

New Learning Context and Welcoming: Gathering Student Feedback on Reciprocal Interview Activities

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Abstract—This communication presents the student feedback on the Reciprocal Interview Activity carried out in the 2022-2023 academic course in two management subjects. The activity can be framed in the ‘Welcoming’, one of the four learning environments that are conceptualized within the frame of the New Learning Context (NLC) implemented at La Salle Universitat Ramon Llull. The activities were designed to promote interaction from the very first day of class, in addition to present the syllabus and the instructors. Findings show that the Reciprocal interview Activities carried out during the first session of class of the subjects were appreciated by the students, valuing highly the level of ‘comfort with approaching the instructor’ and the ‘student comfort with class participation’.

Keywords—Class climate; Engagement; First Day of Class; ICTs Engineering Programs; Management Subjects; New Learning Context; Reciprocal Interview Activity; Teaching Innovation.

I. INTRODUCTION

This work presents a Reciprocal Interview Activity that was carried out in two management subjects at La Salle Campus Barcelona, Universitat Ramon Llull (La Salle-URL) with the goal of establishing a good class climate, engaging the students in the subjects, and promoting their well-being. Different research works have focused on students’ perspectives about different activities carried out during the first session of class of a subject [1]–[4]. In addition, a specific design of this first session may help the instructors to reach explicit objectives [5]–[8]. And between this designs, a Reciprocal Interview Activity can be carried out [9], [10].

The New Learning Context (NLC) deployed at La Salle-URL is a framework applied to all the programs taught at La

Salle Campus Barcelona [3]. This communication presents the gathered feedback from undergraduate students once they experienced a Reciprocal Interview Activity during their first day of class, in the context of two management subjects in the 2022-2023 academic course.

II. MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND

A. New Learning Context at La Salle-URL

The New Learning Context (NLC) is implemented at La Salle-URL in all the different undergraduate programs taught in the campus which are mentioned below: ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) Engineering; Software Application Techniques; Health Engineering; Animation; Digital Arts; Business and Management; Architecture. The aim of the NLC to adapt education to today’s students. Therefore, it takes advantage of technologies -such as ICT-, as an instrumental tool to enhance teaching and learning and to adapt the teaching methodologies to the students. It is out of the scope of this text to detail the NLC in depth. However, it can be mentioned that the practical implementation of the NLC is based on five different learning environments, as shown in [3], [11]: (1) Welcoming; (2) Seminar; (3) Workshop; (4) Project; and (5) Closure). This communication is oriented to present the findings associated to the practical implementation of a Reciprocal Interview Activity carried out in the framework of one of the aforementioned learning environments, the ‘Welcoming’.

B. Reciprocal Interview Activity

The first day of class of a subject can be performed through diverse approaches and activities. During this first session the syllabus of the subject is usually explained by the instructor. This presentation can be done by means of different approaches. One generalized option is a ‘one direction’ speech conducted by the instructor to explain the syllabus and the nature of the

subject, which may even include time for questions and clarifications once the instructor has given offered the explanation. Another possibility is to carry out diverse activities during this first session o class, as showed in diverse research works [1]–[4]. When implementing the latter, the activities should be carefully designed according to the specific goals that the instructor wants to achieve during the first session of class.

The Reciprocal Interview Activity consists in establishing a ‘two direction approach’ between students and instructors [9], [10]. In one of the subjects, all the instructors that taught sessions to diverse groups of class, attended each and every one of the first sessions of each group; in the other subject, the session in charge of the only instructor of the subject. Briefly explained, the activity was articulated through the following mechanics: (1) the instructor walked into the class, said ‘hello’ and the first name of the instructors; (2) the instructor commented that during the first day of class of the course there was going to be an activity instead of a more standard presentation; (3) the first step of the activity consisted of a brief and partial explanation of the syllabus, which was already available in the LMS (Learning Management System) from the moment the student enrolled in the subject; (4) students were asked to form groups of four or five students, and to introduce themselves for five minutes; (5) students should discuss what questions to ask the instructors and chose a spokesperson for the group; (6) the interview started with one question from the instructors to each one of the groups; answers should be answered only by the spokesperson of each group; (7) the spokesperson of each group asked one question to the instructors; (8) once the first round was finished, any student could ask the question that they thought convenient to the instructor; (9) the instructors completed the session by adding the ideas that the team of instructors had previously agreed upon during the preparation of the activity that had not arisen spontaneously during the activity; (10) the students were asked to complete a questionnaire related to the Reciprocal Interview Activity. Finally, the instructors explained to the students the objectives of the activity, mainly to reinforce the idea that they wanted to establish a class climate throughout the course based on the interaction and dynamism of the classes by means of the questions and interventions of the students in the class sessions.

III. ACTIVITIES AND FINDINGS

The activity was carried out during the first session of the 2022-2023 academic course in two management subjects taught in the context of eight technological degree programs at La Salle-URL. The Reciprocal interview Activity was designed in both subjects to explain the syllabus of the subject, in addition to obtaining a series of outcomes explained in this section.

A. Subject: ‘Value Chain and Financial Economics’.

This is an annual second-year subject of 4 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) taught to all the students of the seven ICTs engineering programs. Both semesters are quite different in terms of content (Financial Economics and Marketing). When undergraduates start this subject, not all the students have met in the classroom altogether during the 2021-2022 academic course; in the 2nd course, engineering students attend class sessions altogether grouped by programs.

The Reciprocal Interview Activity was planned to achieve the following goals: (1) to introduce the subject; (2) to introduce the team of instructors; (3) make the students know each other; and (4) to establish a participatory climate in the classroom, which was similar to the way of working expected during all the class sessions of the subject.

B. Subject: ‘Entrepreneurship and Innovation’.

A third-year year subject of 3 ECTS given in the first term of the degree in Software Application Techniques. In this case, the Reciprocal Interview Activity was carried out to introduce the subject and the instructor, and also to create a participatory climate in the classroom.

C. Student feedback on the Reciprocal Interview Activity

The questionnaire was properly answered by 125 students (80.65% of the total enrolled students), 105 engineering students and 20 students in the degree in Software Application Techniques. Data were collected through an anonymous 5-point Likert scale questionnaire that was distributed in the classroom after the activity was completed. Students were asked their opinion about the activity based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, values that were associated to the following descriptions: 1 (‘Strongly disagree’), 2 (‘Disagree’), 3 (‘Undecided’), 4 (‘Agree’), and 5 (‘Strongly agree’). Questions were grouped in four topics as shown in Fig. 1.

Topics	Items	Questions
Comfort with approaching the instructor	Q1	‘Talking to the instructor about the topics to be learned through the subject’
	Q2	‘Talking with the instructor about assignments’
	Q3	‘Asking questions to the instructor during class sessions’
	Q4	‘Talking to the instructor during office hours’
	Q5	‘E-mailing the instructor with questions’
	Q6	‘Knowing the curricula and the background of the instructors’
Student comfort with class participation	Q7	‘Meeting my new classmates’
	Q8	‘Working in group activities in the class session’
	Q9	‘Sharing ideas and opinions during the class session’
Evaluation of the Reciprocal Interview Activity	Q10	‘Would you recommend other instructors to do this activity at the beginning of the term’
	Q11	‘Have you found useful this Reciprocal Class Activity?’
	Q12	‘Did this activity seem to be a waste of time?’
... the activity help to	Q13	‘To understand what was expected of the subject in the class session’
	Q14	‘To understand what was expected of them in the class session’
	Q15	‘To work hard to do well in the class session’
	Q16	‘To become more comfortable participating in class session’
	Q17	‘To share concerns with the instructor’
	Q18	‘To establish a climate of interactive classes between students & instructors’
	Q19	‘To understand what the subject was about’

Fig. 1 Questionnaire: asking 19 questions about 4 topics.

In this communication, the answers are grouped in the three following categories: ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’; ‘undecided’; ‘strongly disagree and disagree’. Fig. 2 displays a graph and a table which show the percentage of students that selected each one of the options given in the questionnaire.

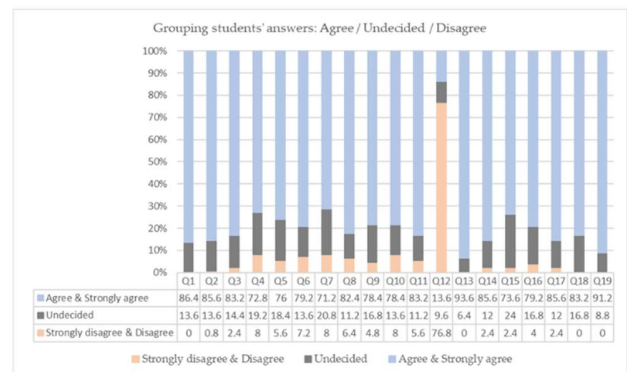


Fig. 2 Percentage of students that selected each option.

Fig.3 shows the answers given by the surveyed students to the first block of questions (from Q1 to Q6), that was about the ‘Comfort with approaching the instructor’. All the options were highly appreciated by the students. On the top, Q1 (86.4%) and Q2 (85.6%); both questions were focused on the interaction with the instructors to know about the subject (or what is the same, what was going to be learned, and which assignments should be done).

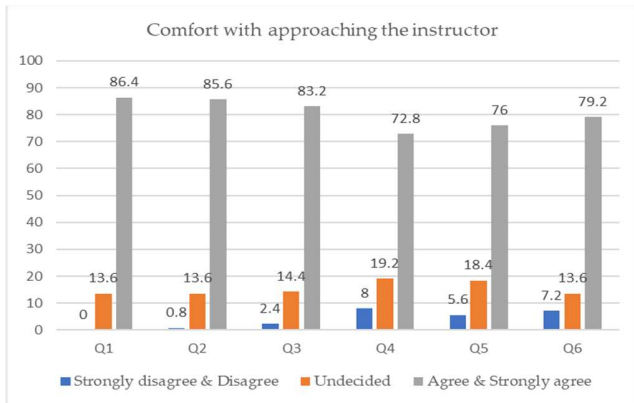


Fig. 3 Items (Q1 to Q6): ‘Comfort with approaching the instructor’.

Fig.4 shows the answers given to the second block of questions (from Q7 to Q9), that was about the ‘Student comfort with class participation’. In this block ‘working in group activities in the class sessions’ Q8 (82.4%), was the option that obtained the higher number of ‘strongly agree and agree’ by the surveyed students.

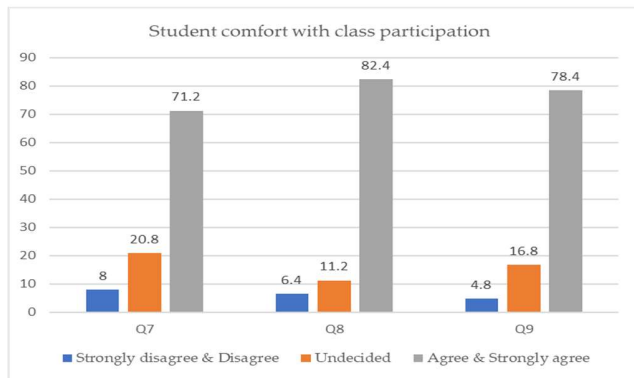


Fig. 4 Items (Q7 to Q9): ‘Student comfort with class participation’.

Fig.5 displays the answers to the third block of questions (from Q10 to Q12), which reflects the evaluation of the Reciprocal Interview Activity by the students. Here it should be noted that Q12 build as a negative statement. The majority of students found useful the activity (83.2%) and recommended to do this activity in other subjects (78.4%).

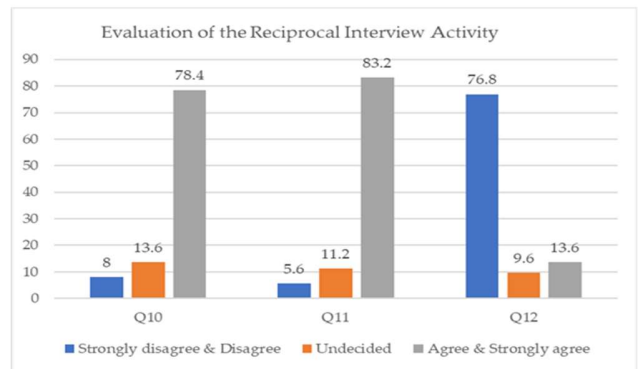


Fig. 5 Items (Q10 to Q12): ‘Evaluation of the Reciprocal interview Activity’.

Fig.6 presents the answers to the fourth block of questions (from Q13 to Q19), reflecting what ‘the activity help to...’. All the options were appreciated by the students. On the top, understanding what was expected from them -Q13 (93.6%)-, and to understand what the subject was about -Q19 (91.2%) On the bottom, ‘to work hard to do well’ -Q15 (73.6%)-

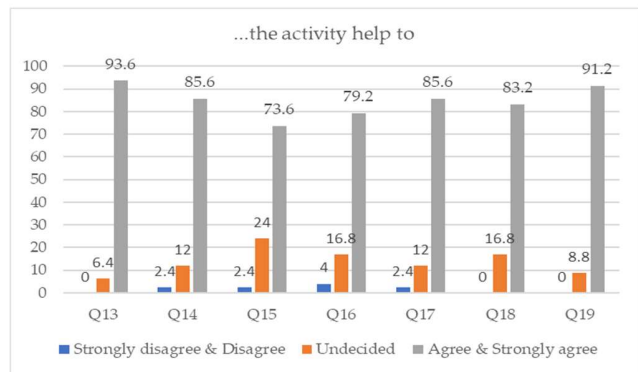


Figure 6. Items (Q13 to Q19): ‘... the activity help to’.

CONCLUSIONS

This communication is focused on the findings derived from a survey on how students perceived a Reciprocal Interview Activity during the first session of two management subjects. Students valued highly the activity, the level of ‘comfort with approaching the instructor’ and the ‘student comfort with class participation’. The Reciprocal Interview Activity itself was seen as a useful activity by the majority of the students who agreed in recommending doing this activity in other subjects.

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