

NEWSLETTER #3

November 2020

Development updates

Now anyone can go into space ;)

One of the many advantages of Virtual Reality technology is that it allows users to feel as though they have been transported to places and/or times that they would not be able to experience any other way. This sensation, of being immersed in a completely unfamiliar world, heightens the senses and makes the experience more memorable. Tasks designed to facilitate language learning that students are asked to undertake in these exotic, new environments are also likely to be more memorable than they would be if they were undertaken in a more familiar setting. So even though some of these tasks might involve activities that students would not have to perform in everyday life, they can nevertheless help in the learning process while providing students with a level of engagement and motivation that would be difficult to match in a more conventional classroom environment. This explains why the virtual worlds we have developed in VR4LL are beyond most people's experience, and it also explains why the tasks students are asked to perform in these worlds are mostly beyond the sort of activity they might be expected to undertake in their everyday lives.

As we move into the **second year of the VR4LL project** we have **finalised the development of the four virtual worlds** we decided to create. We are now concentrating on **developing the tasks** that students will be asked to perform when they find themselves **exploring** these exciting new worlds.

Let's summarise the tasks students will be asked to complete in each of the four virtual worlds we have created:

Virtual world one is literally out of this world – it transports students to an international space station which provides some stunning views of the earth below. The first task they will be asked to complete is to repair a faulty communications antenna. This task involves collecting the tools and other materials they will need, from different locations within the space station, then putting on a helmet and venturing outside. The views are truly amazing, but students won't have time to stop and stare; they will need to complete the repair and get back inside the space station within a set time frame, before they run out of oxygen.



Image on the left shows actual 3D model of our Virtual World: International Space Station

The second task on the space station also involves a repair but in this case the student-astronauts first have to create a plastic washer in the laboratory, using a combination of biodegradable ingredients. Achieving the correct strength of plastic is vital. Experimentation is the key.

Virtual world two in VR4LL is a deserted, tropical island. Our students have been shipwrecked and need to build themselves a sea-worthy raft so they can sail away and leave the island behind. That's task number one and it involves finding the right tools and materials, then building the raft. Task number two is to locate the treasure that's rumoured to have been buried on the island. But the clues to its whereabouts are not obvious, and there are several of them.

Virtual world three takes us back to ancient Rome in the middle of the first century AD. Britannicus, son of the Emperor Claudius, has been murdered! How did it happen? Who was responsible? Will our student detectives be able to complete task one and discover the truth? Task two finds our students locked in the dungeons below an earlier version of the Coliseum. Will they manage to escape? Or will they be thrown to the lions?

Students will need to wrap up warm before they enter **virtual world four**. They will find themselves somewhere in a snow covered landscape with only a small wooden cabin for refuge. But where exactly are they? Task one involves locating their whereabouts using a compass and other tools. Task two will also be a challenge. Students will need to build themselves a new cabin using only the natural materials they have to hand. The key is to build a solid, environmentally friendly structure that will keep out the cold. If they don't do a good job they will almost certainly freeze.

Areal maps of Virtual Worlds



tropical island



frozen world

It will take another four or five months before we have all the tasks ready to test with guinea-pig students. If you are interested in joining in the pilot phase, let us know! The more feedback we receive the better.

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<https://web.facebook.com/VR4LL>

or watch us on VR4LL's YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHsNCjW2gc0D8IEPzbgz6gA>

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