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Case study of a Global Simulation in French as a Foreign Language with beginner level learners at the University of Namibia: A search for an authentic language and culture exposure in an African Anglophone country

Abstract

In a communicative based approach, the French Foreign Language learning-teaching activities offered in classrooms favour exposing learners to authentic communicative situations that are relevant in a French or Francophone "genuine" context. This quest for "reality" or "authenticity" might be challenging in some linguistic environments such as African Anglophone countries where learners do not benefit from many opportunities to practice the foreign language and/or to get accustomed to its culture beyond the classroom. From this perspective, role-plays proved to positively provide learners with efficient communication skills that closely resembled "real" communication contexts.

This paper aims at defining the Global Simulation (GS) process and its technicalities. The paper also aims at describing the adaptation from Debyser's Global Simulation guide, *L'Immeuble,* to the context of the study: second year level students at the University of Namibia. The impact of applying GS on learners' needs and expectations will be analysed.

Key words: Global Simulation, French Foreign Language didactic, communicative approach, African Anglophone context.

1.   Introduction

There is a long history of involvement of international organisations that aimed to enhance the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language in developing countries. In 1947, for example, after the second session of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) general conference held in Mexico, UNESCO appealed to its members to pool their expertise to ensure the "massification" of education in developing countries (UNESCO, 1948:18). In 1959, mandated by the European Council, the *Bureau d'études et de liaison pour l'enseignement du Français dans le monde* (1) (*BEL)* was created and assigned to prepare and train teachers in French as a foreign language (FFL) didactics before they were sent on missions abroad (*Dictionnaire de didactique du français,* 2006:36-37)*.* In 1965, the *BEL* changed to the *Bureau d'Enseignement de la Langue et de la Civilisation françaises* à *l'étranger* (*BELC*) (2) when it joined the *Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques* (3) and this newly formed institution continued to share expertise in the didactics of FFL research and teacher training.

One of the earliest initiatives to improve the teaching of FLL relates to the work of Francis Debyser, an FFL didactic expert at the *BELC,* who eventually became its second director. Debyser pioneered the Global Simulation (GS) teaching-learning technique. He supported the fundamental principles shared across "communicative approaches" to language teaching that included a focus of the teaching-learning process on learners' needs, a consideration of the educational environment of teachers, and of proposing a language course stimulating the development of communication skills. Debyser did not believe that revisiting textbook content and quality was the main solution that would achieve significant improvements in the communication skills of foreign language learners who learn French. As early as 1973, Debyser (1973: 3-4) published a polemical and virulent paper entitled: "*La mort du manuel et le déclin de l'illusion méthodologique*" (4). In this publication, Debyser denounced textbook inflexibility that, in his view, over-emphasized the importance to teaching methodology, while it omitted a much needed focus on the development of communicative language skills.- At the *BELC*, Francis Debyser, Jean-Marc Caré and Christian Estrade introduced didactic training events that linked to simulation where, for instance, role plays, dramatisation techniques and improvisation were foregrounded. Soon after, they proposed workshops on Global Simulation (GS) to FFL teachers who received the training in this innovative teaching practice very positively. Since the 1970s, GS in FFL have been used worldwide and it even gained in importance in the past 10 years with the massive implementation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in FFL teaching.

2.   Context of the study

This case study conducted at the University of Namibia (UNAM) was initiated based on the researcher's assumption that learning French as a foreign language in African Anglophone countries was more challenging both for learners who were not exposed to the language outside the classroom and for the teachers. The main challenge for the

learners is that they would struggle to relate to the language and its culture because their only exposure would be in the classroom. This situation also disadvantages teachers who are expected to provide learners with comprehensive enough and authentic language and culture experiences within the confines of classroom boundaries and teaching and learning time on the time-table.

The recommendations following from Peigné's (2010) doctoral dissertation also motivated the study. Peigné (2010) found that the majority of studies of the teaching of French as a foreign language, focussed on FFL teaching in African Francophone countries and that there is a scarcity of research on the status of FFL in African Anglophone countries. Peigné (2010) therefore encouraged researchers to pay more attention to the African Anglophone (and other similar contexts) in which FFL is conducted.

In the current study, the researcher conducted a GS intervention with second year beginner learners of French as a foreign language at the University of Namibia. The findings from this study would contribute to some extent to address the main recommendation made by Peigné (2010) that more research should be conducted on the learning of French as a foreign language in African Anglophone (and other similar) contexts.

## 2.	Origins and evolution of GS

### 2.1.	Georges Perec's *La vie mode d'emploi* novel: the thematic stimulator for Debyser's *L'Immeuble guide*

Georges Perec, a famous French novelist and essayist, published *La vie mode d'emploi* in 1978. His novel relates the occupants' daily life during more than half a century in a Parisian apartment block. Perec's plot construction depicts tenants' lives through a historic evolution with an extraordinary precision which contributed to the success of his fiction.

Perec's novel became a thematic stimulator for Debyser's first published GS entitled *L'Immeuble* in 1986*.* Echoing Perec's style, Debyser imagined a simulation occurring in a Parisian apartment block where learners inhabit and become co-lessees – and where they interact with each other – in a normal French daily life. In Debyser's simulation, learners progressively create their life environment and interactions as if they were living in France, in Paris, in the same building.

### 2.2.	Debyser's definition of a GS in FFL

In 1995, Debyser and Caré (*Simulations Globales*, 1995:10-11) assessed that since the 1970 simulation techniques in FFL practice, pedagogic material had been unfortunately reduced to role-play activities proposed in textbooks. According to them, this situation scaled down the concept of simulation to mere drama exercises in which learners were imprisoned in pre-determined characters and a rigid canvas. In their view, role-play

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totally omitted learners' creativity and input in the learning process. This contradicted Piaget and Vygotski's constructivist-based pedagogy whereby learners' environment is a vital stimulus in their language cognitive development. Therefore, learners need to be considered as main actors in the language learning-teaching process (*Dictionnaire de didactique du français*, 2003:53).

Debyser (*La mort du manuel et le déclin de l'illusion méthodologique*, 1973:5) agreed that learners had to be 'creators' in their learning process and for him 'simulating' firmly provided this condition. This implied that learners were not meant to simply imitate reality but rather to develop their own reality. In 1986, he published the first GS guide *L'immeuble* (4). In his guide, he proposed lesson plan guidance organising the GS in three steps. Firstly, the class creates a realistic environment in which learners add their own characters, and then interact with each other managing daily life incidents and relationships (always consistent with the world that they are evolving into). Most of the other GS publications kept that chronology. Themes, target public and language were, however, adapted to the public's needs: *Le Cirque* addressed a young public, *L'entreprise* targeted adults studying business management and *La conférence internationale et ses variantes* focussed on adults from public management. To secure continuity, authenticity and coherence through the GS exercise, Debyser (*L'Immeuble*, 1986) prescribed the recording and archiving of all information revealed in GS. For each competence, Caré and Debyser (1995:62-63) suggested that documents such as written productions, maps, audio recordings, pictures and transcribed dialogues are incorporated. For them, they serve to cultivate what they call the "*mémoire collective*" (5) of the class.

2.3. GS on Domain-Specific French

As early as 1973, Debyser (1973:63-68) defended the view that classroom simulation for language learning would offer the same advantages for learners as for trainees and staff members from corporate and scientific spheres thus simulating tasks was an efficient practice to prepare for actual professional endeavours.

Between the 1980's and the 1990's, language content became extremely specific because of the professional and linguistic needs of the global market. Domain-Specific French (DSF) was developed and introduced for adults with explicit language professional needs in the fields of Law, Business, and Hospitality. As the target language was domain-specific instead of general FFL, GS was considered a privileged teaching method which bridged domain-based and specific language skills. New GS guide publications in DSF offered simulations for international conferences, hostels, hospitals and enterprises.

2.4. GS and ICT

Since the introduction of ICT in language classes, FFL teachers had opportunities to experience online GS. Access to the Internet pushed classroom boundaries, and online GS projects opened up GS to an unlimited number of participants. One of the largest online GS conducted by Perdrillat between 1996 and 1997, gathered 250 learners

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from 18 institutions from Canada, the United States of America, France, Belgium and Germany (1998). Magnin (1997), who experienced online GS with students from San Diego University, argued that the Internet medium positively enhanced the GS technique experience, – offering students unlimited information access and artefacts to nurture the GS story. She added that online GS facilitated fast updating of the story's evolution and was a perfect archiving system.

3. Adaptation of Debyser *Immeuble* to a FFL beginner level module at the UNAM

3.1. Background

At the UNAM, students registered for a Bachelor's Degree at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (FHSS) might opt in their first year to start a new language, either a local language (i.e. Oshidonga, Oshihehero, Khoekhoekovab or Afrikaans), or a foreign language (FL) (i.e. German, Spanish, Portuguese or French) over a period of three years. In 2007, the Department of Literature and Language Studies, strongly inspired by the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) in terms of objectives formulation, teaching and learning practice, and language levels, revised the language curriculum. To complete their first year, beginner students need to pass two modules of 96 contact hours, mixing oral comprehension and production, written comprehension and production and reaching an A0-A1 level on the CEFR. In the first semester of the second academic year, two modules are offered namely "Reading and Writing Skills" and "Listening and Speaking Skills". Students are then taught the FL through compartmented competences, separating oral from written skills. This is not recommended by the CEFR and proved to be challenging for the lecturers in the French section.

To address this challenge, two lecturers from the department co-presented a programme for eight contact hours per week to 26 students. It was agreed that the Listening and Speaking Skills module would be dedicated to a GS and that the Reading and Writing module content, instead of following a specific textbook, would be adapted to answer GS needs and themes. Technically, learners first acquired reading and writing skills on a specific topic before practicing them in the GS classes. Although skills were still separated, the FFL acquisition was more coherent and the GS could be exclusively based on oral skills. The topics list was defined as in Annexure 1.

3.2 Significance of the research problem

The findings of this study could provide a teaching reference for the UNAM French Department in designing a coherent teaching mode of delivery adapted to the UNAM public of beginner students – mostly African Anglophone speakers – and to Namibia's multicultural context.

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Furthermore, findings might provide a better understanding of how teachers could contextualise FFL in an African Anglophone context to compensate the geographical and sometimes sociocultural distance with the culture and language taught and with learners' cultures and language(s) of reference. On that point, Puren argued that the concept of a learner-centred approach in FFL often failed to address the learner's own characteristics:

l'apprenant […] est un membre d'une culture déterminée, ou plutôt comme un individu se comportant de manière singulière en fonction de sa personnalité, de ses expériences personnelles antérieures d'apprentissage, de son projet ou de ses stratégies, ou encore des paramètres de son environnement concret d'enseignement-apprentissage (6) (Puren, 2005: 491-512).

3.3. Problem Formulation and Research Questions

The main objective of this case study was to test the impact of GS on beginner students at UNAM between February and May 2014 in order to formulate GS didactic advantages for students' expectations and needs to understand and speak FFL in an effective manner. The CEFR, in its first chapter presenting its objectives and goals, defines communication as "the epicentre of FL teaching-learning success". Communication skills are supposed to equip learners to be able to: "face daily life situations met in the foreign country, to exchange information, feelings and opinions with young and adult speakers in the foreign language and to understand habits and culture" (The European Council, 2000:10).

The underlying research questions were:

–   Would a Global Simulation help participants perform better in this specific module at the final examination?

–   What advantages would a Global Simulation provide as compared to former FL teaching techniques in the FFL second year module "Listening and Speaking Skills"?

–   How would students react to this pro-active teaching-learning activity in class?

–   Would a Global Simulation activity help participants to better contextualise the foreign language and culture?

3.4. Methodology

The case study mixed qualitative and quantitative instruments. Three questionnaires were distributed to participants before and after the implementation of the GS (Annexure 4). Questionnaires proposed mixed open and open-ended questions and different scales such as the Likert scale as defined by Creswell (Educational Research, 2012:167) and ranked items. The population included 26 participants. Following a classroom observation checklist (Annexure 5), ten class observations were conducted

to assess the participants' performance in the GS. Continuous assessment (CA) and final examination marks were also considered as evidences in the study and compared to 2013 results.

3.5. Description of the GS experienced at UNAM in the FFL module "Listening and Speaking Skills"

3.5.1 The GS place-theme

The researcher selected *L'Immeuble* –the theme of which focuses on daily interactions between a varied community of people in a Parisian building. This theme addressed the learning outcomes expected after completion of the module "Listening and Speaking Skills in French" that require students to be able to:

– Interact with reasonable ease in structured situations and short conversations, provided the other person helps, if necessary.

– Manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort.

– Ask and answer questions and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations.

– Give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes and dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list.

– Demonstrate enough understanding to be able to meet needs of a concrete type provided speech is slowly and clearly articulated. (UNAM website: www.unam.na)

Secondly, the *Immeuble* configuration was adapted for the participating population – young adults living together.

In a GS, the first step for learners is to be able to describe their collective environment. In order to do so, the lecturer proposed four authentic rental advertisements for different Parisian buildings which were to be rented. Each of the rental properties derived from different architectural periods and the adverts provided information with regard to price, location, transport access, services, shopping centres, schools, parks, and a picture (Annexure 2). Students were asked to vote for their favourite building and to choose a name. The building was baptised "*Rose Nuit*".

To concretise and organise the distribution of tenants inside the building, the researcher proposed a diagram of the building (Annexure 3). The building also included a restaurant, parking and a small shop. Students had to choose and describe the interior of their flats (floor plan, furniture, room allocation).

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3.5.2 Creating fictional identities

In order to give them a sense of ownership of the *Immeuble* and its story, learners are asked to focus on issues of their identities, i.e. physical appearance, psychological profile, biography, past and habits.

To achieve this initial characterisation, learners decided on their name, profile and interests. This information was incorporated in a written document which was distributed to participants and then used as evidence of '*mémoire collective'*. Students gradually completed the document as new information arose in the GS. Learners' creativity, in terms of identities, was fruitful and linked to everyday social issues and personalities, for example, an old alcoholic retired General, a journalist, a restaurant owner lost in an unsuccessful marriage, teenagers, a professional soccer player, an artist, students, a strict single mother raising two daughters, a professional baker.   Next sequences were dedicated to tenants' first contacts as they randomly and spontaneously met through telephonic conversations and first-greetings on stairs.

3.5.3 Creating the environment

Another week was dedicated to establishing the environment of the building. Students were divided into groups to prepare and present a location project to the rest of the class. Each group defended its project according to the potential needs of the building's tenants and the class voted on the best project.

Once the place and characters were defined and established, tenants began their interactions. As listed in Annexure 1, co-lessees were confronted with various daily life situations, for example organising their booking for holidays, having dinner at the restaurant in the building, shopping at the supermarket and the market and speed dating each other *inter alia.*

3.5.4 Creating incidents and events

After facing many common daily life social situations, Debyser (L'Immeuble, 1986) proposes that participants are exposed to specific social incidents and challenged to solve individual and community issues. Similarly, the CEFR recalls that if a learner visits a foreign country he/she should have the "willingness to engage with other people in social interaction […] and to take initiatives or even risks in face-to-face communication" (The European Council, 2000:12). Therefore, language teaching content should expose learners to daily routine situations including conflict situations. They should be able to present and defend their opinions.

During the GS study, the researcher proposed that participants invent problems among their fictional characters according to their personalities, but also address the flow of events that formerly occurred in the GS. As in real life, typical problems found in a community arose: the old army retired General alcoholic who was obsessed with

guns almost killed another tenant, a heavy cigarette smoker was accused of smoking in the building common areas, some lessees complained about the poor quality of the food served at the restaurant, young students were blamed for noise nuisance. Another phase was also proposed as a semi-directed situation: a lessee, known for his negligence, forgot to turn off his bath tap flooding the neighbour's flat. Tenants had to debate on the actions to be taken against him.

3.5.5 Global-Simulation Closure

To conclude this experience, lecturers asked learners to associate words linked to their GS experience. Lecturers summarised learners' words and organised them into categories so that chapters for the short story could be determined. Learners created three chapters; the building construction, the characters' identities and the events.

4.   Could a GS be an advantageous activity in French Foreign Language teaching in Anglophone countries?

In a previous paper, Zannier (2014) identified six main characteristics of the GS that could potentially provide positive contributions to improve FFL teaching practice: to address learners' needs, to provide a game-like activity and a project-based teaching method, to stimulate learners' creativity, to supply an authenticity in the language communication and to offer a platform for practicing sociocultural codes.   In this paper, the researcher confronted each of these aspects with the participants' answers collected in questionnaires and with her class observations to answer the four research questions of the study.

4.1. Learners' needs and progress

4.1.1 Initial questionnaires

Two initial questionnaires, distributed to participants at the beginning of the course, investigated learners' expectations of the module after reading its descriptor but before the intended GS experience had been explained. Unfortunately, not all of the 26 registered students attended the first week of lectures, and therefore few questionnaires were collected.

Questionnaire 1 asked participants to assess themselves in four FFL competences and enquired about their favourite types of language teaching activities and areas of interest. Learners had to rate their ability in FFL; oral and written comprehension and written and oral production from 1 to 4 (4 being very comfortable in the competence). Of the 15 candidates, two did not complete the self-assessment. Thirteen candidates assessed themselves as follows:

	1	2	3	4
Listening Skills	0	60-61%	38-39%	0
Reading Skills	0	61%	32%	7%
Speaking Skills	0	46-47%	53-54%	0
Writing Skills	0	60-61%	39-40%	0

In the following semi-open question "What are the activities that you like to do in the FL class?" 20% of the candidates answered in terms of areas of interest regarding music, movies, speed dating and sports. Some others answered the question by formulating communication objectives "*Working on telephonic conversations in French*" (25%) or general learning objectives "*To improve my French speaking skills*". As regard the use of material, 40% mentioned listening to audio documents or the radio. One of them explained that she was looking for:

> *"A good interaction that gets everyone involved, gets everyone interacting. Exercises that help build from the foundation that has already been set. Speaking among students to build confidence and help create a community."*

And another one: *"Getting to know people and communicating in French."*

18 participants answered questionnaire 2 (concerning their expectations of the module). Some students had unrealistic goals for example, "to be fluent or reach a C level in French", but most of them expressed the need to understand Francophone people, to participate in daily life conversations and to understand French culture and rituals.

To answer learners' needs, lecturers considered the results of the two initial questionnaires to orientate the GS tasks; among others 'ordering at a restaurant', 'booking accommodation on the phone' and 'speed dating'.

4.1.2 Class observations

During class observations, the researcher tested whether each participant had an equal chance to perform verbally. Item 5 tested whether or not each group performed within the 50 minute sequence. Results showed a 70% success. Item 13 was testing if "During the performance, learners equally intervened". Results correlated with item 5.

4.1.3 Final Questionnaires

To measure the efficiency of the GS as a learner-centred activity, the researcher invited participants to answer questions 2.4, 2.5 and 2.9 in the final questionnaire.

Question 2.5 tested whether participant felt that they were presented with enough opportunities to practice speech. 96% stated that the GS technique gave them more opportunities to participate than ordinary teaching lessons. Only 4% classified the statement as 'Quite True'.

Supporting this fact, a candidate answered the first question ("How would you define a 'Global Simulation') by stating that: *"[…] the simulation does not neglect students so everybody can learn the French language."*

Not True
Quite True
TRUE
Very True
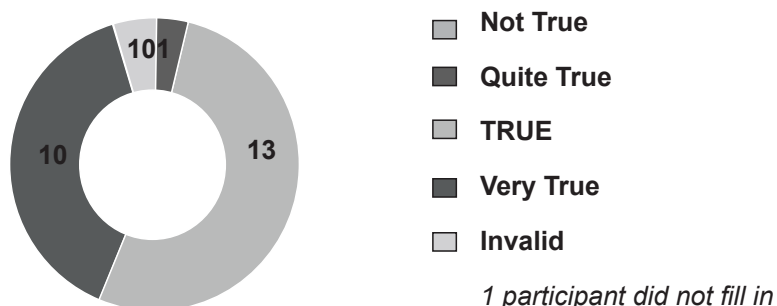Invalid

1 participant did not fill in

Figure 1: Participants' rating for question 2.5*: I feel that I had more opportunities to participate in class with the Global Simulation technique than with traditional teaching methods.*

Between 38 and 39% of the participants considered that the GS was coherent or compatible with the module descriptor while between 56 and 57% truly agreed with the statement. Only between 3 and 4 % thought that the statement was 'Quite True'.
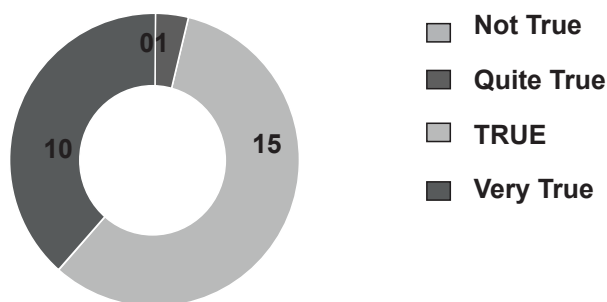

Not True
Quite True
TRUE
Very True

Figure 2: Participants' rating for question 2.9*: I believe that this method is appropriate vs. the content of the module descriptor.*

With regard to self-assessment question 2.4, which tested the participants' perception concerning improvement in listening and speaking skills, a majority of 48% were of the opinion that good progress had been made while 40% believed that they had made very good progress. Only 12% rated this statement at 'Quite True'.
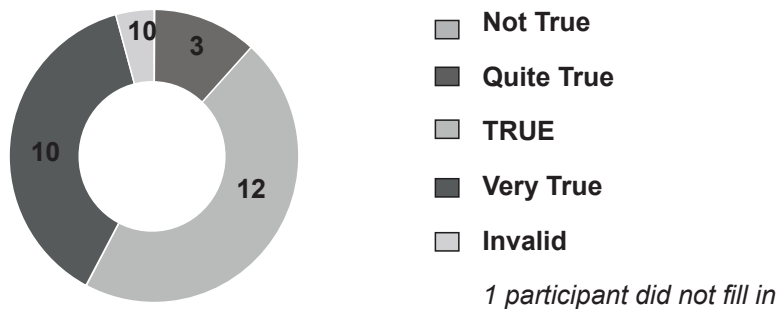
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Figure 3: Participants' rating for question 2.4: *I feel that my listening and speaking skills in French improved.*

To test participants' answers about learning progression, the researcher also studied CA results and final examinations marks to see if there was a relevant progression and/or outstanding results. The 26 participants attended the final examination. This examination paper was sent for external moderation and found to be of good standard.

Annexure 6 indicates that the class average for CA was 66%, while the average examination mark rose to 71.1%. This result is noteworthy because in past years students performed worse in final examination than in the CA in this module (students seem highly stressed by the practical oral examination).

The UNAM general regulations stipulate that CA marks must weigh 60% and the final examination mark 40%. Unlike past years, none of the 26 candidates had to repeat the module (there is usually an average 10% failure rate from one academic year to another). This result is truly encouraging, especially for the weakest candidates who performed better in the examination than at the CA stage. Thus, the lowest four lowest CA marks increased by from14 to 35%.

Candidate	CA Mark	Final Exam Mark	Increase
4	47	63	+16 %
6	42	77	+35%
11	47	61	+14%
18	46	61	+15%

4.2. Game-like activity

If this aspect was mentioned in various open questions or comments in the final questionnaire, it was not so frequently raised by participants. Some candidates explained that compared to textbook activities, the GS tasks were more "fun" and "entertaining". Others said that the FFL class was less "boring".

4.2.1 Class Observations

During the first two weeks, the researcher noticed that a few introverted participants were not embracing the game-like aspect of the GS. It took them longer to get accustomed to the GS principles and process. Initially, the researcher estimated that a third of the class was less-confident in using French in public. Finally, only two remained positively impressed by the exercise while others did finally embrace the game concept. At a later stage some initially reluctant persons admitted that the game helped them to express themselves in front of the class.

During the researcher's class observations, the game-like aspect of the GS was assessed as quite positive based on participants' respect of the GS rules and their proactive attitude in the activities. Participants rapidly organised the groups' task distribution and showed enthusiasm and motivation for the game.

Checklists showed that in 70% of the observed sequences, learners respected the time allocated to achieve their tasks and 80% of the times each group performed well. Regarding item 15, questioning whether 'Learners easily succeeded in selecting their partners to accomplish the task', checklists proved that they adequately achieved this goal in 9 of the 10 observed sequences. The researcher noted that there was a fair rotation in collaborations. Item 16, testing the participants' ability to manage their group's work distribution, was slightly more challenging for participants. The researcher sometimes discerned that some groups were taking too long to organise their tasks, and were missing opportunities to wisely and efficiently delegate activities among the group members.

The researcher noted that when volunteers were required in the class, most of the participants reacted positively to organising the classroom space, taking pictures or videos, and becoming group representatives or spokespersons. Further evidence arose from the competitive position which the class groups found themselves in. For instance, when each group had to devise the building diagram and present their project to the class to be selected as the most prestigious project.

4.3. Group-based mode

As for the simulation game-like activity aspect, the group-based mode required some adaptation skills from the participants. To help solve this, the GS sequences were structured similarly to create a *routine* in the GS activity and therefore represented guidelines for the participants to adapt.

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Lecturer	Time allocation estimation (in minutes)
Class attention - Focalisation	2-3
Theme - Activity explanation	5-10
Distribution of documents and/or material/ Individual questions	5
Group internal task distribution	5
Group preparation and group questions	10
Presentations-Collective Assessment	15-20
Feedback/Closure	5

In this lesson design, group work was central but groups varied in size from pairs to groups of four to six learners. At each sequence, groups had to perform at the end of the class. The time allocated (50 minutes) to finish this lesson design was really challenging. Therefore, the last phases of collective assessment and feedback eventually had to be sacrificed.

4.3.1 Class Observations

Based on the researcher's observations, the GS group-based mode generally encouraged and helped learners to keep their motivation and participation high. Depending on the theme proposed in the sequence, participants rotated within groups. The researcher made sure to be present during the Group Preparation phase to answer technical, methodological or linguistics questions and to assure efficient guidance.

4.3.2 Final Questionnaires

Question 2.6 questioned whether learners enjoyed the group-project based aspect of the GS. 60% enjoyed working in groups and 32% really enjoyed it. Less than 10% assessed the statement as 'Quite True' (Figure 4).
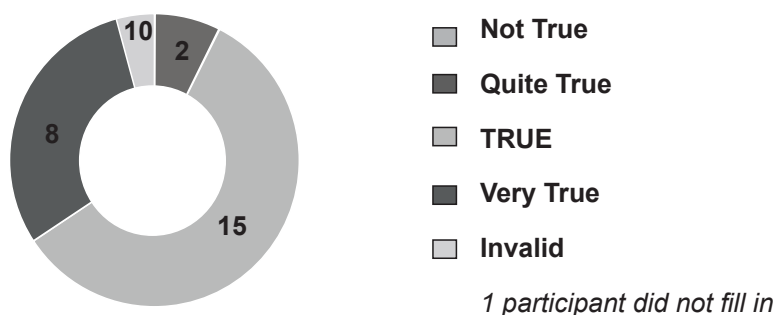

- Not True
- Quite True
- TRUE
- Very True
- Invalid

1 participant did not fill in

Figure 4: Participants' rating for question 2.6: *I enjoyed partly preparing role-plays in groups.*

Some comments in Question 3, explained why participants appreciated group-based work in the GS: *"[…] when I was acting with friends, I did enjoy that." / "Playing a role within my group [...]." / "I am not really a comfortable speaking person, but when we are placed in groups, it makes easier because you are not the only one and the character allows you to be the person of your choice." / "Group work; you are less scared and more confident when working with others."*

4.4 Stimulus to learners' creativity and ideas

As Zannier (2014) states, the CEFR engages instructors to use: *"methods of modern language teaching which will strengthen independence of thought, judgement and action, combined with social skills and responsibility"*. The CEFR also explains that *"it is a central objective of language education to promote the favourable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture"* (The European Council: 9-11).

In this perspective, learners' creativity and reactivity need to be simultaneously stimulated and encouraged as frequently as possible. From the six aspects identified by Zannier, this one convinced participants least.

4.4.1 Class observations

Class observation results for item 18, indicate that learners were truly creative during the whole GS: from the first step of creating their characters to their interactions with others. The self-confidence provided by this 'fiction' might have been a positive factor to stimulate this creativity. The diversity of the proposed situations and the 'unknown' factor of the GS might have forced learners out of their comfort zone and therefore pushed them to be more creative. Finally, group work and partial collective marking might have also contributed to the dynamic.

4.4.2 Final Questionnaires

Questions 2.1 and 2.8 tested the impact of the said 'mask pedagogy' on participants. Question 2.1 investigated participants' feelings about the ease of acting through a fictional character. This distinction from real personalities had been identified by Zannier as a positive factor serving the communicative teaching method. 15% of the population viewed the statement as 'Very True', between 38 and 39% estimated that it was 'True', between 34 and 35% rated the statement as 'Quite True' and between 11 and 12% considered it as 'Not True'. If one considers 'Not True / Quite True' as rather negative answers and 'True / Very True' as positive, it can be concluded that the class group was more divided on that question than on others. Participants were not equally convinced that "playing somebody else" was truly helping to interact.
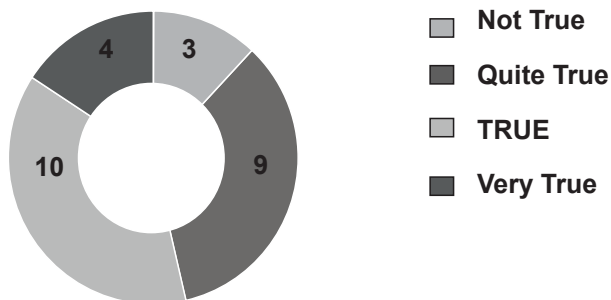
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Figure 5: Participants' rating for question 2.1: *I felt more comfortable playing somebody else than my true character*

Question 2.1 invited participants to justify and/or comment on their rating. Some of those convinced of the advantages of 'masking real identity' commented: *"It was really good playing being someone else not yourself, it is easier trying to be someone else in front of other colleagues, it reduces nervousness." / "I like the fact that errors and embarrassments would not be to me but to my character" / "Most of us are not comfortable expressing our true selves. But playing a role, you are not attached, to make you comfortable and not withdrawn." / "It allows me to be confident and gives me a chance to be a different person".* Some others expressed the idea that "being somebody else" inclined them to push their boundaries, to challenge themselves, and encouraged them to "think outside the box": *"It helps me imagine beyond what I am usually used to (the actual world)." / "It helps me learn more about the language and to do other things besides my character." / "I feel very comfortable because it gives me the chance to be free and to explore more French vocabulary and thus relax more in class".* Two candidates refuted the statement stating that they were very comfortable with their true characters and did not see the advantage of "masking their true identity".

Question 2.8 tested whether participants felt especially 'empowered' by the GS teaching-learning process. One of the researcher's objectives was to assess whether their involvement in creating their storyline could 'empower' them. While a large majority agreed or strongly agreed about the benefit of their decision-making power, almost 10% did not enjoy this position.
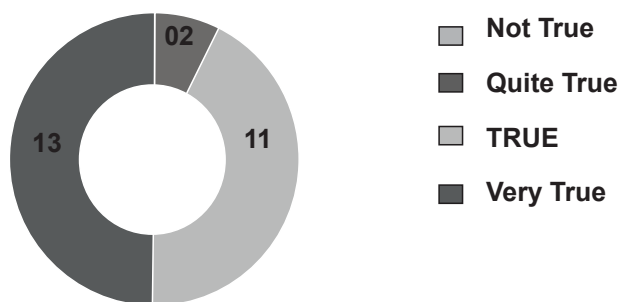
Figure 6: Participants' rating for question 2.8: *I liked that the class has a decision making power in the realisation of the simulations.*

4.5. Authenticity of the target language and communication

The notion of authenticity of the target language and communication was a salient objective to demonstrate whether the contextualisation was improved by the GS technique.

4.5.1 Final Questionnaires

Questions 2.2 and 2.7 requested participants to compare GS teaching-learning and textbook activities as regard the authenticity of the language learnt and the communication situations encountered. In the formulation of the questionnaire question, the researcher intentionally transposed the notions of "authenticity" and "communication" with the simplified term "real".

When participants compared textbooks and GS activities, a large majority (almost 80%) recognised that the GS experience exposed them to the target language while 16% (scaling the affirmation as 'Not True' or Quite True) were not totally convinced of this.
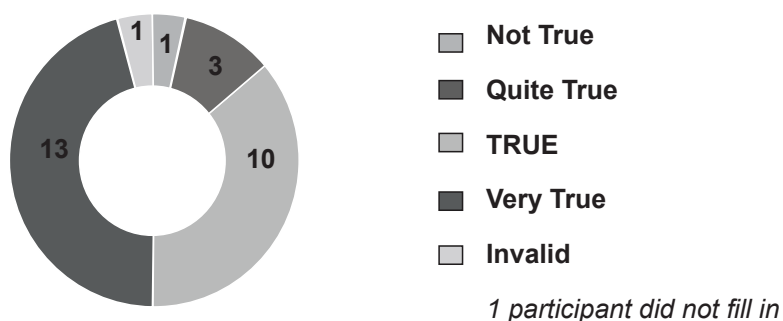

1 participant did not fill in

Figure 7: Participants' rating for question 2.2: *I felt that the proposed situations made me practice a more real language as compared to activities proposed in textbooks.*

Some terms used by participants eloquently underlined the communicative aspect of the GS; the GS offered a "real", "everyday" language and "daily", "practical" situations.

"*Because it is **everyday language**, which expresses **a real flexible life approach** than the fixed textbook one.*" / "*It puts us in **more natural and realistic situations** which aids in understanding the language.*" / "*This way I **get to apply what I know in real life situations and it broadens my knowledge**.*" / "*We have to act out different scenarios which teach us how it probably **will be in the real world**.*" / "*Textbooks do not teach you how to have an **everyday conversation** in French; it only teaches you basics and structures. The simulation at least helps you with **everyday situations**".*

With question 2.7, the researcher wanted to assess the authenticity theoretically expected from the GS's "Global" characteristic; living within a community as in 'real life' and facing daily situations as in 'real society'. A significant 96% of the research population estimated that the GS was a good technique to 'feel' a sense of community within the class group which was a reflection of 'real life'.
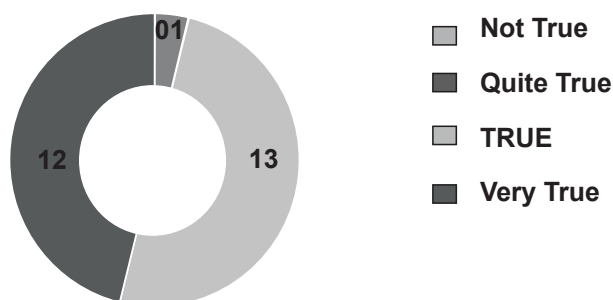

Figure 8: Participants' rating for question 2.7: *I felt that the fact that all students are involved in a common story line gave us a feeling of community as in real life.*

4.6. Practice of sociocultural codes

The CEFR prescribes that the FL teaching: *"approach […] views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. While acts of speech occur within language activities, these activities form part of a wider social context, which alone is able to give them their full meaning"* (The European Council:18). This aspect in the findings was relatively important as it directly sourced one of the research questions testing the efficiency of a GS as a way to contextualise FFL and facilitate communication skills in FFL in an Anglophone country.

4.6.1 Final Questionnaires

Question 2.3 tested participants' reflection on their exposure to French Foreign cultural and civilisational codes. It was believed that "simulating" specific daily life in a French building could help learners to understand and practice French habits and social interaction codes. Only one candidate answered 'Not True' while the rest of the class rated this statement as 'True' or 'Very True'.
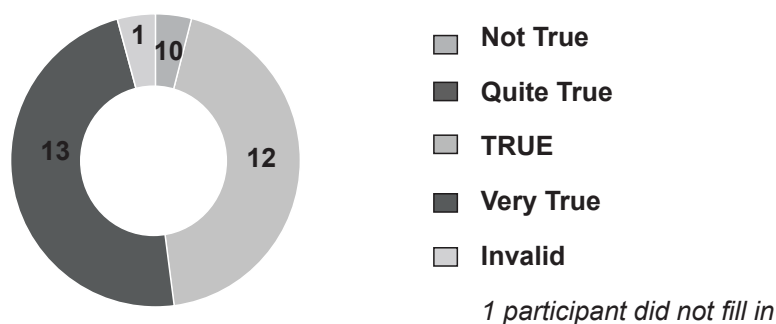

Figure 9: Participants' rating for question 2.3: *Simulating the proposed situations made me understand French habits and behaviours better.*

Through the learners' comments on their favourite activity/sequence, participants mainly justified their interest in situations –as in the case of the restaurant sequence or the conflict simulations– by the fact that they enjoyed experiencing and learning some common French daily life codes. They sensed that their fictional character was eventually experiencing situations in France and pretending to be French. Some participants said that tasks such as "ordering and paying at the restaurant", "buying products" or "telephonic booking" supplied them with practical professional interactions that might be useful in their intended carriers in Tourism and Hospitality.

5.   Conclusion

Findings from this case study testing and questioning the GS teaching technique efficiency to contextualise FFL and culture with a class of 26 students from an African Anglophone country such as Namibia proved that the GS offered a large number of positive aspects for participants. The study population appreciated the authenticity and communication facets of the GS both in terms of language and simulated situations. They embraced their French fictional characters and adapted their learning to the context of a French society. Learners' comments expressed feelings of empowerment, enjoyment, and decreased shyness.

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The summative evaluation conducted during and at the end of the teaching semester, clearly revealed that learners performed well in the module; for the first time in five years all candidates passed their module on "Listening and Speaking Skills". Some students genuinely expressed their appreciation of the GS technique as they previously felt 'uncomfortable' in speaking FFL in front of a group. The participants' attendance was also better than in past years. Three students who did not regularly attend the course dropped the module after one month.

The formative evaluation also proved to be very rewarding; all candidates progressed well in their understanding of the GS principles and process and also in FFL oral skills. They demonstrated a positive response towards the GS experience.

However, as stated by the researcher in her article (Zannier, 2014), the GS still represents challenges for the FFL teacher. The researcher had to develop extensive abilities in terms of energy and reactivity while facilitating GS sequences. The updating of documents was also quite time consuming and the co-lecturing also required additional work to maintain a certain coherence and efficiency in the GS experimental attempt. This rewarding experience, both for learners and teachers, will benefit from reorganising the UNAM co-lecturing teaching content, and from being applied to other Foreign Languages at UNAM.

It is therefore, recommended that the UNAM French Department pursues the experience in 2015 in the same module 'Listening and Speaking Skills in French'. Firstly, the replication of the GS research could provide valuable secondary data to confirm the findings of 2014. Secondly, it is believed that the 2014 findings were sufficiently encouraging to confirm that the GS has indeed a positive impact on students' language contextualisation, and provides them exposure to the FFL and culture. Finally, it is concluded that this study proved that even if the GS Foreign Language teaching technique was created some 40 years ago, its relevance as an 'authentic' teaching tool seems intact, at least in a challenging environment for learners in an Anglophone country like Namibia.

Notes

1.   Liaise and Research Office for the Teaching of French in the World

2.   Office for French Language and Civilisation Teaching abroad

3.   Studies and Research Centre for the diffusion of French

4.   The death of textbooks and the decline of the methodological illusion

5.   Collective memory

6.   The learner […] is a member of a specific culture, or rather an individual behaving in his/her own singular way depending on his/her personality, on his own past learning experiences, on his/her project and strategies, or his/her concrete learning-teaching environment.

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ANNEXURE 1

COURSE OUTLINE: MODULE LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

Theme 1 : Identity

How to introduce yourself physically, morally, your profession, your hobbies. How to describe oneself or somebody.

Theme2 : Housing

How to describe different parts of a building and the interior of a room.

Theme 3 : Location

How to describe a location, places, and how to indicate spatial directions.

Theme 4 : Holidays

How to book on the phone

Theme 5 : Meetings

Speed dating sessions. How to talk about your qualities and your defaults.

Theme 6 : The restaurant

How to understand and produce a menu. How to order at the restaurant. How to talk about food. How to ask for a price and pay a bill.

Theme 7 : Disturbances and complaints

Interactions around problems as a community and as individuals.

Theme 8 : The short story of the building

Annexure 2

Annonces Immeubles a Louer

Immeuble 1:

Description:

Immeuble à 4 étages ancien. Plusieurs appartements de différentes tailles (de la chambre aux quatre pièces).

En centre-ville, près des transports en commun (métro, bus, train).

Restaurants et magasins autour de l'immeuble. Ecole primaire et collège à proximité.

Loyers entre 800 et 2500 euros.

Immeuble 2:

Description:

Immeuble à 4 étages tout neuf. Plusieurs appartements de différentes tailles (de la chambre aux quatre pièces). A 30 minutes du centre-ville

A côté de la rivière. Entouré d'un grand parc avec jeux pour les enfants.

Cafétéria dans l'immeuble. Ecole primaire à proximité.

Loyers entre 700 et 2000 euros.

Immeuble 3:

Description:

Immeuble à 4 étages construit dans les années 80. Plusieurs appartements de différentes tailles (de la chambre aux quatre pièces). A 15 minutes du centre-ville.

Grand parking. A proximité d'un mini supermarché.

Restaurant dans l'immeuble. Collège et lycée à proximité.

Loyers entre 800 et 2000 euros.

Immeuble 4:

Description:

Immeuble à 4 étages construit dans les années 50. Plusieurs appartements de différentes tailles (de la chambre aux quatre pièces).
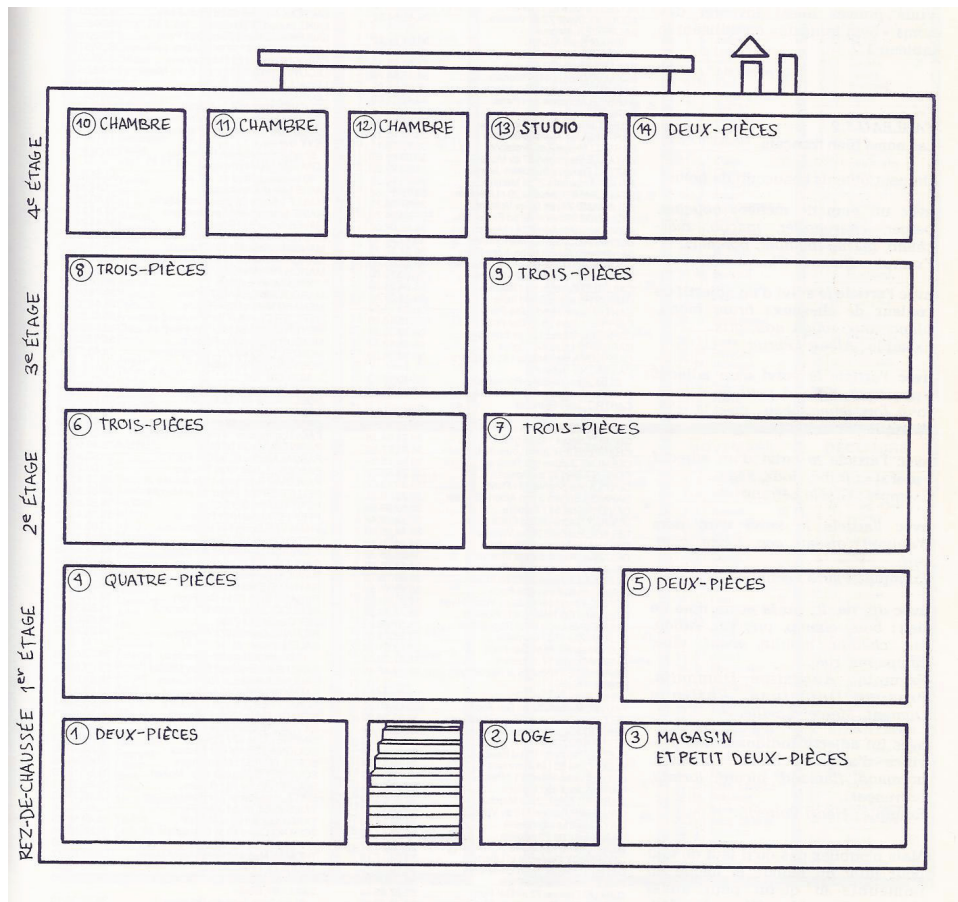
Restaurant dans l'immeuble. A 20 minutes du centre-ville.

Collège et lycée à proximité.

Loyers entre 400 et 1500 euros.

Annexure 3

Distribution Des Appartements

L'Immeuble, Debyser.

ANNEXURE 4

Participants Final Questionnaire

1.   How would you define a "Global Simulation"?

2.   Assess the following statements by ticking the appropriate box:

NOT TRUE	QUITE TRUE	TRUE	VERY TRUE

2.1   I felt more comfortable playing somebody else than my true character.

2.2   I felt that the proposed situations made me practice a more real language as compared to activities proposed in textbooks.

2.3   Simulating the proposed situations made me understand better French habits and behaviours.

2.4   I feel that I made progress in listening and speaking skills in French.

2.5   I feel that I had more opportunities to participate in class with the Global Simulation technic than with traditional teaching methods.

2.6   I did enjoy to partly preparing role-plays in groups.

2.7   I felt that the fact that all students are involved in a common story line gave us a feeling of community as in real life.

2.8   I liked that the class is having a decision making power in the realisation of the simulations.

2.9   I believe that this method is appropriate vs. the content of the module descriptor.

3.   What was your favourite activity? Why?

4.   Do you think that the content module that you had with Mr Lumbu was adequately complementing the Global Simulation needs? YES/NO/PARTLY

5.   Do you have any recommendation to improve this teaching technique?

ANNEXURE 5

Classroom Observation Checklist

OBSERVATION DATE:

THEME OF THE GS SEQUENCE:

LESSON DURATION: 55 MIN   ☐   1 HOUR 50 ☐

	YES	NO
1. Due group work productions were done.		
2. The course started on time and finished on time.		
3. Less than 10% of the class was present.		
4. Learners respected the time allocated to accomplish the task.		
5. Each group performed.		
6. Each group had a chance to reflect on its performance.		

RATING SCALE:

5 = Extremely

4 = Very well

3 = Adequately

2 =Inconsistently

1 = Not at all

N/A = Not applicable

	RATE SCORE
The lecturer took a reasonable time to explain the set-up and tasks of the sequence.	
The public took a reasonable time to get ready and focussed.	
Learners clearly understood the instructions for the lesson sequence.	
The lecturer assisted learners with some extra visual material and vocabulary on the board.	
Learners easily succeeded to select their partners to accomplish the task.	

Learners succeeded to well manage their group work's distribution.	
During the performance, learners equally intervened.	
Participants offered a creative effort.	
Participants were reacting comfortably to the simulation involved.	
The lecturer gave a feedback on the performance.	

Annexure 6

Class Results –Continuous Assessment and Examination Marks

Candidate Identification	PAPER ONE	Full Period Mark	Exam Mark	Final Mark	Result Code	Result Description	Pass/ Fail
1	76(76)	76	76	76	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
2	64(64)	59	64	61	P!	C - GOOD	Pass
3	72(72)	75	72	74	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
4	63(63)	47	63	53	P=	D - SATISFACTORY	Pass
5	75(75)	73	75	74	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
6	77(77)	42	77	56	P=	D - SATISFACTORY	Pass
7	64(64)	52	64	57	P=	D - SATISFACTORY	Pass
8	68(68)	71	68	70	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
9	70(70)	68	70	69	P!	C - GOOD	Pass
10	83(83)	86	83	85	P*	A - DISTINCTION	Pass
11	61(61)	47	61	53	P=	D - SATISFACTORY	Pass
12	64(64)	57	64	60	P!	C - GOOD	Pass
13	73(73)	67	73	69	P!	C - GOOD	Pass
14	82(82)	78	82	80	P*	A - DISTINCTION	Pass
15	69(69)	75	69	73	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
16	72(72)	54	72	61	P!	C - GOOD	Pass
17	69(69)	71	69	70	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
18	61(61)	46	61	52	P=	D - SATISFACTORY	Pass
19	71(71)	71	71	71	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
20	68(68)	67	68	67	P!	C - GOOD	Pass
21	73(73)	80	73	77	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
22	74(74)	78	74	76	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass

23	79(79)	66	79	71	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
24	77(77)	81	77	79	P+	B - VERY GOOD	Pass
25	73(73)	63	73	67	P!	C - GOOD	Pass
71.1(71.1)	66.0	71.1	68.0				
6.1(6.1)	12.4	6.1	9.2				

Continuous Mark = Full Period Mark

Examination Mark = Paper One

One student is not on the list as she/he encountered problems in her/his registration, which explains the total number of students of 25 instead of 26 on this document

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