Aalto-yliopisto
Perustieteiden
korkeakoulu

PED-131.9000
Teaching assistant as a learning instructor
Day 2

Pedagogical training for SCI course assistants, Friday 13.10.2017
SCI Learning services (LES)
Kirsti Keltikangas and Jukka Parviainen

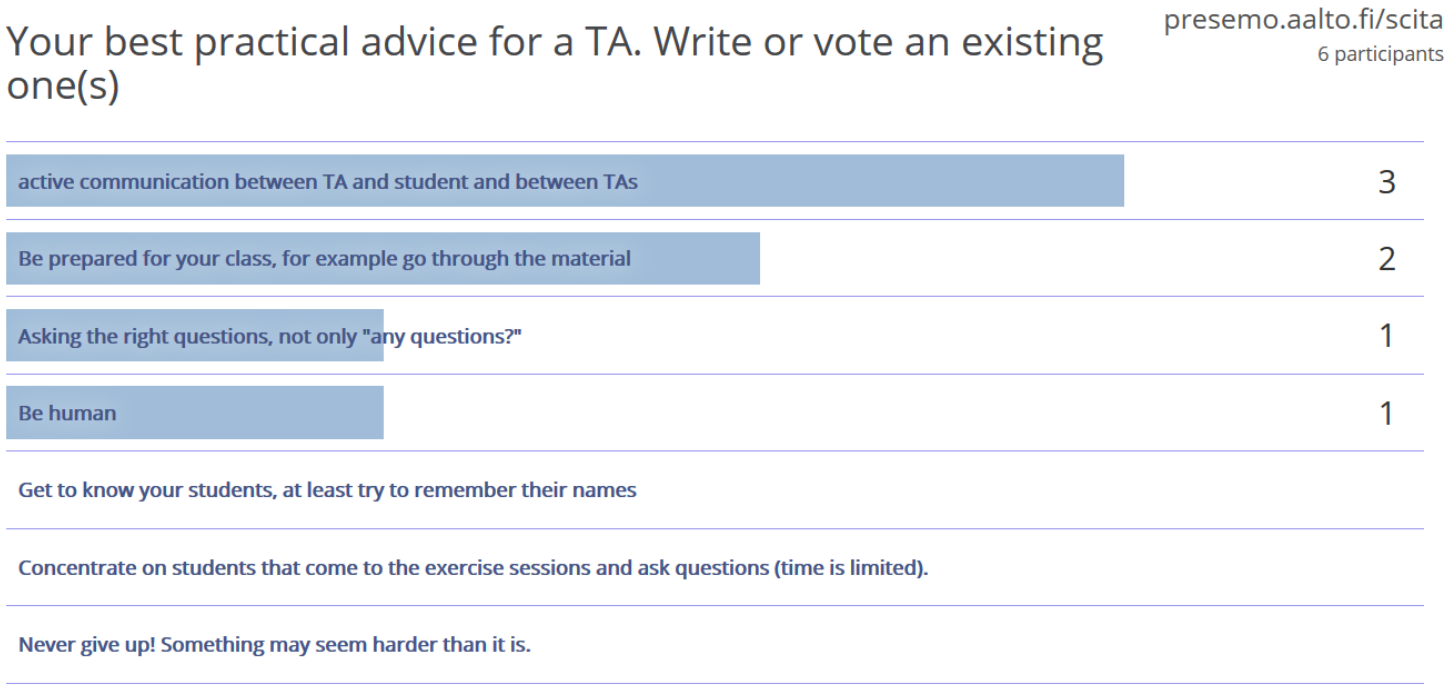
Today's schedule

12:00–12:50	Coffee, Cocktail Party, learning approaches, summary of observations
12:50–13:30	Group work: Different student profiles
13:30–14:45	Wrapping up the group work (acting out the profiles), summary of approaches to learning and studying
14:45–15:00	Learning assignments and feedback

Breaks included in the programme
Lecturers Riikka Kangaslampi (MS) and Jami Kinnunen (TFY) with us today!

Class discussion on Learning Assignment #1: results

Your best practical advice for a TA



The key finding

- **“TA should be active and not passive, and TAs cand give feedback of the students to the lecturer so he can adapt the lectures”**
- **“When teaching, it's important to actively evaluate if the student really understands what you're teaching.”**

Using Presemo

- Presemo is a polling system used with a device with Internet connection (phone, tab, laptop, desktop, …)
- Fully anonymous
- Instructions in http://opit.aalto.fi => Presemo
- Create a poll in a few minutes: http://presemo.aalto.fi/new
- Question types: poll (multichoice), voting (ask for free text, others can vote), chat (text box)
- In teaching: supports anonymous feedback; supports checking learning of a certain issue (typically, a setting ”do not show answers to other students”)
- Some settings and reports (Screen) may require attention

Approaches to learning: theoretical framework

Background

- **Lot of research on learning approaches has been done in universities worldwide since the ’70s**
- **Approaches to learning were developed when trying to understand and explain *why* students’ *learning outcomes* differed so much**
- **The approaches were initially considered to be stable and immune to differences. Today they are understood to be situational: changeable and influenced by the learning situation (teacher, subject, group, requirements,...)**
  - This means that we approach a learning situation in certain way (depending on our previous experience, self-image, interest, motivation,…) BUT we also react to the situation and behave (consciously or unconsciously) in a certain way

Deep learning

Typical motivation	To understand and follow one's own interest
Learning strategies	Knowledge building; finding similarities and differences between theories and concepts; understanding the bigger picture (not forgetting the details)
Difficulties	Knowing one's own limits and what is enough; getting things done "well enough" and proceeding to other tasks; getting stuck with (or finding and answering) questions that are too difficult (might get frustrated or dissatisfied with one's own behaviour)
Support provided	Find relevant extra information; encourage to share interest with other students; set the "well enough" goals; explicate the allocated workload; give positive feedback on what's sufficient for learning efforts

Surface learning

Typical motivation	To pass the course (reasons for not setting higher objectives can vary from not-interested to no-chance-to-succeed)
Learning strategies	Rote learning, seeking hints, passive receiving
Difficulties	Concentrating on what is important to learn; to start doing things and trust one's possibilities to succeed; finding one's own interests; proactively creating links between course contents so that knowledge does not seem to be fragmented and full of irrelevant details
Support provided	Help believe in one's own skills; positive feedback on things already done; help build bridges between the contents; set goals; find appropriate (basic enough) exercises; help to start working

Compiled from Biggs (1999), Entwistle (1988) and Ramsden (1992))
http://exchange.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching-theory-guide/deep-and-surface-approaches-learning.html

Organised learning

Typical motivation	To optimise and get ”good results” (grades); interest in practical matters: skills and knowledge that can be used in the future (in work)
Learning strategies	Being aware of course requirements and assessment criteria; monitoring and planning one’s studies, but being dependent on the teacher’s goals
Difficulties	Optimising grades, but forgetting one’s own interests and learning; sometimes overestimating one’s own skills
Support	Help to concentrate on learning and to find meaning; challenge to set ”deeper” goals

Entwistle (1988); Marton & Säljö (1976)

Approaches to learning

Entwistle (1988); Marton & Säljö (1976)

Orientation	Objective	Action	Consequence
Deep	To understand for oneself	Active processing	Actively interested (gets deeply engrossed)
Surface	To achieve the pass criteria	Simply reproducing content to pass the course	Difficulties in understanding and anxiety
Strategic	To obtain good grades	Systematic planning of activities	Aware of performance criteria

See also Chapter 2 in ”Get inspired!” / ”Innostu ja onnistu opetuksessa”

Different student profiles

Read through the four student profiles and note down their most important aspects. Think about the learning approaches (from your reading assignment) as well.

For the profile assigned to your group, think about the following:

- Have you met students who might be similar in any way?
  Don’t take the types too literally and don’t go into details
- How might they act and succeed in your course(s)?
- How can you support their learning or help them solve exercise problems?
- How can you support their motivation?

Prepare to present your case to the others depicting the student profiles

Tim

Tim noticed in the morning that he should do his course assignments. Feeling somehow anxious and restless, he decided to do his laundry first, and, while waiting for the washing in the machine to be done, he checked if there was anything interesting in Netflix. After four hours, he felt even more anxious, but nonetheless he picked up the course material. The first assignment was difficult, and he tried to look for an example similar to the assignment in the materials. He did not really understand the idea of the assignment, and wondered why he had to study such demotivating material.

The next day he went to the exercises (laskarit) and noticed that he didn't really understand what the assistant was talking about. For a moment he thought that it would be a great idea to ask if the assistant could explain the main idea more clearly. Then he noticed that everyone else was taking notes. He was glad that he didn't ask anything so that the others didn't notice how stupid he was.

Lisa

Lisa woke up early in the morning because she had a very busy day ahead. She was worried about her math assignments. She had allocated two hours for the assignments and knew that it was too little for such complicated assignments, but she also had to prepare for two oncoming exams, attend an important board meeting of her guild , take her dog to the vet, and write some summer job applications.

She ended up spending one hour with the math assignments, having tried in vain to look for something helpful in the course materials to do the assignments as quickly as possible. She felt bad about herself because she really would like to do well in her studies. Math is important in her field, and she knows that. She blamed herself for bad time management.

The next day she went to the exercises (laskarit) and asked for some help. She didn't understand what the assistant said because she couldn't remember what some of the key concepts meant. "Too much information," she thought but didn't say anything.

Anna

Anna found math assignments very interesting. She had attended all the lectures and even read some extra material she found on the Internet while she looking for material on a related topic. She had a good routine for doing calculations, but one of the assignments was particularly difficult. She had some ideas on how to solve this difficult assignment, but she didn’t know how to proceed.

Anna went to the exercises (laskarit) and took a seat in the back row. She had always been shy and was a bit worried about whether the course assistant was paying attention on her. She didn’t really know other students in the classroom because she preferred to study on her own. She was hoping that someone else would ask the same questions she had in mind.

Ted

Ted had always been interested in natural sciences and thought that the assignments on the course were quite easy. He spent some time calculating the assignments but skipped the last one because he thought it was a kind of stupid. “Why should I know this type of detail anyway? And there are so many other interesting things to do…”

The next day Ted came to the exercises (laskarit) and noticed that the course assistant was one minute late. Ted talked with some friends or browsed Facebook most of the time. The assistant asked Ted to write one solution on the blackboard, and Ted asked if it really was necessary because the assignment was so simple. When explaining some details of the last assignment, Ted interrupted the assistant and asked if they really understood what they were talking about.

Learning assignment #2

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1. **Reading assignment**
2. **Teaching observation**
3. **Group meeting**

1. Reading assignment: DL 13.11.2017

Go to MyCourses → Learning Assignments → LA #2, and find the link for the book (available both in English and Finnish):

Hemminki, M. Leppänen, M. & Valovirta T. 2013: *Get inspired! A guide for successful teaching*.

Read **Chapter 5, "How do I teach?", pp. 39–49.**

Read the text so that you can discuss it with your peers in your group and in class.

Learning assignments

2. Teaching observation. DL 13.11.2017

- Observe an exercise class. If possible, visit a class of your group members or your course mates.
- Use the feedback form from MyCourses (LA #2)
- Focus now on **the students** and note down at least the following: What do the students *do*? How does the teacher *motivate* them? Add reflections and insights of your own. Write your notes on page #1 of the feedback form
- You may, if you want, give constructive feedback to the teacher (ask first). Be specific, be positive and give constructive feedback. Use page #2.
- Submit your feedback form, **at least page #1**, to MyCourses (LA#2)

Learning assignments

3. Group work: reflect on the teaching session and the reading assignment. DL 23.11.2017

- Arrange a meeting with your small group (do it now).
- In the meeting, describe your teaching observation and discuss the article.
- Submit a group summary of your reflective discussion in MyCourses (LA #2):
  - *What did you discuss?*
  - *What did you observe?*
  - *What did you think about the article?*

Feedback from LA#1 and this session

Please, give feedback in MyCourses -> Contact teaching sessions -> Feedback from 13.10.2017

Using MyCourses (Moodle)

- **MyCourses is a tailored Moodle ver. 3.2**
  - Instructions http://opit.aalto.fi/ => MyCourses
  - Google “Moodle 3.2 <keywords>”
- **There are “activities” (student does something) and “resources” (teacher adds stuff)**
- **An activity Feedback used here to collect anonymous feedback from the session**
  - Note: increasing the response rate => reserve time in the end of the session