

Learned lessons

Human-computer interaction turns out to be a concept that we often only relate to how we directly interact with software, machines, or technology, forgetting about many other important aspects that are involved in this process. We even see it merely as simple interfaces we use in our projects. Concepts such as UX, prototypes, and usability testing have a significant background in this concept. When we talk about HCI, we can also discuss different approaches that focus primarily on the user in order to create software or even a product. Products like smartwatches or wearables exist thanks to the diligent research of individuals focused on HCI. We could go on and delve deeper into everything that this entails, but we also want to talk about our first experience working with HCI.

When we started our project, we had many expectations and ideas. One thing that put us to the test was presenting speeches in front of the teacher. From that first test, we realized that creating a product, no matter how innovative it may sound, is challenging. We not only have to think of something we believe will be useful but also consider something that we know or see will be used. That was the first lesson we learned in this course. Although we didn't pass that test, we continued with an idea and a desire to learn about HCI.

When the first deliverable arrived, after many discussions with the teacher and within our team, many concepts were still unclear. Concepts such as personas and non-functional requirements that should respond to the user's needs were not well understood, and overall, it was not a successful delivery. However, today we can recognize those mistakes. Simple things like conducting research and using elicitation techniques to obtain analyzable results, which we didn't do as expected, we now see the importance of using personas not only to have an idea of the users but also to understand them, empathize with them, and gain a better understanding of our users. Most importantly, it allows us to have a solid foundation for our design choices. On the other hand, when writing our requirements, especially the non-functional ones, we didn't consider many important factors, such as incorporating the perspective of users and focusing on the user. Despite our poor performance, we were able to realize these shortcomings and correct them in the future. Through all these experiences, we have learned that user-centered design, its stages, its foundations, and crucially, research, must always be performed consciously.

Moving on to our second deliverable, we can say that there was a significant improvement. With our newfound knowledge and better organization within the team, we made great progress. In this stage, we were able to learn and develop our skills in creating prototypes and wireframes. The research aspect was also highlighted at this point. We didn't just perform activities for the sake of it; we investigated how to do things and what they entailed. The change in requirements was a pivotal point in this stage, as it taught us that personas were also of great support in shaping these requirements. Lastly, it is important to emphasize that thanks to our organization, we were able to identify and support each other in overcoming our faults. There was undoubtedly a significant change at this point.

Despite everything, with this final deliverable, we were able to move forward. Thanks to the organization and support of the team, we can say that we have not only learned in this course but throughout the semester and all our subjects. We can take a little bit from each experience and apply it better today. The use of tools we learned in this course, such as Figma, highlights the importance of prototypes and how they can greatly help us make the right decisions in the project. Additionally, conducting usability tests, despite any challenges, was one of the most satisfying parts. Seeing how our applied efforts yielded positive feedback, as well as some constructive criticism, now we understand that although there are things to improve, we were able to create a project that provided users with an easily accessible experience.

In conclusion, we take away many tools, learnings, and knowledge from this course. The use of user-centered models and designs now has a greater impact on our thought process. Whether in other subjects or projects, we now consider the user before making any other decision. We have also learned that research and the proper definition of personas are very useful when constructing our requirements. Usability testing to evaluate interfaces, the use of tools like Figma, and even leveraging ChatGPT, which we see evolving and growing each day, teach us the importance of adaptation rather than closing ourselves off. Alongside many other valuable lessons, we can say that today we carry with us the essence of HCI. Even though there is still room for growth, we can continue to learn and apply what we already know because every day brings an opportunity to learn something new, and this semester, we got to know what HCI truly is.