

A simulation-based environment for interaction training



VENTURE is a virtual training environment that helps enhance a learner's interpersonal skills to include diversity training, performance feedback, leadership and cultural awareness – any type of role play that can be acted out in a safe environment in the learner's own time. VENTURE is particularly suited to compliance based training where the learner interacts in real time with chat bots using open/semi-structured conversation. VENTURE has three key elements: (1) a Conversation Simulator used by the learner to engage in chat with a "virtual colleague"; (2) a Scenario Designer that enables instructors to create interaction training exercises; and (3) an Automated Assessment Mechanism that evaluates the learner's performance.

Figure 1: Example of VENTURE's Conversation Simulator

A. The Conversation Simulator replicates real-world interactions between two people. Figure 1 shows an example of how a student (Sue), a software developer from the UK, interacts with a Virtual Colleague (Raúl), a Spanish software developer. A Virtual Guide (Maria) helps Sue through the interactions giving immediate feedback to highlight good and bad practice at appropriate places in the conversation. Here, Sue complains about a problem immediately; Maria explains this direct approach might offend Raúl as typically Spaniards prefer a more indirect communication style, and suggests an alternative approach.

B. The Scenario Designer (see Figure 2) allows the instructor to define interaction exercises by dragging and dropping phrases into a scenario workflow. The Scenario Designer also has a database of rules and standard interaction problems that can be reused in new simulations. VENTURE's Scenario Designer makes it possible for the training platform to be used in many training areas, such as cultural training, assertiveness training, and diversity training.

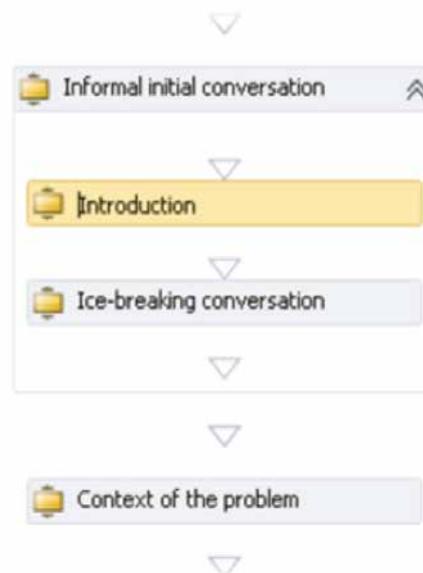


Figure 2: Scenario Designer workflow

C. The Automated Assessment Mechanism (see Figure 3) automatically assesses the student's skills. At the end of the training session VENTURE generates a report showing where the student made mistakes. The report includes a final score, and a breakdown for each skill practiced in the exercise. This report of strengths and weaknesses is produced immediately after the student completes the training. Once set up, the assessment does not require any intervention from the instructor.

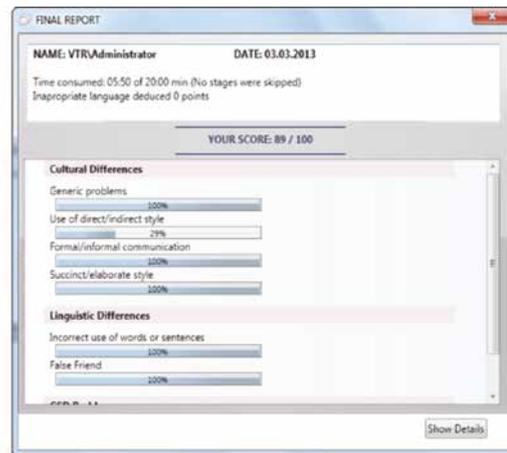


Figure 3: Assessment Report

Current status: The VENTURE prototype has been validated in a field study involving real users. An independently conducted feasibility study has demonstrated the commercial potential for VENTURE. We have received further funding from Enterprise Ireland through the EU Regional Development Fund to commercialise VENTURE and are now looking for industry/business partners, to:

- » Trial and use VENTURE
- » Invest/partner with us in future development of VENTURE
- » Licence VENTURE technology for use in your products

Meet the VENTURE team



Dr Sarah Beecham
 (Principle Investigator, Marketing and Project manager)
 Senior Research Fellow in Lero - the Irish Software Engineering Research Centre.
 Research focus: Global Software Development, Software Processes, Requirements Engineering, Research Methods, Software Evolution, Effort Estimation, Fault Prediction, Software Engineer Motivation.
 Email: Sarah.Beecham@lero.ie



Dr John Noll
 (Content/Technical Lead)
 Research Fellow in Lero - the Irish Software Engineering Research Centre.
 Research focus: Empirical Software Engineering, Global Software Development, Agile Software Engineering, Open Source Software, Requirements Engineering, Software Processes.
 Email: John.Noll@lero.ie



Dr Helen Kelly-Holmes
 (Content Advisor)
 Senior Lecturer in Sociolinguistics and New Media; Assistant Dean for Research in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, University of Limerick.
 Research focus: Sociolinguistics, with a focus on the interrelationships between media, markets and languages.
 Email: Helen.Kelly.Holmes@ul.ie



Alejandro Estrada Gomez
 Software Developer for VENTURE
 PhD graduate of Computer Engineering at the University of Castilla - La Mancha (graduated in November 2015, Software Engineering Specification)
 Experience: Web development and Avatar design
 Visiting Lero from June 2015 - December 2016