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Leonardo da Vinci

SINAPSI PROJECT

D 7.4 Tutor and User Vademecum version 2

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Authors	Alberto Venditti
Partner	CNR
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Purpose of the Vademecum

The Tutor and User's Vademecum version 2 doesn't show any changes in relation to the first version of the manual, as the software in its initial release has been assessed positively by people who used it during the trial. That's the reason why all manuals, including this vademecum, still present the same structure of the first versions.

This Manual is intended to prepare participants for correct usage of SINAPSI. It is divided into five sections:

1. Classroom training
2. Preparing for the simulations
3. Simulations
4. Debriefing and evaluation
5. The tutor-participant relationship

This Manual comes with separate technical and software user manuals. There is a similar, separate version for learners (see "Vademecum for Tutors").

Section 1: Classroom training

First classroom session: Start-up

The SINAPSI training course begins with all of the participants, tutors, and project organizers meeting in-person. This session serves for evaluating the participants' incoming skills for training purposes.

Relevant Objectives

1. Allow the participants to meet one another and the staff
2. Encourage participants to raise and discuss their expectations and suggestions
3. Present the project
4. Facilitate use of the technology
5. Share some useful language and strategies

Objectives relevant to the training

1. Explain the subject matter
2. Explain the target skills
3. Evaluate participants' incoming skills
4. Share participants' expectations for individual growth
5. Stipulate the training agreement

The initial questionnaire will be distributed to all participants during the start-up session.

Second classroom session: Evaluation

The training course concludes with a second classroom meeting involving all the participants, tutors, representatives of the partner organizations, and project organizers (when available). This session serves the dual purpose of evaluating the learning process and, the effectiveness of the learning tool.

Relevant Objectives

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of the tool
2. Assess proper use of the tool
3. Assess the tool's potential
4. Evaluate the tool's limitations within the relevant context
5. Evaluate learners' attitudes towards the tool

Objectives relevant to the training

1. Check on the state of the simulations
2. Self-assessment of the learning process
3. Self-assessment on achievement of personal goals.
4. Evaluation of relationships among participants and tutors
5. Assessment of the tool's impact on the training course

The exit questionnaire will be distributed to all participants during the evaluation session.

Section 2: Preparing for the simulations

Before each session, the tutor will provide learners with all necessary logistic and educational information. The goals of this preparation can be summarized as follows:

Organizational goals:

1. Clarify details of the session (who the participants are, whether they will participate from the beginning or only when summoned by the tutor, whether there will be observers, and which avatar is theirs)
2. Settle when (day and time) the session, debriefing, and handing out of the end-of-session questionnaire will happen
3. Get to know the scenario, the avatars and their stories (if it is a new scenario), or reconstruct the events that have taken place (if the session is continuing a previous scenario), and begin to get into the roles of the respective avatars.

Educational goals:

1. Consider the objectives of the session and strategies for reaching them
2. Identify personal learning goals
3. Review any reading or further information suggested by the tutor

Section 3: Simulations

From the beginning of the simulation, learners will be faced with the challenge of getting into the role of their avatar (i.e., staying in character and keeping in mind the avatar's personal history, relationships and objectives, stated and unstated). Within this structure, learners are free to adopt strategies necessary to reach the prearranged goals as they please.

Learners will have the following interaction functions available to them:

- Chatting with everyone (for attempts to cooperate or conflict with the rest of the group, manage the group discussion, or propose solutions)
- Chatting with individuals (for attempts to communicate one-on-one, resolve issues, and prepare proposals to present to the whole group)
- Gesture, movement, and expression functions (for communicating moods and moving around in the environment)
- Abandoning the session, as a sign of protest or on breakdown of negotiation.

Section 4: Debriefing and evaluations

At the end of the session, the tutor asks each user to respond to a questionnaire, designed to evaluate the technical and educational elements of the simulation.

In addition to this scheduled evaluation, tutors may – if they deem necessary – conduct a debriefing, right after the simulation or at a later time. The goal of such a debriefing is to examine whether and how the objectives were reached, and discuss what was learned. This optional session can also be held online, using the simulation environment in a “free chat” mode.

Section 5: The tutor-participant relationship

During the in-person session at the beginning of the trial, it is important that the learner become completely familiar with the software and well-acquainted with the tutor and the other participants. This will help promote effective online interaction and correct use of the tool. Before each training session, it is also important that learners should be clear about their goals “during play,” and their own training goals.

As far as concerns goals “during play,” learners should feel free to ask their tutor for clarifications about the scenario, its current state, the specific goals of the session, or their own character. This discussion can take place during the preparatory phase for the session, via email. Tutors may also propose a session suddenly without preparation, or ask a participant to suddenly change avatar (i.e., character). In other words, learners should be willing to accept unanticipated changes in strategy, identification, mode of communication, or point of view, and to postpone any clarifications until after the session. This mode of intervention, while not allowing for preparation, trains learners in exercising mental flexibility, putting themselves in others’ shoes, and confronting unexpected situations, all of which are characteristic skills of a good mediator.

Learners should be clear about their own learning goals, and in particular in terms of the skills they wish to try out, acquire, and reinforce, the limitations they want to overcome, etc. Likewise, it is important that learners should know about the classical ways in which these skills are taught. This knowledge will help them to evaluate the new training tool in context, and to see how it could be integrated into classic training practices.

Learners are advised to go to their tutor if they need anything, and to take time to share with the tutor anything of particular interest that came up in the simulation, regarding the situation as a whole or their own personal thoughts or skills. Where learners so desire, it is good that they should share their thoughts and work with the group. Feedback from the other participants can be particularly helpful. Finally, learners are encouraged to look further into the themes and topics dealt with during the training course, following the tutor’s advice and suggestions.