Aalto University
School of Electrical
Engineering

PED-131.9000 Teaching assistant as a learning instructor

Day 1

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Timetable

9:00–9:40	**Welcome**
9:40–12:00	**What makes a good assistant/teacher?** **Interaction in learning and teaching** **Giving feedback**

What do you think about working as an assistant?

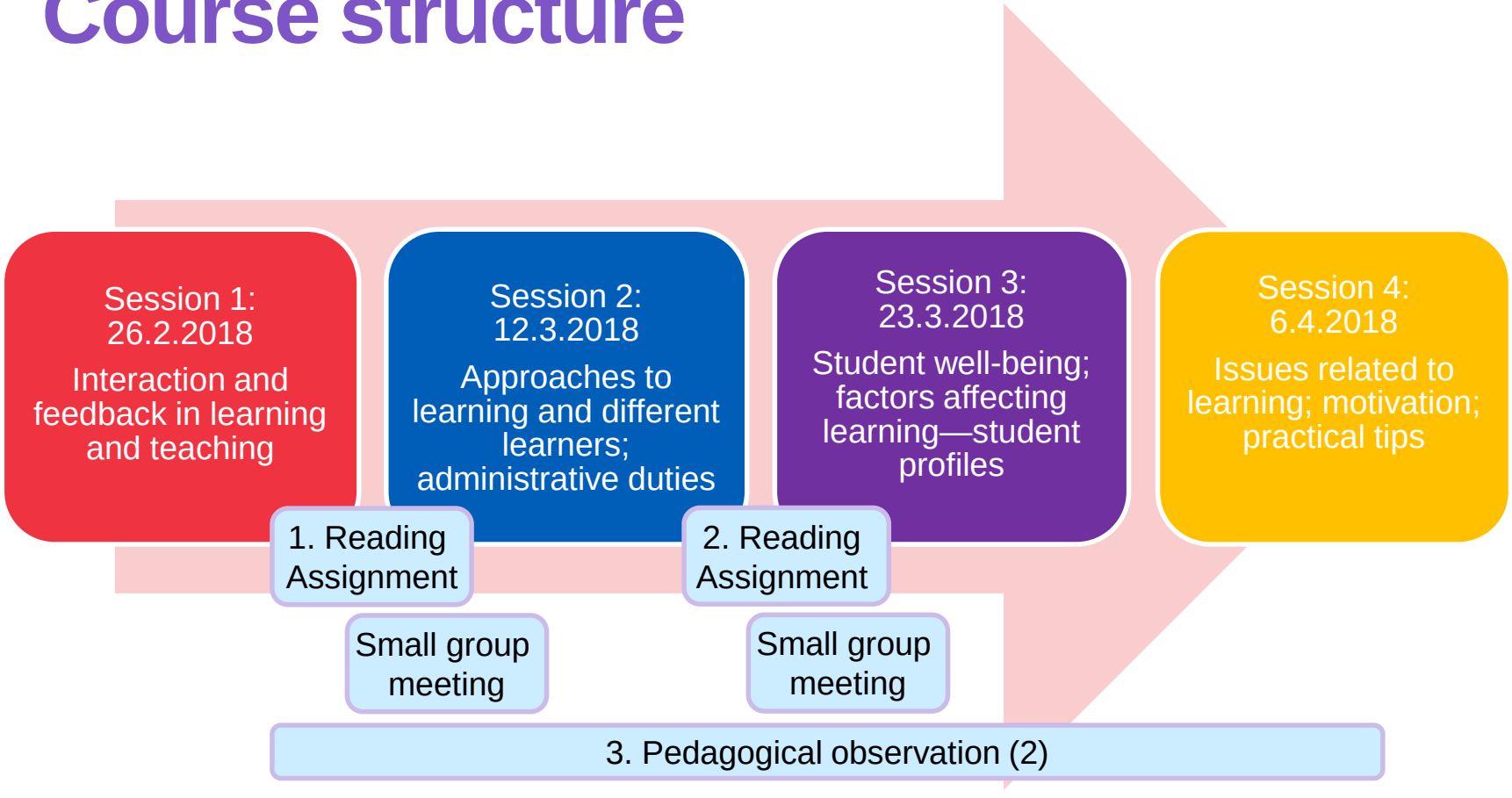
Pick a **postcard** which somehow describes your thoughts about working as an assistant

Learning outcomes for this course

After the course you will be able to

- observe the classroom environment from the learning perspective
- identify aspects to support students' learning process
- recognise ways to support students' study motivation
- identify your role as a learning instructor

Course structure



How to complete the course

- Participating in the teaching sessions
- Doing the coursework
  - reading assignments (two)
  - teaching observation and giving written feedback
  - do a reflective write-up (half to one page)

Participant's workload

A. Teaching sessions	**12 h**
B. Learning assignments (all together)	**14 h**
a) Reading assignment x 2	*4 h*
b) Teaching observation	*6 h*
c) Reflective write-up	*4 h*
C. Working in peer groups (2 meetings)	**10 h**
D. Reflection & working independently	**18 h**
Total (2 credits)	**54 h**

(one credit is equivalent to a workload of 27 h)

Your expectations (1/3)

- **Haluaisin oppia kurssilla** erilaisia työkaluja opetuksen toteuttamiseen ja oppilaiden motivoimiseen. Esimerkiksi millaisia keinoja on luennon elävöittämiseksi, millaisia vaihtoehtoja on perinteisille kalvosulkeisille.
- This course will feed me more information about teaching style of Aalto.
- Understanding the best practice and research undertaken to make best use of teaching assistants.
- Learning how fine-tuning your deployment can transform the preparation and practice of your TAs.
- Identifying strategies to overcome and avoid key obstacles to change.
- Discovering ways to construct TA Development.
- To teach variety of students in an effective manner.

Your expectations (2/3)

- I want to learn more about how making students understand the main goal of course with simple explanation and smart organization of the course parts.
- Basic skills for teaching, teaching methods and tips for challenges such as stage fright, ways of talking, slides/blackboard advantages-drawbacks, etc.
- Just a guess: I think I would be interested in the theoretical and explanatory part why certain behavior/certain things in class help students understand, learn, and probably raise their motivation/make them eager to do this and to reach certain goal. How to practically apply those things in a given situation - with an example - would be interesting as well.
- How to motivate students. How to organize lecture content. How to design assignments.

Your expectations (3/3)

- Miten selittää monimutkainen asia kiinnostavasti opiskelijalle.
- I wish to learn to be a better assistant for any course.
- Teaching methodology
- Teaching others in an effective manner
- Fix the mistakes in my current teaching approach
- I wish to get experience in seeting interactive media in lecture class room and other teaching methods which were taken as best practice in the school/university.
- Ongelmatapausten tunnistamista etukäteen.
- Tahdon oppia kuinka kannustaa oppilaita oppimaan lisää ja miten heitä voi rohkaista kysymään apua sitä tarvittaessa.
- How to support students learning and team formation. Learn on teaching/learning culture in engineering sciences in general.

What makes a good course assistant?

What are the elements and capabilities that make ”a good course assistant”?

Step 1 (5 min):

- Write down each element or capability on a separate sticky note.

Drawing a ”prototype” of a good teaching assistant

Step 2 (steps 2 and 3, ~30 min):

- Share your thoughts with your group.

Step 3:

- Draw and describe the course assistant that has the attributes and capabilities you have discovered.
- You can personalise your prototype:
  Give her/him a name, age, discipline etc.
- Prepare to present your group work (max 4 min/group).

Conceptions of teaching and learning: why is it important to be aware of them?

The teacher's own conception of learning has an impact on their choices of teaching methods

If you want to develop your teaching, it is vital to know what to develop

- Different conceptions may lead to different teaching methods—and different methods may lead to different learning results

International students may be used to different teaching and learning methods, so they expect different kinds of teaching

Short break!

Interaction: Why and how?

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Interaction in teaching: why?

- The fundamental rationale is to improve students' learning
- Here interaction refers to the types of exchanges (communication) that are believed to extend thinking and enhance learning
- According to this view, learners develop understanding
  - *in interactive and social situations*
  - *with the help of and in collaboration with others*

Vygotsky 1972; Bruner 1986; Britton 1970; Wells 1986; Norman 1992; Barnes & Todd 1995; Mercer 1995 (in discourse: Gumperz 1982; Chafe 1982; Tannen 1989; Levinson 2006)

Interaction

When dealing with social information

we observe the situation

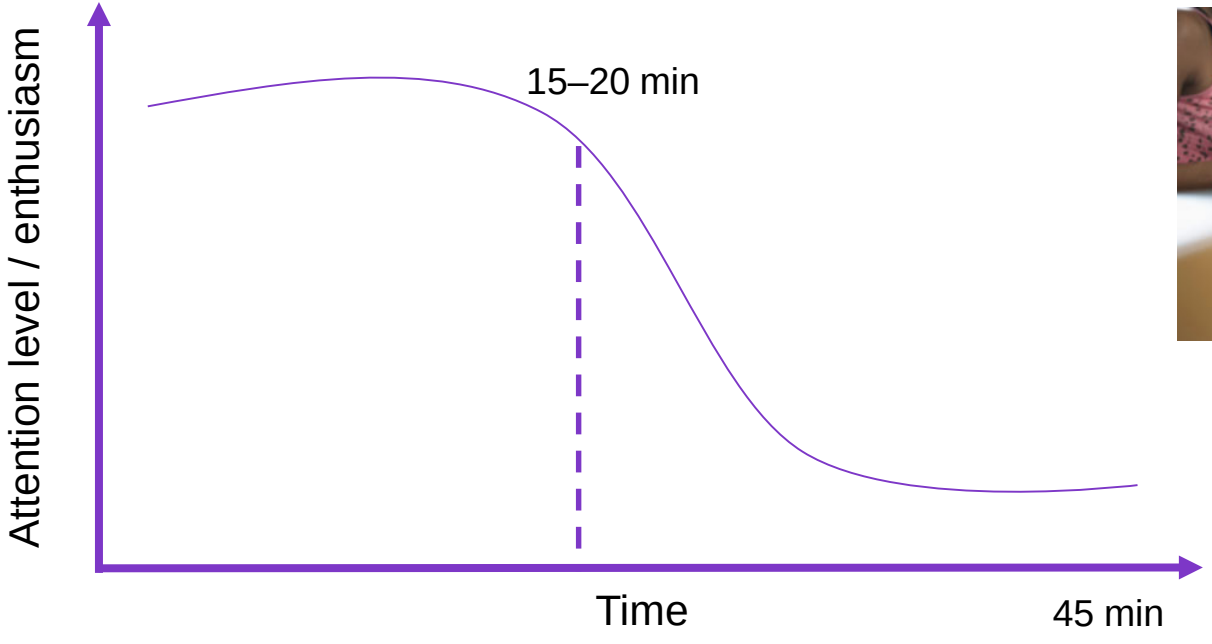
we interpret

we set a goal

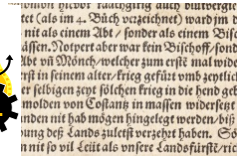
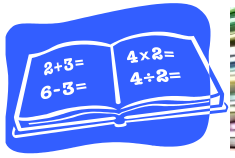
we consider optional courses of action

we consider the wisest course of action

Attention vs. Rhythm of teaching



E.g., Johnson, A. & Proctor, R. W. 2004. Attention, theory and practise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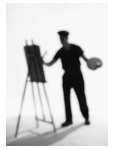

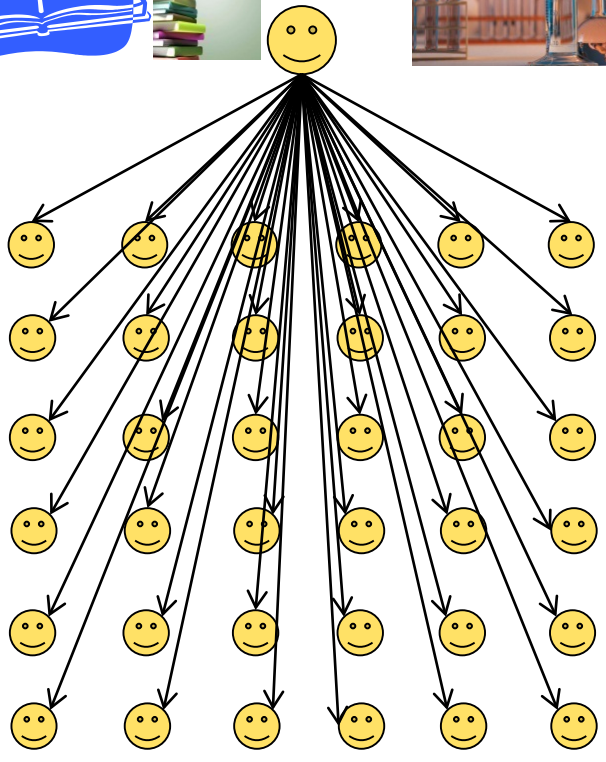

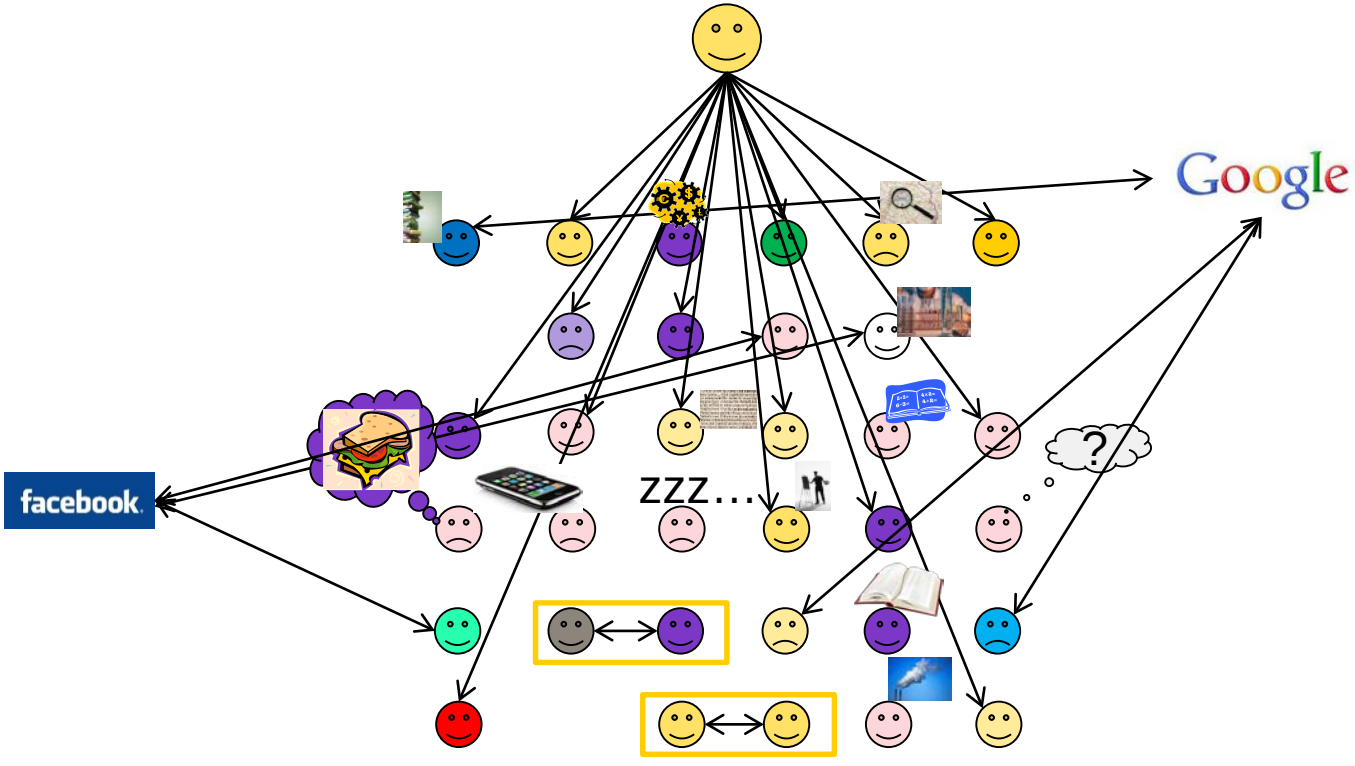
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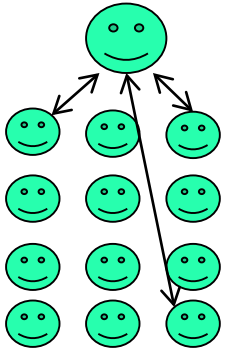
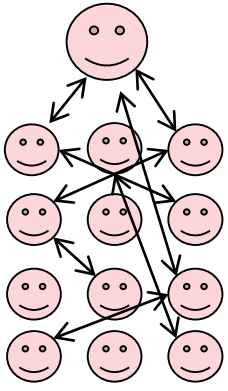
Examples of how to arrange interaction

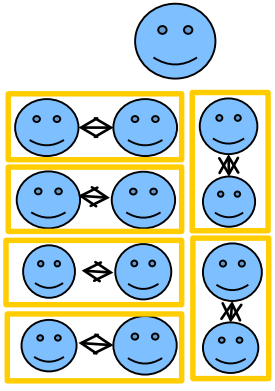
Between teacher and student



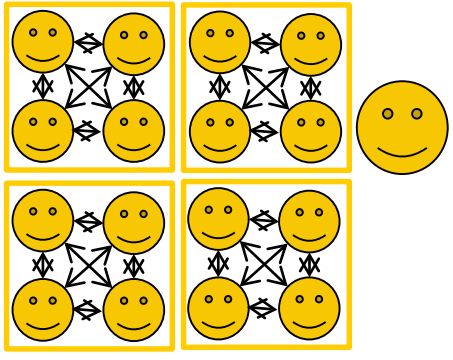
Teacher led group discussion



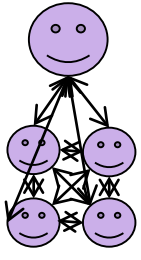
Discussion in pairs



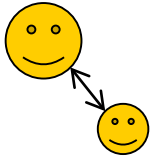
Group discussion; teacher coordinates



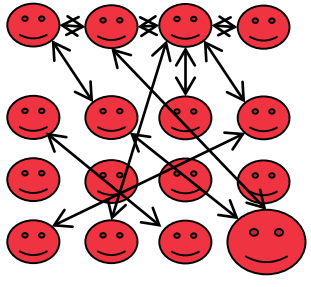
Group instruction



Personal instruction



Group discussion, led by the students



Interaction: to promote learning

Constructive discussion of conflicting points of view

Deep processing of the learned subjects

Fair/equal participation

Positive and safe atmosphere

Remember the code of conduct

Open questions to stimulate thinking (Aarnio & Enqvist 2002)

How do you consider…?
What is it based on...?
What does it mean...?
What are the consequences of...?
How do you understand...?
What is it all about...?
What is the meaning of...?
What if...?
What is this… connected to?
How do you feel about...?
What do you think you are going to do...?
How do you explain…?
How is it in your point of view…?
What kind of actions…?

Short break!

Feedback

What type of feedback have you received?

Recall a feedback session and analyse it:

- How was the situation?
- Who gave/received the feedback?
- How did you feel about it?
- What was good/not so good in the situation?
- Did you learn something from it?

Discuss and share them in groups of two or three (10 min)

Offering feedback

Your message should be in the tone: *I appreciate you and what you have done and whatever else I say should be taken in this context.*

- Be realistic
- Be sensitive to the goals of the recipient: LISTEN
- Be timely!!
- Be descriptive
- Don’t be judgemental
- Be positive

Adapted from Boud, D. (1991). Implementing Student Self Assessment. HERDSA Green Guide. No. 5. Second Edition. Sydney: HERDSA. Revised October 1994.

Feedback

Constructive	Unconstructive/destructive
Is about an **issue/action** ▪ *E.g. Up to here everything is fine… now let me see… ah, there's an error here.*	Is about the **person** ▪ *E.g. Can't you understand when I tell you…?*
Justifies the **views** ▪ *E.g. Consider this from the point of view of…*	Contains **judgements** (good/bad) ▪ *E.g. You don't know what you're talking about.*
Is useful for **development** ▪ *E.g. You did this part correctly, and practice this part some more…*	**Does not** necessarily **benefit** anyone ▪ *E.g. How stupid can you be...*
Takes into account the recipient's state of development, situation, ability to receive feedback, etc. ▪ ***Confirm the situation:*** *Can you explain what you have done…? What do you think about this…?*	**Does not take** the recipient into account, is given only from the evaluator's perspective ▪ ***Assume you know the situation:*** *This is how it is, nothing you say will change my mind…*

Examples

Constructive	Unconstructive/destructive
States **observations** ▪ *E.g. This is what **I observed**... This looks like… I think this is…*	Makes **subjective conclusions / interpretations** ▪ *E.g. This is what **you did**. This went like this because...*
Two-way process, the recipient has an opportunity to respond ▪ *E.g. Do you think that **you understood** what I meant… I hope **I understood** your question correctly...? Could you elaborate...?*	**One-way process,** no chance to answer or reflect ▪ *E.g. This is how it was, and **that's it.***

Goals of the learning assignments

1. **Reading assignments (two)**
   - Read the text so that you can discuss it with your peers in your small group
2. **Teaching observations (two)**
   - Observe a class, focusing on a given theme
   - Make notes and reflect on the observation
   - Give feedback to the teacher observed
3. **Group meetings (two)**
   - Reflect on the previous course session
   - Discuss and reflect on the reading assignment
   - Plan your teaching observation

Learning assignments for the next session 1/3

1. **Reading assignment: DL 12.3.2018**

   Go to MyCourses→Day 1, and find the link for the book:

   Biggs, J., Tang, C. 2011: *Teaching for Quality Learning at the University*.

   Read **chapter 2, "Teaching according to how students learn", p. 16–33.**

   Read the text so that you can discuss it with your peers in your small group

Learning assignments for the next session 2/3

2. **Teaching observation: DL 12.3.2017**
   - Visit an exercise class, if possible a class of one of your group members.
   - Focus on **interaction** in the classroom and note down at least the following: How was it created? What approaches were used? Which aspects you found supported students' learning process? You can add reflections and insights of your own.
   - Be specific, positive and give constructive feedback. **Use the feedback form from MyCourses for this.**
   - Give your feedback to your peer/the teacher, and submit it in MyCourses (Day 1) with the name of the observed peer/teacher removed.

Learning assignments for the next session 3/3

3. Group work for the course

- *Start your group work now:* Arrange two meetings with your small group, one before the next class and the other after (do it now).
- Plan your teaching observation and discuss the article.
- Submit your notes and reflections in MyCourses (Day 1): What did you discuss? What did you observe? What did you think about the article?

Hand in

- Your notes, reflection and feedback given on the observation
- Notes on the group work; one for the entire group (put the names of the group members on the document submitted)

Feedback time:
What was good?
What would you change?