :

Je me donne des airs et on a l’impression que je suis très important – plus important que mon standing bas dans l’équipage.

Le but privé :

Quand je rencontre des autres – des Anglais ou ceux d’autres navires – je les assure de mon importance, même en fabricant des intrigues qui n’existent pas.

Je veux avancer mon standing n’importe comment : si c’est d’une façon honnête ou malhonnête, ça m’est égal !

Je m’entoure d’alliés (en faisant une clique).
7. Nicolas-Martin PETIT

**Mes particuliers : (about me)**

Je suis réservé, doux, compréhensif et nerveux. La condition humaine m’intéresse beaucoup. L’intrigue répugnante à bord me horrifie. Je reste dehors des cliques qui se forment.

**Mon standing : (social standing at start)**

J’ai eu la chance de rencontrer le Capitaine Nicolas Baudin au port du Havre. Je lui ai montré mes dessins et il les a appréciés, ainsi il a crée un poste d’aide canonnier pour moi.

**Les circonstances :**

Je suis d’un niveau bas dans l’équipage mais le Capitaine Baudin, ayant vu mes dessins, me voulait comme illustrateur, avec Lesueur, pour son *Livre de Mer - journal personnel*.

Je m’intéresse beaucoup à faire des portraits et pour mes modèles, je les fais prendre une pose dramatique.

**Le but public : (public agenda)**

Je veux noter les détails de notre voyage d’une façon exacte, honnête et compréhensive…. et un peu dramatique, aussi !

**Le but privé : (hidden agenda)**

J’aimerais bien être le premier artiste du voyage et pour cela il faut amoindrir le standing de Lesueur.
8. Charles-Alexandre LESUEUR

Mes particuliers :

Je suis né au Havre et j’habitais près du port. Étant très curieux par tempérament je me suis demandé ce qui passait au port. J’ai rencontré le Capitaine de la corvette « Géographe ».

J’adore l’aventure. D’un côté je suis naïf, mais de l’autre je suis perspicace et circonspect. Je suis avide d’apprendre tout ce que je peux et j’observe tous attentivement et note soigneusement les détails.

Mon standing :

Capitaine Baudin m’a accepté pour le voyage car ayant vu mes dessins il me voulait comme illustrateur pour son journal personnel. Il m’a embauché comme aide canonnier.

Les circonstances :

J’ai un boulot de niveau bas mais j’ai aussi l’honneur d’illustrer, avec Petit, le livre de bord officiel du Capitaine Baudin.

Mon but public :

Je dois faire un dossier visuel aussi précis et complet que possible sans admettre que je suis un favori du Capitaine.

Mon but privé :

C’est de devenir artiste officiel de l’expédition et je veux obtenir le succès et parvenir à la gloire.
Setting Sail

Welcome to the ‘play hard’ phase of our role play.

Remember that we are working with a mix of historical fact and imagination. You do not have to stuck to the facts! Feel free to improvise, and change the course of history. The Baudin story is just our ‘jumping off’ point for an enjoyable exercise in online roleplay. You can take you character in any direction you like, especially if it is one that might fulfil your hidden agenda!

Your first job is to **flesh out** your character based on the profile you received in your WebCT e-mail.

Make your character a real person for the other players, tell them a bit about your appearance, your position on the ship and your view of the world.

Remember not to give away your private agenda. A couple of paragraphs will be fine.

**Post this description to the discussion topic called Mon Profile**

Ground Rules and Guiding Lights

Learning Outcomes

Just to give you the ‘big picture’ view of our aims and aspirations, here are the learning Outcomes for our role play.

- Communicate in French with subordinates and superiors in a manner appropriate to the work place
- Conduct online research and report the findings via a discussion group
- Work collaboratively in an online environment
- Conduct self evaluation and participate in peer assessment of language, interpersonal and technical skills demonstrated in the role play

Participation Parameters 😊

- Try to post between 2 and 5 messages a day (you must visit the site at least 2/3 times a week)
- Check the site daily if you can to see what’s changed and who has replied to your messages
- Send an e-mail to your moderator – le singe futé if you need information or advice on any aspect of the roleplay. You can be sure that le singe futé will be contacting you to let you know how you are going!
- Use the chat room to have important private discussions with other characters. If you want to invite someone to chat, send them an e-mail with the time and the name of the chat room you will be in

Have fun!

This is the most important instruction of all!
Bienvenu à tous ! Nous entrerons dans la phase intensive de notre jeu-de-rôles.

Il faut se souvenir qu’on prendra un mélange des faits historiques et l’imagination. Notre jeu-de-rôles ne sera pas basé obligatoirement sur la réalité ! Soyez libre d’improviser et de changer le déroulement de l’histoire. L’affaire de Baudin est simplement notre début pour un exercice agréable de ce jeu sur web-site. Vous pourriez développer votre personnage d’une façon qui vous plaira, surtout si ça vous aide à réaliser votre but privé.

Votre première tâche sera d’étoffer votre personnage, basé sur le portrait que vous avez reçu par email.

Créez un caractère réel pour les autres joueurs. Dites-leur comment vous êtes physiquement, et en plus, signalez votre standing à bord et votre perspective du monde.

Il ne faut pas révéler votre but privé. Deux paragraphes seront suffisants.

Afficher cette description sur le sujet de discussion qui s’appelle « Mon Profil ».

La Procédure et les aide-guides

Les objectifs d’étude

Pour vous donner un tableau ‘en gros’ de nos buts et nos espoirs, voici les objectifs de notre jeu-de-rôles :

- Communiquerez en français avec les subalternes et les supérieurs d’une manière appropriée au lieu de travail
- Faites des recherches sur l’Internet et faites un rapport sur vos découvertes en groupe de discussion
- Travailliez en commun avec les autres sur le web-site
- faites une autoévaluation et participez en évaluant des habiletés interpersonnelles et techniques démontrées dans le jeu-de-rôles.
Les caractéristiques de participation

- Essayez d’afficher entre 2 et 5 messages par jour
- Visitez le site chaque jour si c’est possible (mais au moins deux/trois fois par semaine) pour voir ce que a changé et qui a répondu à vos messages
- Envoyez un email à votre modérateur – le singe futé, si vous avez besoin des renseignements ou des conseils sur n’importe quel aspect du jeu. Vous pourriez être sûr que le singe futé vous contactera en vous confirmant le progrès que vous ferez.
- Utilisez la salle de causeries (Chat Room) pour les discussions importantes et privées avec d’autres personnages. Si vous voulez inviter quelqu’un à causer, envoyez-lui un email avec l’heure et le nom de la salle de causerie où vous vous trouverez.

Amusez-vous bien !

Ça, c’est la règle la plus importante !
Appendix 12

Extract of Chat Room dialogue upon Vasse’s return.

He appeared in the Chat Room but was too overwhelmed to respond. This is what the others had to say:

Baudin : Quelle surprise ! Vasse revient à nous.
Baudin : Apparemment il a été trouvé par des indigènes au Nouveau Corse.
Petit : Oui, Vasse a pris le dos au dauphin à Port Jackson.
Le Chat : « Vasse revient à nous »…oui vous êtes ivre encore.
Vasse est MORT !!! Il est MORT, MORT !!
Le Chat : C’est un miracle !
L’Haridon : Puisque je ne sais pas où Vasse était, je pense qu’il devrait avoir un contrôle de santé avec moi.
Petit : Oui, c’est un miracle – il vit mais il ne parle pas. Tim, avez-vous perdu la langue ?
Péron : Il a oublié comment parler français ! C’est le choc !
Le Chat : Tim, Vous êtes ici ? Vous parlez français ?
Péron : Donne-lui un verre de vin rouge.
L’Haridon : Vasse, parle-t-il souahéli ?
Petit : Il ne parle pas. Il est fantôme.
Le bateau est hanté ! Au secours !
Ronsard : Tim, can you speak English ?
Le Chat : Fantôme !! Aide ! Aide !
Baudin : Il n’est pas un miracle, il est seulement un garçon vilain.
Le Chat : Ouai ! Ronsard parle anglais aussi.
Péron : Il est très intelligent.

…..

Baudin : Parlez à nous. Peut-être Vasse a perdu la langue.
Péron : Vasse ! Pourquoi ? Pourquoi ?
Petit : Tim, si vous ne pouvez pas parler, chantez.
Péron : On doit taper Vasse à la tête. Peut-être, ça aide !
Le Chat : Oui, oui, chante, s’il te plaît.
Je joue de la guitare.
Baudin : ou siffle..
Ronsard : Tim, peux-tu m’entendre ?

Baudin: What a surprise ! Vasse has come back to us.
Baudin: Apparently, he was found by Aborigines in New Corsica.
Petit: Yes, Vasse came to Port Jackson on the back of a dolphin.
Cat: “Vasse has come back to us”.. yes, you are drunk again. Vasse is DEAD!!! He is DEAD, DEAD!!

Cat: It’s a miracle!
L’Haridon: As I don’t know where Vasse was, I think he should have a medical check-up with me.
Petit: Yes, it’s a miracle – he lives but he doesn’t speak. Have you lost your tongue?
Péron: He has forgotten how to speak French! It’s the shock!
Cat: Tim, are you here? Do you speak French?
Péron: Give him a glass of red wine.

L’Haridon: Vasse, do you speak Swahili?
Petit: He doesn’t speak. He’s a ghost. The boat is haunted. Help!
Ronsard: Tim, can you speak English?

Cat: Ghost!! Help! Help!
Baudin: He’s not a miracle, he’s only a naughty boy.
Cat: Wow! Ronsard speaks English as well.
Péron: He’s very intelligent.

…..

Baudin: Speak to us. Perhaps Vasse has lost his tongue.
Péron: Vasse! Why? Why?
Petit: Tim, if you can’t speak, sing.

Péron: We should hit Vasse on the head. Perhaps, it helps!
Cat: Yes, yes, sing please. I’ll play the guitar.
Baudin: or whistle ..
Ronsard: Tim, can you hear me?
Le Chat : taper à la tête avec la guitare.
Péron : Bonne idée !
L’Haridon : Je pense que Vasse a besoin de thérapie. Viens chez moi.
Péron : Thérapie psychologique !
Le Chat : *bonk*
Ronsard : Nous avons besoin d’un ventriloque.
Le Chat : pas de résultat … encore !
L’Haridon : Oui, un peu de thérapie psychologique et thérapie physique aussi.
Le Chat : bonk, bonk, bonk
Baudin : Peut-être Vasse est vraiment un fantôme.
L’Haridon : Je pense que c’est vrai.
Baudin : Il n’existe pas.
Chat : Il a la tête dure.
Péron : On a besoin d’un médium pour parler avec Vasse.
Ronsard : Pardon, nous avons besoin d’un ventriloque.
Baudin : Vasse est faible. La masseuse, vite, vite !
Péron : Peut-être il cherche des mots.
Petit : Je suis d’accord comme ça parce qu’il ne répond pas. Tous les fantômes ne parlent pas : ils apparaissent seulement.
Petit : Tim, vous avez un drap blanc ?
Baudin : Peut-être le chemin du Nouveau Corse à Port Jackson était trop long. Vasse est fatigué.
Péron : Peut-être les indigènes ont coupé sa langue !
...
Cat : mais Vasse est ici encore … Vasse … aller, aller au lit !

Cat: Hit him on the head with the guitar.
Péron: Good idea!
L’Haridon: I think that Vasse needs therapy. Come here.
Cat: Okay. It’s the guitar. No problem!
Péron: Psychological therapy.
Cat: Bonk
Ronsard: We need a ventriloquist.

Cat: No result … again!!
L’Haridon: Yes, a little psychological therapy and physical therapy also.

Cat: Bonk, bonk, bonk.
Baudin: Perhaps, Vasse is really a ghost.
L’Haridon: I think that it’s true.
Baudin: He doesn’t exist.
Cat: He has a hard head.
Péron: We need a ‘medium’ to speak to Vasse.
Ronsard: Sorry, we need a ventriloquist.
Baudin: Vasse is weak. The masseuse, quick, quick!
Péron: Perhaps he is searching for words.
Petit: I agree with that because he doesn’t answer. All ghosts don’t speak: they only appear.

Petit: Tim, do you have a white sheet?
Baudin: Perhaps the journey from New Corsica was too long. Vasse is tired.
Péron: Perhaps the indigenous people cut his tongue.
...

Cat: but Vasse is still here … Vasse .. go, go to bed!
**Voici mon journal**

Les indigènes m’ont appris à me servir d’écorce et le charbon pour écrire. Voici mon conte !

J’étais perdu en mer. C’était très orageux. Les vagues étaient énormes. Je n’ai pas su ce qui s’est passé, mais je me suis trouvé finalement sur les roches à coté de la mer.

J’ai rampé au sable et je me suis effondré.

Les indigènes m’ont trouvé et m’ont amené à leur camp. D’abord j’ai eu peur. J’ai pensé qu’ils iront me tuer, mais ils semblaient gentils. Ils m’ont donné la nourriture et ils m’ont fait chaud.

Je pense que le bateau reviendra mais il n’est pas revenu aujourd’hui.

J’ai décidé d’allumer un feu sur la plage pour que les marins me voient. Je suis resté sur la plage tout le temps. J’ai cherché un bateau toute la journée.

Les indigènes m’aident. Ils me montrent les plants qui sont mangeables. Ils m’apportent de la viande mais je ne mange pas beaucoup. Je voudrais rentrer en France.

Je grandis plus faible chaque jour. Quand est-ce qu’un bateau viendra ?

Les indigènes ont quitté leur camp. Maintenant je suis seul. J’attends le bateau revenir ……

J’attends et j’attends …. peut-être demain ……………

*Tim Vasse*
Mon profil
Moi-Moi
Je me présente
A.M. le Docteur

Bonjour tous les amoureux...
Les fonctions de tous à b...

Le chat
La santé
La médecine

Laide
Re: L'aide
Re: L'aide
Re: L'aide
Re: L'aide
Re: L'aide
Rendez-vous avec le petite...
Port L'ajxson

S'avance

Un message de la chatte

Dans l'entrepont chat Le (040103130) Sat 2
Exprimer chat Le (040103130)

Mon Profil François-Michel Ronsard (040205217) Sun
La Passerelle François-Michel Ronsard (040205217) Sun

Mon Profil La Mouette (cd04l'amoue) Sun
Dans l'entrepont le singe futé (04602283) Wed

Dans l'entrepont François Étienne L'Haridon (040204447) Wed

Dans l'entrepont François Étienne L'Haridon (040204447) Wed
La Passerelle François Étienne L'Haridon (040204447) Wed

La Passerelle Henri Desaulces de Freycinet (048530913) Wed
La Passerelle François Étienne L'Haridon (040204447) Thu
La Passerelle Henri Desaulces de Freycinet (048530913) Fri

La Passerelle François Michel Ronsard (040205217) Sat
La Passerelle Henri Desaulces de Freycinet (048530913) Sat

La Passerelle François Étienne L'Haridon (040204447) Mon
La Passerelle Henri Desaulces de Freycinet (048530913) Mon
La Passerelle Henri Desaulces de Freycinet (048530913) Mon

La Passerelle François-Michel Ronsard (040205217) Tue
Dans l'entrepont chat Le (040103130)
Dans l'entrepont Nicolas Baudin (040211938)
Dans l'entrepont Henri Desaulces de Freycinet (048530913) Thu
Dans l'entrepont François Étienne L'Haridon (040204447) Thu
Questionnaire 1

Web-based online role-play simulation

The purpose of this questionnaire is to ascertain what prior knowledge of online learning you may have had and what are your perceptions of the online role-play that you are about to undertake. There are no right or wrong answers, and so we would ask you just to answer thoughtfully in giving us your opinion.

1. Have you heard of the term ‘online role-play’? (please circle one only)  YES  NO

2. We have been preparing for such a role-play in class, using WebCT (Web Computer Tools). What do you understand / think the term “online role-play” could mean?  
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

3. Do you have access to a computer with Internet facilities for at least 2 hours a week? (please circle one only)  YES  NO

4. How confident are you at using a computer? Not at all  ❑  Reasonably confident  ❑  Very confident  ❑

5. Have you personally studied using Online Learning in any form? (please circle one only)  YES  NO

   If YES, please state type of course.  __________________________________________________________

Online Role-play Simulation Survey  Questionnaire 1

Appendix 15
6. On a scale of 1 to 5 where ‘1’ means “strongly disagree” and ‘5’ means “strongly agree” how would you rate the following statements in relation to your own personal feelings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) I enjoy taking part in role-plays in my French class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Role-plays are fun.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Being able to communicate in French gives me a sense of achievement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) I am confident in voicing my opinion in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Online role-play will give me time to think about what I am going to say.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Taking the part of a historic character will give me a greater sense of French culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) I am less shy in an online role-play than I am in class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) I am anxious about dealing with online technology.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Thinking of what to ‘say’ / communicate in French will be difficult.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) I am happy that the moderators will be able to help me online.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) I think it will be hard to interact with people that I can’t see.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l) As no-one will know who I am, I will be able to express myself openly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, to enable researchers to make accurate analyses, could you please give the following biographical information:

7. (a) Are you MALE or FEMALE?  
(please tick one only)  
MALE □  
FEMALE □
(b) What age are you? (please tick one only)  
Under 24 □  
25 – 34 □  
35 – 44 □  
45 – 54 □  
55 – 64 □  
Over 65 □

8. What is the highest level of education you reached?  (please tick one only)  
Primary School □  
High School □  
Tertiary or other qualification □  
University □

9. What is your occupation?  
___________________________________

THANK YOU for helping us with this survey. Your input has been most valuable.
Questionnaire 2

Web-based online role-play simulation

The purpose of this questionnaire is to give us an understanding of how well the web-based online role-play simulation helped your learning and your ability to express yourself in French. There are no right or wrong answers, and so we would ask you just to answer thoughtfully in giving us your opinion.

Your answers to these questions will enable us to make a judgement on the outcomes of the study and will have no bearing on your assessment. Please be assured that your responses will be regarded as highly confidential and your anonymity will be maintained.

For each of the following statements, you will be asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5, your actual experience and your preferred experience in a number of areas relating to your own learning and your interaction with other participants, the online program and the moderators. The actual experience relates to how you felt during the role-play and the preferred experience relates to how you would have liked it to be. These may or may not be the same.

The scale will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My own learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Actual experience</th>
<th>Preferred experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I found that my ability to communicate in French improved.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The ‘events’ of the role-play stimulated my thinking.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I found that I was able to express myself more freely in French.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The role-play added variety to the French course.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The research that I had carried out prior to the role-play was useful in developing my character.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I was able to influence the course of events through collaboration with some of the other characters.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### My interaction with the other characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Actual experience</th>
<th>Preferred experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Over the course of the role-play, my confidence in interacting with others grew.</td>
<td>![5]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I liked having time to work out my responses to the other characters (rather than having to respond immediately).</td>
<td>![4]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I found that I was able to respond more quickly as the role-play progressed.</td>
<td>![4]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It became easier to ‘converse’ in French in the Chat Room.</td>
<td>![4]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I found it difficult to be spontaneous in the Chat Room.</td>
<td>![3]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I felt that the other participants empathised with my attempts to communicate.</td>
<td>![2]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Actual experience</th>
<th>Preferred experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. I found that the introductory sessions using WebCT prior to the role-play were helpful.</td>
<td>![4]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I found the computer and internet difficult to use.</td>
<td>![4]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I found it hard to have adequate access to the web-site.</td>
<td>![4]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I became more confident in using the technology over the 4-week period.</td>
<td>![4]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I found it easier to participate in online discussions than face to face classroom discussions.</td>
<td>![4]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I felt that my lack of confidence in using computers hindered my participation.</td>
<td>![3]</td>
<td>![5]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The content

<table>
<thead>
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</table>
Open questions

31. My favourite part of the role-play was …

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

32. My least favourite part of the role-play was …

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
# Questionnaire 2

## Group 1 Responses

The scale will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## My own learning

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I found that my ability to communicate in French improved.</td>
<td>5 4</td>
<td>3 4 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The ‘events’ of the role-play stimulated my thinking.</td>
<td>4 5</td>
<td>6 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I found that I was able to express myself more freely in French.</td>
<td>3 6</td>
<td>4 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The role-play added variety to the French course.</td>
<td>2 2 5</td>
<td>5 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The research that I had carried out prior to the role-play was useful in developing my character.</td>
<td>6 3</td>
<td>2 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I was able to influence the course of events through collaboration with some of the other characters.</td>
<td>7 2</td>
<td>2 3 4</td>
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</table>
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<tr>
<td>7. Over the course of the role-play, my confidence in interacting with others grew.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I liked having time to work out my responses to the other characters (rather than having to respond immediately).</td>
<td>1 1 1 5 2</td>
<td>1 1 1 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I found that I was able to respond more quickly as the role-play progressed.</td>
<td>2 2 2 5 1</td>
<td>1 1 1 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. It became easier to ‘converse’ in French in the Chat Room.</td>
<td>2 2 1 2 7</td>
<td>2 7 7 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I found it difficult to be spontaneous in the Chat Room.</td>
<td>2 2 2 2 1</td>
<td>5 3 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I felt that the other participants empathised with my attempts to communicate.</td>
<td>2 2 4 4 2</td>
<td>4 3 2 2</td>
</tr>
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<td>1 2 6 1 3 3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I found the computer and internet difficult to use.</td>
<td>6 2 1 6 1 2</td>
<td>6 1 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I found it hard to have adequate access to the web-site.</td>
<td>5 2 2 6 1 1</td>
<td>5 2 6 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I became more confident in using the technology over the 4-week period.</td>
<td>1 2 6 1 4 4</td>
<td>1 4 4 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I found it easier to participate in online discussions than face to face classroom discussions.</td>
<td>3 3 3 1 6 2</td>
<td>3 3 3 1 6 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I felt that my lack of confidence in using computers hindered my participation.</td>
<td>6 1 1 1 7 2</td>
<td>6 1 1 7 2</td>
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<td>conditions experienced by explorers in 1800s.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I found it easy to remember my social standing on the ship and express</td>
<td>6 3 1 7 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>myself appropriately.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I became more aware of the social conventions of the day in French</td>
<td>8 1 2 2 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>culture.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. It was fun to be able to change the (historic) course of events</td>
<td>2 2 5 1 6 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>through our own interactions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23. I learned more about French exploration and its contribution to W.A.</td>
<td>2 7 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I expanded my knowledge of the French language and culture through</td>
<td>1 8 1 1 6 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. I felt frustrated because it took too long to get a reply to my</td>
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<td>have the moderator make suggestions.</td>
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Questionnaire 2

Web-based online role-play simulation

The purpose of this questionnaire is to give us an understanding of how well the web-based online role-play simulation helped your learning and your ability to express yourself in French. There are no right or wrong answers, and so we would ask you just to answer thoughtfully in giving us your opinion.

Your answers to these questions will enable us to make a judgement on the outcomes of the study and will have no bearing on your assessment. Please be assured that your responses will be regarded as highly confidential and your anonymity will maintained.

For each of the following statements, you will be asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5, your actual experience and your preferred experience in a number of areas relating to your own learning and your interaction with other participants, the online program and the moderators. The actual experience relates to how you felt during the role-play and the preferred experience relates to how you would have liked it to be. These may or may not be the same.

The scale will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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My own learning

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>2. The ‘events’ of the role-play stimulated my thinking.</td>
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<td>3. I found that I was able to express myself more freely in French.</td>
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<td>[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The role-play added variety to the French course.</td>
<td>[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5</td>
<td>[ ] 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. The research that I had carried out prior to the role-play was useful in developing my character.</td>
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Questionnaire 2

Group 2 Responses

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<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I felt that my comments were responded to adequately.</td>
<td>1 1 2 4</td>
<td>1 1 4 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I didn’t feel the need to ask the moderator for any guidance.</td>
<td>2 1 2 3</td>
<td>2 2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I liked to try to influence the course of events myself rather than have the moderator make suggestions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 2</td>
<td>2 2 1 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My favourite part of the role-play was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gp 1</th>
<th>Baudin:    Thinking up unusual and provocative circumstances.  Twisting history.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ronsard:   Using the chat room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon:</td>
<td>Composing meaningful sentences in French. Just communicating. I think that the “provided character” in my case would not have been as important as the fact that everyone communicated thus giving us an opportunity to improve our French – which is /was the aim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit:</td>
<td>1) Hilarity in the Chat Room. 2) History of the expedition. I knew little, if any, of French exploration in WA. 3) The company and social interaction of my mail-pal. 4) Great fun trying to work out the student/role-play relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit MP:</td>
<td>Working with a partner who was computer literate. The amusement generated in the Chat Room – it was hilarious at times, but this is probably because a modern day spin was put on to the historical drama. Having to carefully watch language in order to be-fit my social standing on board ship. The desire to borrow two books, on the voyages, from my local library. An amusing aspect was working out (with my partner) who was playing the role of the various characters. By the end of Week 1 we had worked out who the Captain was. By the end of the time we felt we knew who most of the characters were.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur:</td>
<td>Being anonymous to carry out the story, it added to the fun of the game; I also enjoyed taking on the personality of a historical figure I found interesting personally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron:</td>
<td>The Chat Room: with up to 8 people being on the chat at one time it was good fun. Unfortunately, the chat only became really good to the end of the four weeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chat:</td>
<td>In the chat room – it wasn’t easy to start at first, but as everyone entered the chat room, conversations began to develop. I enjoyed it because it encouraged me to think what I would like to say in French and I began to converse in French simultaneously with the other participants. Whether my sentences were correct or incorrect, I felt encouraged to say (or type) more French and I felt happy that I was able to converse in French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gp 2</td>
<td>Baudin:    The chat room. Researching the history was too difficult but I enjoyed reading it from a book and preparing messages for discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>De Freycinet: *? To try to change events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ronsard    (played by one of the technicians as student had to go to France suddenly to finish his PhD in Physics.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon:</td>
<td>My social position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petet:</td>
<td>Learning of the influence and discoveries of the French and of the hardships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit MP:</td>
<td>An interesting experiment! I wish I had had more in using Internet but still I enjoyed whatever I learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur:</td>
<td>Embellishing the character with my own idiosyncrasies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron:</td>
<td>Reading the other characters messages and seeing what events they’d thought up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chat:</td>
<td>Once given a new character (formerly a ‘mailpal’), I found myself able to “chat” quite quickly to the others. I enjoyed teasing them in my role.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My least favourite part was:

Gp1

- Baudin: When I couldn’t understand what others wrote. Confusion with the complex computer system. Not knowing where messages were going.

- Ronsard: Not being able to log on to the TAFE website in computer class because of the computer problems.

- L’Haridon: The pre-roleplay anxiety – especially from the point of view of most (a great number of students). Online role-play is just like in-class face to face role-play and that the aim is to have fun and learn was very important. This is something that was done very well by Vanda.

- Petit: 1) Frustrations at perceived lack of research by other characters. 2) Not fully understanding the actual computer process until mid-way through. 3) My lack of correct proof-reading before sending messages. 4) Lack of response to my messages, especially via e-mail, some of which I believe were important to the actual role of my character and, therefore, inhibited progress with the role.

- Petit MP: Lack of replies to some of the messages which were posed.

Petit MP: Lack of replies to some of the messages which were posed.

- Lesueur: The occasional technical difficulties were annoying, particularly in the last week of the study. I also think if it had lasted longer, there would have been more opportunity to develop the story – it ended too soon.

- Péron: Having to do a lot more on top of my daily business. Often only read messages but didn’t have time to answer. By the time I came to respond the story already moved on – that would have been easier with internet at home.

- Vasse: Using TAFE computers. Trying to understand all the different sites and how to access them.

- Le chat: Time-consuming: Could be a lot of work sometimes: reading and getting an understanding of the new emails or discussions could take a long time. And more time was needed to post my own emails and discussions.

Gp 2

- Baudin: Trying to finish the whole thing, and I was extremely frustrated by not being able to do anything on the computer at home or at times when I was free to do so, which left me to the only option – making a special trip into the TAFE library and working under far from ideal situations. By the finish I was almost completely brain drained and could barely communicate in English let alone French. Because I don’t like the computer, although I can see where it is of use to some people, my heart really wasn’t in it. Trying to type, use the numbers for accents and different ones for the chat room, think in French and remember what I actually do know was just too much for my brain and I must admit I was very relieved when it was over. I really believe the computer is far from an ideal way to communicate and always will be.

- De Freycinet: to wait for replies from other characters. The time it took several times a week.

- Ronsard: (played by one of the technicians as student had to go to France suddenly to finish his PhD in Physics.)

- L’Haridon: Insufficient knowledge of what experience my role part would have had to perform his duty.

- Petit: Sending emails (ie not posting discussions) and getting no replies, meant that I couldn’t change events and have fun. I wish we could have all been able to communicate more during the week.

- Petit MP: Perhaps staying back late? (for the Chat session)
Lesueur: Coming to grips with the technology.

Péron: Having to write in French! Also having people who did not have constant access to a computer made it difficult to arrange times to “meet” – as the suggested time was often over before the person got to read the message.

Le chat: The absolute frustration of the website being unavailable; not being able to see my discussion points when I posted them, e.g. Friday 6/6/03. Couldn’t read the e-mail from Singe Futé. Found it difficult to get access to the internet. Sometimes the problems were caused by my lack of experience with computers and sometimes with the program itself. I used my library, internet cafés and a computer at work in my endeavours to participate fully.
Weekly thoughts – Week 1

1. What did your character contribute to the role-play this week?

Gp 1

Baudin: Numerous e-mails and discussion messages, set directions of ship, names new French colony (Nouveau Corsica) and settled colonists (de Freycinet), promoted two artists and zoologist.

Ronsard: He introduced himself, described his appearance and his family background.

L’Haridon (stepped in for another student at last moment): A brief post-introduction to L’Haridon.

Petit: Responded to most messages left by others. Initiated only one. Probably wrote more messages than other characters but none had a great deal of substance to the role of the character, more to the personality.

Petit MP: I brought myself to the Captain’s notice about facetious in the email. Replied to Ronsard. Let M. Lesueur know I was as skilled as he. Arranged to contact Lesueur about shared work.

Lesueur: Started rivalry between Petit and Lesueur.

Péron: Profile, told of new discoveries.

Vasse

Le chat: Not much. I introduced myself to all the others on the boat – that’s about it.

Gp 2

Baudin 2: The only contribution made was to put online my profile. In fact I only prepared it and Diane actually used the computer.

De Freycinet: I felt that I had to jump-start things when no-one had posted anything late in the week. I contributed a profile plus two or three messages. I was annoyed that the key character had not posted a profile, then put it in the wrong place, very late. (This was because Baudin almost quit the course and was taken off WebCT and was not fully reinstated at the time of submitting his profile. Thus the profile had to be sent by email. The others were not to know.)

Ronsard 2: (Unfortunately, had to quit within days of completing the initial questionnaire, due to a position becoming available in France for the completion of his doctorate in physics. This role was taken over by one of the technicians, who later got sick.)

L’Haridon 2: Very little I am afraid due to my lack of computer knowledge. I do not have a computer. I do not know how to use one. It is obviously something which cannot be learned overnight. (Yet, he refused to have a mail-pal.)

Petit 2: Not much. I put profile on internet. 2 others went on. By Sat. I was able to write emails to Lesueur and Péron.

Mail-pal 2: Not much.

Lesueur 2: No submission (not even from his secretary!).

Péron 2: I put in my profile and met the other characters.

Le chat 2: (started the week as a mail-pal but decided to go it alone, so was made the cat.) More character profile.
2. How do you feel that your participation in the role-play is enhancing your use of the French language?

**Gp 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baudin</td>
<td>Making me use dictionary and verb book. Increasing the amount of time I spend on French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronsard</td>
<td>I learnt to construct simple sentences in the French language which improves my understanding of the French language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon</td>
<td>Very much so. Active composing of sentences in the course of “discussions” – there was time to compose properly i.e. use of dictionary, etc… in the case of chat – more spontaneously and therefore practising in 2 different ways to improve French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit</td>
<td>Improvement in writing the spoken word rather than the written word – two totally different styles of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit MP</td>
<td>It requires a lot of dictionary work and verb conjugation – which is good, if most of it is remembered! However, it does not help with French pronunciation at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur</td>
<td>It’s a challenge to write messages in French for quick replies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron</td>
<td>Read in French / English (2nd Language) on the net in order to learn about François Péron.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasse</td>
<td>Le chat: I could see how the role-play is going to improve my French as it progresses. So far my French has improved slightly after having to introduce my character in French to the other participants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gp 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baudin 2</td>
<td>Increasing my vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Freycinet</td>
<td>Well, messages have to be translated and understood before they can be responded to, so it can’t help but improve one’s use of French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronsard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon 2</td>
<td>I do not feel that I am participating in this project for the reasons mentioned above. Therefore, I have gained very little.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit 2</td>
<td>It is making me write sentences about specific topics. (I generally read and write given sentences (putting in verbs, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail-pal 2</td>
<td>I feel good about that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur 2</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron 2</td>
<td>I have trouble writing and don’t remember new words after I’ve written them, so not much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Chat 2</td>
<td>I haven’t been able to participate much this week (See Q. 1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. What new things have you learnt this week (whether it be in regard to learning French or computing technology)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ronsard: I learnt how to send a message and change the colour black to a lighter colour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L’Haridon: Learning more grammar and vocabulary/ general and specific to shipping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Petit: I’m not proof-reading as well as I should. Not exactly sure of the various sites within the programme, e.g. how to send to a few rather than all (away from the e-mail).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Petit MP: Interest in learning the history of the French expedition to Australia. Also to respect the keyboard skills of my partner, and the knowledge that an accidental slip onto the wrong key on the keyboard, can wipe the lot and it has to be re-done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesueur: More practice of future tense, i.e. I will go to….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Péron: Learnt the difference between threaded and unthreaded messages. Memorised my student number. Worked myself into the Baudin topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vasse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le chat: I got an insight into how a role-play could be done on the Internet. I’ve learned some history about Baudin, his discovery of Western Australia and those who were on the ship with him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gp 2</th>
<th>Baudin 2: Unles one is constantly using the language in some form, it is quickly forgotten especially if one loses interest! The same applies to the computer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>De Freycinet: That my comprehension is not too bad. The computing is fine because I am au fait with computers in general, having used them since 1985. I should learn to rely more on my memory regarding vocab.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ronsard 2: nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L’Haridon 2: Listening to tapes in class has improved my comprehension of French. One’s grasp of the situation and understanding of just a few key words guides one’s understanding BUT caution is required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Petit 2: More familiar with Baudin site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mail-pal 2: Investigating the history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lesueur 2: nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Péron 2: --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Le Chat 2: More about emails.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Reflect on your experience this week.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gp1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baudin:</td>
<td>Would be nice to know just where the ship is supposed to be. But now, I will be more proactive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronsard:</td>
<td>I learnt about my role on the ship. I communicated with other ship crew and I had a lot of fun in my first week on the voyage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit:</td>
<td>In a word “fun”. Working with a partner has drawn a lot of laughs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit MP:</td>
<td>Fun with a partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrowed history books from library in order to follow what should be going on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur:</td>
<td>Things started out slow but the programme shows potential when everyone starts chatting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron:</td>
<td>Generally don’t have much time to spend on WebCT, but try to at least read all the new messages – so I pick up some new words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Chat:</td>
<td>Haven’t learned a lot just yet – I felt we are still at the introductory stage where everyone was still trying to understand what needs to be done in this role-play, trying to figure out WebCT, and the activities so far have only been introducing our characters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gp 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baudin 2:</td>
<td>I need help to keep motivated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Freycinet:</td>
<td>I have taken a fair amount of time to look up articles on the expeditions to try to sort out exactly what my character did as opposed to his brother. Not much has been found. Generally, I have been frustrated with the contributions of my crew – not enough input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon 2:</td>
<td>I am better able to follow Le Journal (French news) on SBS. French films are harder to define how much we actually understand and how much the sub-titles contribute. Also I am struggling to read Zola’s «Germinal» in French. I read aloud to myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit 2:</td>
<td>Role-play takes time, I have gone in several days but nothing more from others to work on. Faxed info to my Mail-pal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail-pal 2:</td>
<td>I did my best, more at home, and at TAFE using the functions of the computer. (This was a bit of a handicap to her mail-pal as only one Petit could chat at one time, even both names appeared on the list of participants.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur 2:</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron 2:</td>
<td>People don’t seem to be posting much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chat 2:</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weekly thoughts - Week 2

1. What did your character contribute to the role-play this week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gp1</th>
<th>Baudin: Changed direction, encouraged discussion regarding the cat. Several e-mails.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ronsard: Yes, I told Mr Baudin the ship is ready to sail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L’Haridon: Active role-playing – replies on discussion board – follow-ups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit</td>
<td>Again answering as much from the notice board as possible. Emails to the captain remain unanswered. I wonder if he’s receiving them as he appears to be a good communicator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit MP</td>
<td>Acknowledged M. Ronsard’s position as chaplain. Asked Lesueur to contact me after receiving his high-handed e-mail. Asked Captain for work guidelines. Requested the name of Vasse be perpetuated on WA Coastline if he wasn’t found. Sent Captain a list of the drawings I have done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur</td>
<td>I went with Péron to collect samples from the mainland. I continued the rivalry with Petit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron</td>
<td>Some short messages and a ‘rapport’. Tried to get in contact with other characters on the e-mail list – was unsuccessful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasse</td>
<td>(nil … lost overboard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chat</td>
<td>I have named the skipping animal «kangaroo» on a message I posted on WebCT.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gp 2</th>
<th>Baudin 2: Not much but did manage to put a couple of messages online. Had trouble answering other characters’ requests.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>De Freycinet: Heaps because not many others did and I felt responsible as one of the key characters. About 8 hours worth of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronsard 2</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon 2</td>
<td>This week is the same. I feel isolated from the rest of the class. Of course, computer access is the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit 2</td>
<td>Not much – have emailed Péron, Lesueur and Cat trying to start some ‘trouble’ to advance myself. No replies – will try again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail-pal 2</td>
<td>(Health problems. This participant is of advanced years.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur 2</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron 2</td>
<td>Put a few messages on the message boards and tried to arrange a meeting with one of the characters, but we kept reading our email too late. (Tracking shows that this character sent only one email during the role-play.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chat 2</td>
<td>Not much as my character was changed. (Last week was a mail-pal with Ronsard in Group 1 but decided to take on a role herself.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How do you feel that your participation in the role-play is enhancing your use of the French language?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gp 1</th>
<th>Baudin: Making me practice use of verbs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ronsard: Yes, because I can read email messages in the French language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L’Haridon: It is a fabulous tool for learning a language. I had to understand what the other characters were wasying to me – so new words had to be looked up for example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit</td>
<td>Not a great deal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit MP</td>
<td>It requires checking grammar and spelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur</td>
<td>It is good to use new vocabulary – on board ship, exploring, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron</td>
<td>learning new words while trying to post messages or read the ones others have posted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasse</td>
<td>(Lost at sea.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chat</td>
<td>Posting an email or a discussion in French has improved my French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Freycinet</td>
<td>Quite a bit. I have spent 8 hours on this project this week. I try to read about the background of the expedition each week to pick up little details. Then, of course, I have to write it in French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronsard</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon</td>
<td>Nothing to contribute (de rien). I feel angry and this is not in my nature. Had I known that computers would be used, I would not have signed for the class. (Moderator chatted with character for about an hour and he seemed more positive by the end of the conversation.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit 2</td>
<td>Making me write more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail-pal 2</td>
<td>(Health problems.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur 2</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron 2</td>
<td>Don’t feel any improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Chat 2</td>
<td>Making me think more quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What new things have you learnt this week (whether it be in regard to learning French or computing technology)?</td>
<td>Gp 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronsard</td>
<td>I learnt how to send a private message to other students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon</td>
<td>New shipping terms, health terms, composing a sentence as correctly as possible, addressing the captain in a manner that is appropriate for example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit</td>
<td>Don’t be in the chat room with a character in your group sitting beside you – anonymity impossible!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit MP</td>
<td>As I work with a partner I don’t work with the computer but I appreciate that if one’s keyboard skills are slow one may as well write with a pen. However, the reply may not be as fast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur</td>
<td>How to use French symbols on the keyboard (ie. ‘alt + 130 = é)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasse</td>
<td>(Lost at sea.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chat</td>
<td>I have learned new words and practised on how to construct sentences in French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gp 2</td>
<td>Baudin 2: I’m managing to remember things better and had enough confidence to go into TAFE and use a computer by myself and felt I had made some progress as I actually managed to get into the site (even though it took 20 mins!) and put some prepared stuff online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Freycinet</td>
<td>I need to learn to trust my memory more with regard to nouns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and verbs. I always check in the dictionary and, of course, that takes more
time.

Ronsard: nil

L’Haridon: At home I listen to language tapes obtained from the library.
These help my pronunciation. I browse through Paris Match and can follow
most of it.

Petit 2: --

Mail-pal 2: (Health problems)

Lesueur 2: nil

Péron 2: --

Le Chat 2: That computers can’t be trusted.

4. Reflect on your experience this week.

Reflect on your experience this week.

Baudin: Enjoyable.

More confidence in corresponding with friends in France.

Ronsard: I learnt how to send a private email message, I am learning how to
write in French and I am having fun on the computer.

L’Haridon: Using dictionaries online are a fast way of finding meaning.

Petit: A few laughs in the chat room. It is disappointing that the syllabus is so
far removed from this project as it would be good for learning outcomes to
have them inter-linked.

Petit MP: Continuing to read history of the voyages.

We tried to work out who the other characters were. We felt we knew who the
Captain was.

Lesueur: I was really fun this week because people had started really chatting.

Péron: Chat is coming on too slow – think I’ve been talking to Darren all the
time.

Vasse: (Lost at sea.)

Le Chat: In order to participate in this role-play, lots of time and effort need to
be put in. I felt I have actually done some serious studying.

Gp 2

Baudin 2: I’ve learnt not to feel foolish in front of a group of confident young
teenagers. At least I have some manners! (Obviously the young TAFE
students in the LRC were not polite!)

De Freycinet: Things go well when all things are equal. One character has
only entered one thing this week. There is no response to addressing this
character. Everyone needs to pull together to make it work.

A couple of times I could not get through to the website and twice it did not
accept my logon.

Ronsard: nil

L’Haridon: Every little bit helps. I think we should have at least one session
where any other language except French should be forbidden, with penalties
for breaches.

Petit 2: I hope I convinced Mae to stay with course. It’s very hard for a
person who isn’t comfortable with computers/Internet to do it. I put her
‘presentation’ in. I ignore the fact I know it’s her and she doesn’t know who I
am.

Faxed info to my mail-pal. She will try to put some discussions on ‘net’
Saturday.

Mail-pal 2: (Health problems)

Lesueur 2: nil
Péron 2: People seem to be making up events that have happened but forgetting to tell us what they are so the massages are a little confusing. (The course of events was updated on a weekly basis on the «Déroulement». This was discussed again in class this week but this character had departed early.)

Le chat 2: Frustrated.

KEY:
‘–’ means that the respondent did not answer that question.
’nil’ means that the respondent did not submit any answers to Weekly Thoughts.
Weekly thoughts – Week 3

1. What did your character contribute to the role-play this week?

Gp1

Baudin 1: Tried to kill the cat. Invented the source of the name Australia. Set up a game of football. Got us to Sydney.

Ronsard 1: I used the Chat Room and communicated with other crewmen on the ship.

L’Haridon 1: Provided advice and suggestions. Promoted exercise as a tool for well-being. Communicated with higher and lower level crew. Tried to have fun.

Petit 1: Continued to reply to many messages through notice board and galley. Have initiated a couple, and await responses.

Petit1MP: Letter to Captain saying I would meet the English artists and look forward to playing the game the Captain has devised.

Ask after M. Lesueur’ health.

Message sent to Doctor suggesting indigenous cures.

Lesueur 1: I was absent this week due to a history tutorial.

Péron 1: Some medium, long messages.

Vasse: nil (lost overboard)

Le chat 1: I haven’t created any event this week. I have only answered some emails and posted a message defending my stay in the ship after Baudin suggested to throw me out into the sea.

Gp 2

Baudin 2: I was able to give some orders and participate in the Chat Room.

De Freycinet: A lot of time again – in the different sections – La passerelle, email, discussions.

I have been in communication with one other character a fair bit, so I’ve appreciated that.

Ronsard 2: nil

L’Haridon 2: What can I add. Let’s face it I’m floundering.

Petit 2: Tried to get going but server doesn’t reply – Péron did but I rec’d it too late. Don’t go online each day – should I know.

Tried to get friendly with Baudin.

In Chat Room on Sat. just fun but no-one replies to me – insignificant character.

Petit2MP: I really tried to get into the swing of it all.

Lesueur 2: nil

Péron 2: I read other characters’ messages.

Le chat 2: A little.
How do you feel that your participation in the role-play is enhancing your use of the French language?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gp 1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baudin 1</strong></td>
<td>Still making me practise verbs I should know from year 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ronsard 1</strong></td>
<td>I think it improves my grammar skills on the computer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L’Haridon 1</strong></td>
<td>Very much. Faster communication – online especially with Chat facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Petit 1</strong></td>
<td>My major problem is always that I try to “get it right” and nothing has changed within the role-play. Have considerable difficulty at times in trying to translate messages of other characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Petit1MP</strong></td>
<td>Continued use of dictionary and verb conjugation in effort to produce good French. There is often the need to look up the meaning of words used by other players, therefore, an increase in vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesueur 1</strong></td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Péron 1</strong></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vasse: (Lost)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Le chat 1</strong></td>
<td>I joined the chat for the first time. I really enjoyed it and was very surprised to learn that I could actually converse more in French than I thought I was capable of.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baudin 2</strong></td>
<td>I am able to answer and communicate with the others (albeit slowly!).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>De Freycinet</strong></td>
<td>Translating messages and composing them makes me focus closely and must be of benefit to my learning of French.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ronsard 2</strong></td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L’Haridon 2</strong></td>
<td>Nothing has changed. I am out of my depth. No flags, no lifesavers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Petit 2</strong></td>
<td>Loved one letter to Le Chat saying to stop talking about her looks and get on with work! I thought she was to spy or tell secrets. I gave her a few to ferment intrigue but they fell flat and unanswered. Wrote to Le Chat to reply to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Petit2MP</strong></td>
<td>I made some messages up at home and put them in email on Sat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesueur 2</strong></td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Péron 2</strong></td>
<td>It’s not – it takes ages to read and translate the messages.</td>
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<td><strong>Péron 2</strong></td>
<td>It’s not – it takes ages to read and translate the messages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. What new things have you learnt this week (whether it be in regard to learning French or computing technology)?

Gp 1

Baudin 1: Access to the Naval HQ. Learned the identity of L’Haridon. [Only because Vikki had taken it on and was emailing the Chat Room dialogue to herself so that we could print it later!]

Ronsard 1: I learnt how to send an attachment from the Microsoft Word program.

L’Haridon 1: More vocabulary – constantly learning words.

Petit 1: 1) Have to remove a virus from the computer via long-distance telephone instruction. 2) Ensure continued use of anti-virus programme.

Petit1MP: Computers can be off-putting and frustrating when they refuse to work. Pen and paper may be slow but they are reliable.

Lesueur 1: nil

Péron 1: Finally looked up what “singe futé” means, had guessed totally wrong.

Vasse: nil (still overboard)

Le chat 1: New French words.

Gp 2

Baudin 2: Because I’m following the story by reading a book of Baudin & Flinders trips, my vocabulary is increasing and translation from English to French. And I’m feeling more confident on the computer.

De Freycinet: That French is a difficult language to learn and that no matter how long I learn it, I don’t think I’ll ever be as good as I want to be.

Ronsard 2: nil

L’Haridon 2: I do enjoy the vignettes of French life on the class video. Providing (as in English) the subjects interests me (sport, and my eyes glaze) BUT one must cater to everyone.

Petit 2: Bep put emails online this week (Sat) but I can’t access them. Sharing character doesn’t work well. I try to let her know what is going on but it takes time, haven’t much! We should interact more. Petit must come over as a split personality!

Petit2MP: More history.

Lesueur 2: nil

Péron 2: People are just as difficult to understand when writing, whether in English or French as they can’t tell when you’re not following what they’ve said.

Le Chat 2: Computer technology is hit and miss.
4. Reflect on your experience this week.

**Gp1**

Baudin 1: Relaxed, inventive.
Ronsard 1: I enjoyed using the Chatline. I laughed a lot while using the computer.
L’Haridon 1: --

Petit 1: 1) Chat room still brings laughs.
2) Disappointed that I am still not proof-reading well before sending messages.
3) Even though characters are “rewriting history”, not learning any more of the history of this very significant expedition re Australian exploration – only the research I’ve done myself.

Petit1MP: Few replies to our e-mails. Are they perhaps being posted to the wrong place? “Chat room” on 24/5/03 very amusing – great repartee – but laughter probably alerted the person next to us into discerning our character. Perhaps there are too many chat-rooms preventing greater participation of ideas on any one subject.

Lesueur 1: nil
Péron 1: --

Vasse: [Lost]

**Le Chat 1**

I learned to think and “speak” faster in French in order to keep up with the conversations in the Chat Room.

Baudin 2: Although I feel I have accomplished a lot as far as using the computer (I actually was able to get into the site very quickly and wasn’t distracted by the noise etc around [in LRC]) and able to put something on line without having previously prepared it at home in the time frame I had, which was a confidence boost – I have still not been able to do research from the internet. It is still not my preferred learning mode which doesn’t bother me.

De Freycinet: I am exhausted because again I’ve spent a lot of time on it, to the detriment of other things in my life. That’s just me, though. Other people probably wouldn’t spend as much time on it. I feel that things have not been equal in this project, i.e. the contribution of each person. I have felt frustrated about this.

Ronsard 2: nil

L’Haridon 2: As before, personal reading at home. Not enough conversation. I like the projects in class with partners, 2 to 4.

Petit 2: Change from verbs and phrases and usual learning homework. Computer trouble so Maxine couldn’t post her stuff Thu or Fri as she wished to. Faxed Bep déroulements.

Petit2MP: Okay.

Lesueur 2: nil

Péron 2: I’m finding it boring and am disheartened by a
message saying I must post (at the start of the week) when I thought I had been posting as much as the others.

Le chat 2: I tried so many times to reply to discussion points – Some of them did not “send”. Because of my frustrations with the website I don’t think I influenced the play as much as I could have.
## Weekly thoughts – Week 4

### 1. What did your character contribute to the role-play this week?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baudin 1</td>
<td>Tried to eat the cat. Spread tuberculosis to the Aborigines. Resurrected someone from the dead – the usual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronsard 1</td>
<td>I said that I hate football and I will go surfing at the beach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon 1</td>
<td>Provided information to crew about the ill-health of the Captain. Encouraged good health – promoted indigenous cooking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit 1</td>
<td>Continued to answer bulletin board notices and emails. Sent final “rounding off” message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit1MP</td>
<td>Returned some messages. Rounded off the voyage situation (in my opinion).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur 1</td>
<td>Mostly just chatting in the Chat Room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron 1</td>
<td>Proposed to take over the ship on the way back, but the others didn’t really react (as on Friday night) – they are all too positive and happy – should have more evil characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasse</td>
<td>I think I actually contributed adequately this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chat 1</td>
<td>Not much. I’ve answered a couple of emails. My mail participation has been joining the Chat in the Chat Room.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baudin 2</td>
<td>Some final orders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Freycinet 2</td>
<td>Much, by way of emails to others who I thought would contribute to my plot to take command of the boat and to steer another course. I also posted messages on the main message board and wrote my private thoughts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronsard 2</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’Haridon 2</td>
<td>Nothing. [the moderator did on his behalf]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit 2</td>
<td>Not much. Wrote to Captain – sympathy. …[???] ditto to Singe Futé (to stir up anything) and [??]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petit2MP</td>
<td>More messages and also more help from my “Double”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesueur 2</td>
<td>nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Péron 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le chat 2</td>
<td>I am not sure whether I did or not – I tried to do as much as possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. How do you feel that your participation in the role-play is enhancing your use of the French language?

**Gp 1**

Baudin 1: Same as last week. [verbs]

Ronsard 1: Yes, because I notice sometimes other class members have made spelling and sentences mistakes which I learn not to do.

L’Haridon 1: As other weeks, slowly learning more vocabulary and using it.

Petit 1: My main difficulty is that I’m “learning” from students. Are they right or am I? As their phraseology, grammar etc is different to how I would put things together, not all the time, but frequently.

Petit MP: Possibly at the same rate as writing and reading it. Unfortunately my memory is not as good as it used to be – so des** continued looking up of dictionaries, etc, I am not sure how much will remain absorbed.

Lesueur 1: Trying to think fast when chatting.

Péron 1: Chat was good – makes me more fluent because I have to react.

Vasse: A little.

Le chat 1: I’ve learned to think faster in French, and have learned to construct better sentences in French.

**Gp 2**

Baudin 2: It isn’t because I am struggling too hard with it and am far too stressed.

De Freycinet 2: By forcing me to communicate – interpret characters’ messages and reply. In my role I’ve tried to use commands. By concentrating on content, I’ve sometimes used the wrong tenses of verbs I’m sure.

Ronsard 2: nil

L’Haridon 2: Negative. Forget computers. Income $220 per week. Housing, food, clothes, medications, car costs, a movie or a coffee now and again. Computer ongoing costs. Get real. People say “It’s only a few dollars a month.” I KNOW!

Petit 2: Helps spontaneous short sentences.

Petit2MP: Very good.

Lesueur 2: nil

Péron 2: Nothing. Must have had laryngitis.

Le Chat 2: In the Chat Room I found myself being a real “chat-ter-box”. I think I gave l’équipage a few laughs.
3. What new things have you learnt this week (whether it be in regard to learning French or computing technology)?

**Gp 1**
- Baudin 1: Worked out that Stephen is Vasse. [wrong!]
- Ronsard 1: I learned new French phrases and I found a quicker way to read other students messages by clicking after each message the “next message” icon.
- L’Haridon 1: --
- Petit 1: How to remove a cheap programme which attaches itself to the modem, thereby preventing Internet access.
- Petit1MP: Continuing interest in French history. Increased respect for my partner’s computing skills and the hope that some of the computing has rubbed off on to me.
- Lesueur 1: I’ve learnt how annoying a downed Chat server error can be!
- Péron 1: --
- Vasse: All computers are different. Any French is better than none.
- Le chat 1: I’ve learned more words, improved my French. WebCT is a great way for students to improve their language knowledge.

**Gp 2**
- Baudin 2: I must stop when I need to and resist being pushed past my limit.
- De Freycinet 2: The everythings works well if the technology works – which it didn’t this week. One day/night I couldn’t log on – it wouldn’t accept my user and password codes.
- Ronsard 2: nil
- L’Haridon 2: I always learn something in class. How much? I have nothing to compare with.
- Petit 2: Keep having to look up new words then forget them.
- Petit2MP: More history personally about my character in the play.
- Lesueur 2: nil
- Péron 2: --
- Le Chat 2: I learnt to have fun and not worry so much about it all.

4. Reflect on your experience this week.

**Gp1**
- Baudin 1: I left too early – but will still contribute from the colony by thought mail.
- Ronsard 1: I learnt new vocabulary and phrases. I learnt more about the computer and the TAFE Website. I pointed out spelling mistakes from some emails and I had a lot of fun.
- L’Haridon 1: Sentence construction – proper addressing to everyone on board.
Petit 1: Reflecting now on the whole experience, chat was fun but have no relationship whatsoever to the period. My messages probably too long for chat. No real relevance that I can see to the learning outcomes in the text book. I would have preferred students to have had a little knowledge of the history of the times, the voyage, diseases, the disasters encountered, etc – but then this is my problem. Did learn any new vocabulary? Not a lot.

Petit1MP: Unfortunately the chance to re-write history has perhaps detracted from a history learning experience. As to a ‘fun’ experience it has been very good.

Lesueur 1: There were a few technical problems with the actual website this week; message posting and chat server were touchy.

Péron 1: Chat was really good on 31/5, up to 8 characters in the Chat Room. Still can’t remember accents, skipped them. Learnt to react more spontaneously in French. Chat was really funny. Less embarrassing to say something wrong, because nobody knows who I am.

Vasse: I found it entertaining to communicate.

Le Chat 1: Being able to converse simultaneously in French (in Chat Room) has given me a very good practice in having a normal conversation with someone in French. And being able to have a normal simultaneous conversation with people in French is one of my main goals in taking this course.

Gp 2 Baudin 2: The computer does not help me in verbal communication at all! I feel as if I’ve lost all the gains I made but I don’t care if I’m no good at role-play. Being myself is enough to get through life.

De Freycinet 2: I have been frustrated this week because I wanted to put into place a plot to alter history. However, I have not had the contributions from others I tried to involve in the plot, so it stalled – the computer problems did not help.

Ronsard 2: nil

L’Haridon 2: The usual gradual acquiring of French. I don’t think I will advance much without total immersion as in a diplomats course or a few months in France (HELP). Of course, my state of health and mental outlook don’t help much. No one is to blame.

Petit 2: Can be a fun way to learn. But Discussion area is confusing. Get stuff posted which is to one person only (for reply) but unless receiver’s name is first in message – not sure whether it’s for me or to whom. People don’t use email, I did but feel now I should have put it on Discussion as did most others. Sharing role didn’t work well. I couldn’t read what Bep sent & vice-versa.

Petit2MP: OK. Overall very good experience but because of lack of time and “feeling well” could have been better. NOBODY’S FAULT.

Lesueur 2: nil

Péron 2: I gave up last week. It was going nowhere, was hard to understand and on top of that we had a talking cat. Funnily enough he/she was the easiest to understand. I think the person playing that character should get top marks, the messages were amusing and well-written.

Le chat 2: I also learnt to have a sense of humour with it and enjoyed my character.
SCRIPT FROM DEBRIEF SESSION

June 7th, 2003

Vanda: Have you worked out who is who?
Group: No.
Vanda: No? That’s great!
M&M: Well, Baudin and I worked out who we were. Kevin (a pseudonym1) was Baudin. Who was in Kevin’s group?
Dave: Who was the doctor?
M&M: Vin, I reckon. Were you the doctor? (Vin nods.)
Vanda: We had a group 1 and a group 2.

I just want to say that you were all fantastic. You were so enthusiastic! The computer literacy difficulties that you overcame were amazing. The cat had some challenges that I’ll go into later but both cats got special mention from people in their groups which was really nice.
Would you like to identify yourselves?
Group: Bea!
Vanda: Yes, Bea – yes in Group 1 and Terri in Group 2.
There was a bit of a glitch with the cats and that was my lack of understanding of the system … I knocked you off (looking at Bea) Group 2 at the beginning, the first week. Did you know that you went to another group?
Bea: No.
Vanda: Well, you did. I thought we’d have a disoriented cat here, but that’s because I didn’t understand the system (WebCT), so sorry about that!
Bea: Well, I didn’t know.
Vanda: Amber, M&M were absolutely outstanding in their knowledge of the history. The way that they wove it into their messages; the things that you wrote!
Group: We were in the other group. We didn’t know.
Vanda: Okay, the second captain was Mortimer. He’s not here either today, so we’re captainless. So Amber, was in Mortimer’s group – de Freycinet. The other de Freycinet, we had to leave … Kevin quickly made him governor of the new colony because he decided not to play.
M2: What happened to Monsieur Lesueur? He was very … obnoxious in the early stages.
Vanda: Oh, he got snowed under with exams. (Laughter)
Colleen: Sorry about that everyone!
Neville: You mean that there was a Lesueur more obnoxious than me? No! I can’t believe that!
Colleen: Who was my “Petit” that I was doing that to?
Vanda: Those two (mailpals), those trouble-makers down there.
Colleen: Oh, okay.
M&M: You promised me a surprise.
Colleen: I can’t remember. I had History (exam) so I started but I didn’t finish…

Terri: What was it about the cat?
Amber: You were in my group but we don’t know who the other are.
Vanda: Okay, Monsieur le Docteur, tell all the projects you had for the car. Remember what you were going to do to the cat but … we had a technical glitch in the last week and people weren’t able to logon so there was too much time lag between things.
Sam: I think I was going to kill everybody off. But I just have no computer skills …. very difficult.
Vanda: He was going to make you (the cat) into a hat, weren’t you?
Sam: Yes, tha’s right.
Group: Which group?
Vanda: Mortimer’s.
Amber: Oh, that was you! I promised you something!
Sam: I don’t know. Can I have it now?
Amber: I was going … we were going to throw Péron overboard because he was devious. And then I was going to take over the ship and I was going to take you all to a lovely island before we set off back to France ….
And I got no response from anyone!
…. chatter ….

1 All the names used are pseudonyms in order to protect the anonymity of the participants.
Sam: ... Dance together to prevent scurvy.
Vin: That was the remedy ...
Amber: No, that’s what they said. Didn’t you read your ....
Sam: that’s ....
Amber: ... move … dance …
Vin: Did you say you could …. Scurvy?
Vanda: Petit in Group 2 was also very active. Oh, something I have to say about Kevin’s group …
You’re such egotists you artists and scientists … the moment you found out that no one (only other artists and scientists) could hear you outside la Coquerie, you never went back there!
You wanted to make sure everyone knew what you were saying.
Sam: I had to go to the Captain’s cabin. I got a message that there was something serious. I went to the library and I typed out my message but my money ran out and it all disappeared [laughter] so that’s when I gave up!
Amber: Can you tell us who was in each group?
Vanda: mm… Shall we go around the room. Amber was de Freycinet who was taking command in the end … organising everyone. You worked very, very hard, I have to say … We have next to you Lesueur (Neville) ‘avec sa secrétaire’.
Neville: Oh, non, non, non…tout seul!
Amber: Who are you?
Neville: Charles-Alexandre Lesueur.
Mortimer’s group. Is that your group?
Vanda: She took over command of the ship … as he (Baudin) was sick (in the RPS), remember?
Amber: … got rid of Péron. I tried to get rid of him. I organised it … we were going to push him overboard. I didn’t have relies from the people I tried to set it up with.
Maggie: Guilty!
Vanda: I almost forgot about you. Sorry!
This is Ronsard who didn’t reply to you.
Amber: Ooooh!
Vanda: She was sick in the last week.
Amber: You’re forgiven!
……..
Group: They were mailpals.
M&M: We worked together.
Sam: I was the doctor.
Dave: It était Ronsard dans le Groupe 1.
Vanda: Dans le groupe de Kevin.
Andrea: Tim Vasse.
Vanda: He caused a sensation when he came back ... and his aboriginal recipes!
Andrea: I was going to cook the cat too actually.
Bea: Were you in my group?
Andrea: [nods]
Vanda: “Chat à l’orange”.
Péron 1 was tireless in writing almost daily … you said some …
Jayne: No, but I read the messages everyday and then wrote a reply tomorrow.
Amber: Who are you?
Jayne: I was Péron but I wasn’t in your group. I was in Devin’s group. Well, I am lucky!
Bea: I’m the cat, Hercule. I gave myself a name.
Vanda: Yes, that was cute!
Jenny: I was the other Péron.
Vanda: ouai! She was the person you had to look out for …
Dave: Ooh! La, la!
Amber: … overboard …
Jayne : Lucky you !
Terri: Il était très bon pourrr moi !
Vanda: The cats were very humourous and everyone mentioned them. Barbra?
Barbra: I was ....
Deidre: … part of a split personality. [mailpals]
Vanda: It was interesting in Chat, that Barbra did her own chat. Deidre?
Deidre: We were both Petit.
Neville: Is it Petit or Petit?
Vanda: *Petit* in French but in English you’d say Petit [pronouncing the final ‘t’].

M&M: It was interesting that the place that is named after is Petit Point . . . like the tapestry/sewing . . .

Vanda: Vin was multi-talented and Vin actually worked with me since September last year working out the logistics and we’d meet with Maggie and Maggie would say, “Do this, this and this” and I’d come away and say, “I think Maggie meant do that” and Vin would say, “No, that’s much too complicated. That’s not what she said!” [laughter]

Maggie: It was a great team effort.

Vanda: Yes.

Sam: When you started did you think everyone would have a computer?

Vanda: No, I didn’t. That’s why we made provision for mailpals. We were going to start with 5 mailpals if you remember, then we ended up with 3 in the first week, and one of those decided not to be . . . to go out on her own, branch out on her own . . . and I think . . . um, but even Barbra did some of her own stuff, even in the Chat last week, M2 worked on her own. So everyone ended up being involved. It was great because it was new technology for a lot of people so I thought that was really fantastic.

Sam: Maggie, how long do you think it would take an average person to become computer-literate?

Maggie: I think that is a hard question, Sam. It really varies enormously and depends on how much access they have to computers, how many opportunities they get to practice, how much they want to be able to do it.

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Vanda: That’s annoying!

Sam: Those little panels on the side and they’re whizzing down. You can’t even read what it says.

Maggie: When I was teaching the Library Studies students, I used to put them into pairs and make them tie their hands behind their back . . . of the person who was giving the instruction . . .

Vanda: Just do this! [mimes hitting the keys for the learner]

Maggie: You’re absolutely right.

Sam: . . .um, but as I say, go home, but you’ve got to look at the screen to find out where it is and they don’t give you time. They jump and do it for you.

Vanda: Those instructions “WebCT Online” – they were good.

Maggie: Yes, I think they’re quite good. They seem to be quite effective. Although those handouts you got at the beginning – that’s the standard handout for all students in the college. They seem to work reasonably well.

Sam: No one tells you about the waiting time. I expected it to be like turning on a television . . . to appear immediately . . .

Maggie: Yes, that’s an issue in the college, I think . . . . In the labs, because more than two people are trying to logon at the same time. For some reason it slows the system. You’re right . . . and people wait for more than 5 seconds . . .

Sam: They think it’s not working!

Maggie: Right! There are lots of issues around the technology. Notwithstanding that, I think you all did a really fantastic job. I really enjoyed it . . . Really exciting for me . . . and a new thing for the college and a new thing for Western Australia. We are absolute pioneers and Vanda and I are going to be showcasing this at a workshop at the end of the year because it really is new ground. No one’s ever done it before, what you’ve just done. So congratulations!

Andrea: Was Nellie in it?

Vanda: She was de Freycinet that we had to leave in a foreign colony, which . . . I don’t know if Kevin had read that but de Freycinet later did become governor of some little island somewhere.

Neville: Réunion?

Vanda: I can’t remember! I didn’t recognize it when I read it but, um . . .

M1: We thought Kevin played his role really well.

Vanda: He did, didn’t he?
M1: His background as a top government bureaucrat was obvious. “These are the instructions for the week. I want a report on this, bla, bla, bla…” and it was so good to work like that because it got things rolling along.

Vanda: Mortimer was very much the same. “These are your orders. Boom, boom, boom…”

…… lots of chatter …..

Maggie: … process of communication …
Deidre: … using email but most people were using Discussion.
Vanda: No, I think Jenny was using email. It didn’t matter because both lit up red when you had something new.
M1: One thing we found difficult at the beginning was that we didn’t understand the actual process of the communication. We weren’t sure who got everything, who got just his. If you sent an email, you couldn’t send it to two people, that sort of thing. Once we’d worked that out, then it wasn’t quite so bad. But then somewhere or other the whole programme seemed to change because initially if a message was flagged, the responses were shown underneath that … but afterwards that didn’t always occur. You actually had to lock into the flagged message and the responses from them.

Maggie: That’s a basic thing about how WebCT is set up. So the principle is that you don’t go nuts every time you go into the discussion, by being presented with all of the messages that are there. It’s default to only show you what you haven’t read and I thought we’d covered that in the induction but we probably didn’t cover it clearly enough – to look at that management of the discussion because that is a confusing thing, you’re right.

M1: But also you see, in the early stages you … once you’d opened a message, your menu showed you that that had disappeared basically. As we progressed … I mean if you look on mine now, it will tell you something like there are 19 messages unread, whereas earlier on, because I had been in and seen all of those, it would show you that there are no messages unread.

Maggie: That’s right because once you’ve read them it marks them as read.
M1: Yes, but now that didn’t occur about half way through.
Vanda: Yes, I found that. I’d open them and I had read them but I wonder if it’s because I went: “next message, next message’.
Maggie: Yes, that’s it. If you go to “Next message”, it will just take you there regardless. The difference is in the way you navigate, I guess. I mean with hindsight, I think we would have benefited from a much longer lead time and a lot more play, not just from the technology but with the whole experience of role-play online. Before we ripped into Baudin, I think it would have been good to have a pre-…. almost pre-Nicolas Baudin kind of warm-up. Yeah.

…… chatter …..

Vanda: I was also learning as we went along…some things I only found out in the last week, so….
Maggie: This is what happens when you are pioneers, you see. It’s a rocky road, guys! But you have the kudos of being the first!
Vin: Should there be a …board with information… “It is advisable to post on Discussion unless something private needs to be sent. Then use the email”?
Maggie: Yes, what I’d like to do next time is make up a set of instructions that come out to you when you get that handout about how to logon. …That …. For a role-play. If you want to plot and scheme, use the email. In your private discussion group, these people are represented…so that’s good learning for me in terms of clear instructions to you about the role-play process.
Colleen: I was confused about who could go where.
Amber: Well, Vanda did explain that.
Colleen: I know but I kept forgetting.
Vanda: I did give them a sheet – just the headings and they could fill in (who could go into which area, as I explained it in class).
Also, it was important to check the Déroulement to find out where you were all the time because it was the course of events…although Kevin kept just taking off all the time…like when I put in the Déroulement that you were heading towards Timor and there was a lot of illness there, he did a complete about turn and set sail for Tasmania. [laughter]
Maggie: You had a unique position too, by having this sort of mix of historical fact and imaginative, creative licence as well which I think was a great thing but also a challenge as well.
.... chatter ....

Sam: Mind if I leave?
Vanda: Oh, not just yet.
Maggie: Can I just ask, “Would you do it again?”
Group: Yes!
Maggie: Yes? Most of you would? Yeah?

Dave: I would do it again but I would make it a little bit longer and also more information on what to do because … a lot more explained. I mean longer but, at the beginning, you know, explain it.
Maggie: What about the play area of four weeks? I felt I was just getting into it. I just got into grips with this and it’s got to end. I found that frustrating!
Amber: That’s right! As you said, if you had a little mini-session beforehand to become familiar…
M&M: Can we find out what the hidden agenda of everybody was and whether they were achieved?
Maggie: Speak to Vanda.
Vanda: Lesueur’s hidden agenda was to get to be more recognized that you. You might have guessed that.
M&M: That was ours, too.
Vanda: Colleen challenged you straight away. She wasn’t going to let you get on top of her.
M&M: But you see, we went the other way. He was being rude and abusive to us. We were going through the back door, getting to the Captain, telling him how good he was in all the different things he was doing… and, you know, trying to paint his portrait, and all that sort of stuff. So we were doing it by stealth rather than directly. That’s what we were thinking.
Vanda: You had a lot of good strategies there.
Neville: Colleen, you were the other Lesueur?
Colleen: [to M&M] I was just trying to intimidate you!
M&M: It didn’t work!

Vanda: [Presentation of Awards] Okay, so “Dans le service de ‘empereur et de la France, on a « Fabien Barthez » award for ‘style and flare under pressure’ – Dave .
« Le Thierry Henri » award for the most prolific striker was for Amber.
Pour « Inspecteur Clusot » for succeeding in spite of himself, Neville, or in spite of the secretary, should we say!
Neville: Merci beaucoup !
« Jacques Tati. » Do you know Jacques Tati? He was a director for comic relief – Bea.
The « Bridget Bardot » award for admirable work as …. Terri.
The « Monet » award for making a good impression …. Colleen.
« Charles de Gaulle » award for Amber for surreptitious politicking.
« Jacques Chirac » award for hanging tough against strong opposition. That was for Kevin, against M&M [laughter]
« Jean Reno » for all-round stunning performance… that was for Mortimer.
Deidre: I’ll give it to her.
Vanda: The « Jacques Cousteau » award for plumbing the depths of the exercise, M&M!
M&M: Thank you.
Vanda: The « Louis Malle » award for behind the scenes direction … Vin.
The « Monte Christo » award for coming back from the dead …. [Vasse] Andrea.
The « Moët » award for adding fizz and pizzas … Deidre.
No one will guess this one! The « Coco Chanel » award for looking great online [laughter] .Sam.
The « Roquefort » award for Jenny for creating a stink.
The « Escargot » award for a slow but steady start … Barbra.
The « Grenouille » award for jumping right in … Vin.
The « Gérard Dépardieu » award for a passionate performance …. Jayne.

[ Vin thanked Maggie on behalf of the group.]
Maggie: It was good fun and if you ever want to do it again, I’m certainly up for it!