

Teaching assistant as a learning instructor

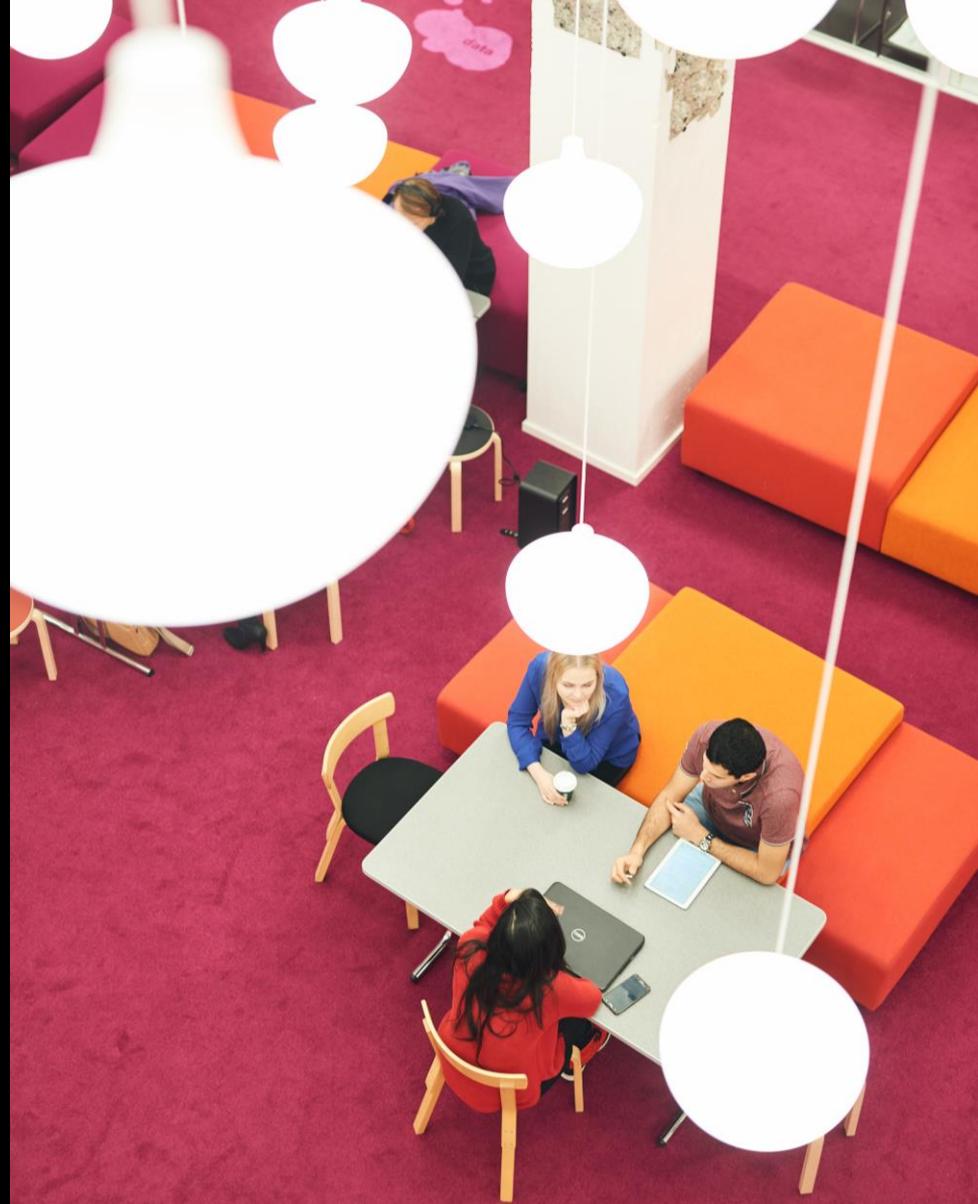
Teaching session 2

27.10.2022

Samu Tikkanen, Maura Ratia, Sara
Rönkkönen



Aalto-yliopisto
Aalto-universitetet
Aalto University



Today's schedule

12.20-13.05 Senior University Lecturer Jari Holopainen & teaching assistant Jan Bergman

13.05-13.15 Reflection on the discussion with Jari and Jan

13.15-13.20 --short break—

**13.20-14.35 Interaction
Feedback**

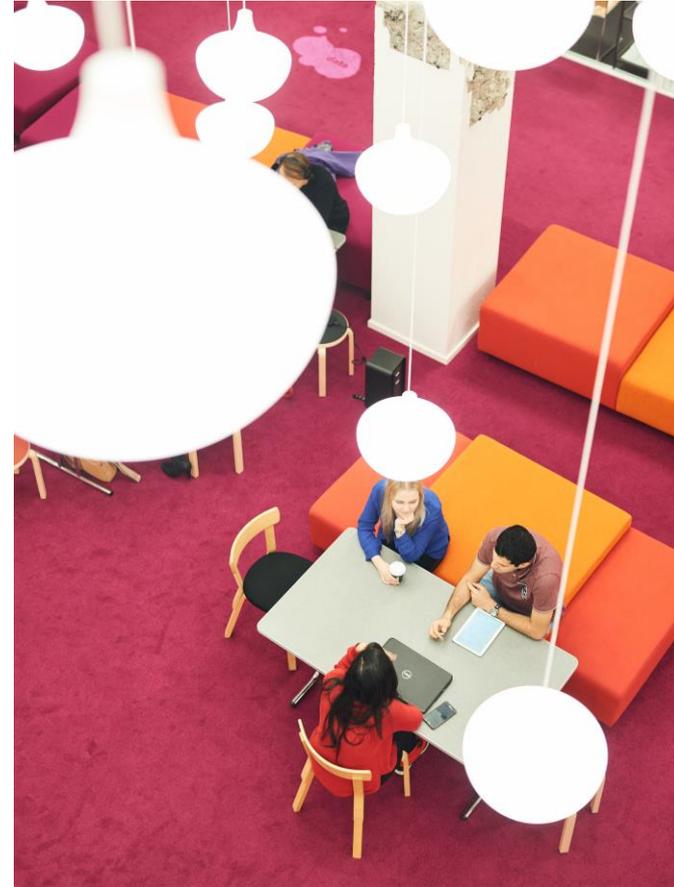
--short break included—

14.35-15.00 Wrapping up the day & assignments for the next time

Learning outcomes for this course

After the course you will be able to

- observe the learning 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



**Senior University Lecturer
Jari Holopainen
&
teaching assistant
Jan Bergman**

School of Electrical Engineering

How can you ensure that those that are too shy to ask for help will have a channel to ask the questions they might have?

How do you encourage the class to interact and ask questions?

How do you deal with students who are having a hard time catching up with the lessons and requirements but who are at the same time really wanting to complete the course?

How do you recognize students' needs?

How do you manage your time with preparations and corrections?

What kind of instructions do you provide to your teaching assistants about teaching and grading? Or is it more assistants' own responsibility to create methods for teaching and grading?

In many courses the teaching assistant is supposed to give hints for the exercises. What is the optimal way of giving hints?

I would like to have tips on how a good teaching assistant manages to guide students towards the right direction without giving a low-effort answer.

What would be the optimal number of students in the group that you are teaching?

Are you also/have you also been involved in designing a course, its contents etc.?

What if you can't answer everyone's questions?

Break. We will continue at 13.20.

Interaction: Why and how?



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

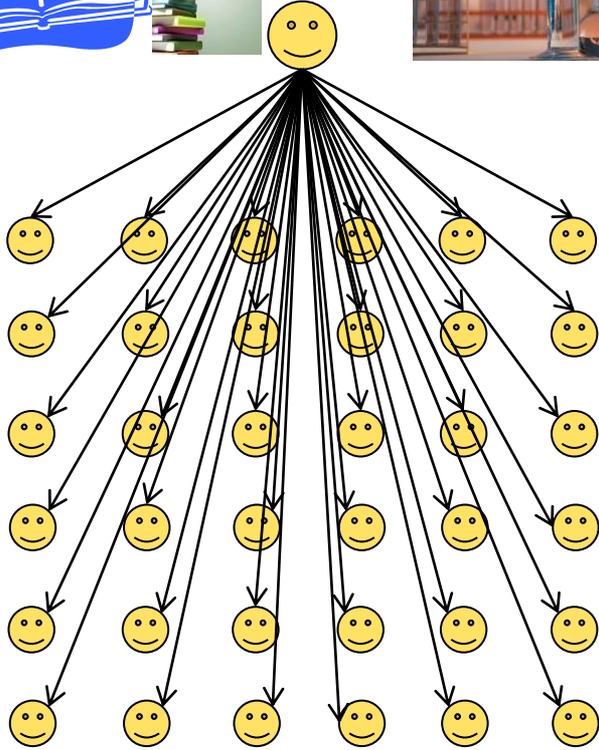
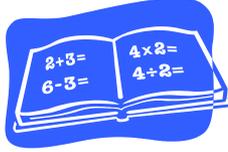
Interaction in teaching: why?

- 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*

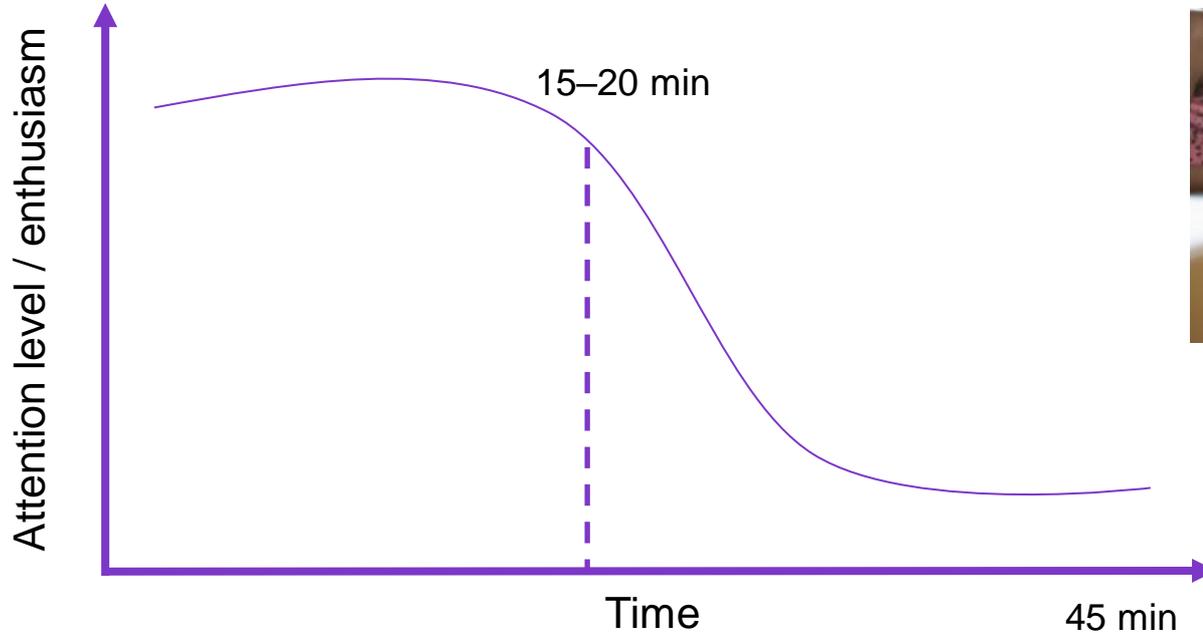
Vygotsky 1972; Bruner 1986; Britton 1970; Wells 1986; Norman 1992; Barnes & Todd 1995; Mercer 1995 (in discourse: Gumperz 1982; Chafe 1982; Tannen 1989; Levinson 2006)



... wenn dieser rausging auch einverge
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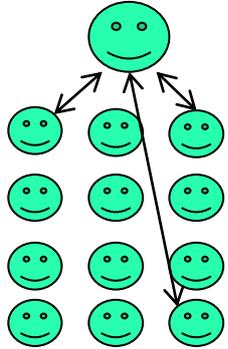


Attention vs. rhythm of teaching

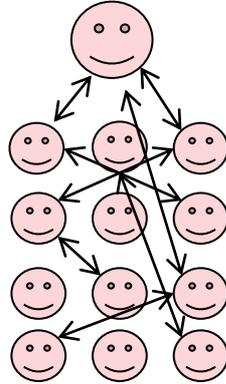


Examples of how to arrange interaction

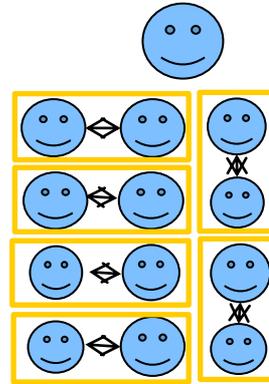
Between teacher and student



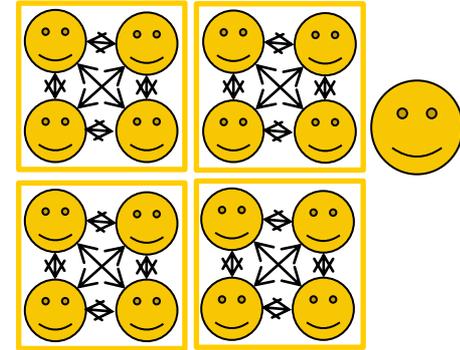
Teacher led group discussion



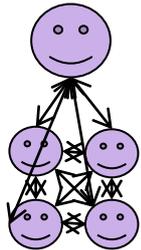
Discussion in pairs



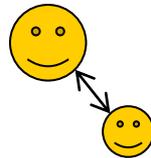
Group discussion; teacher coordinates



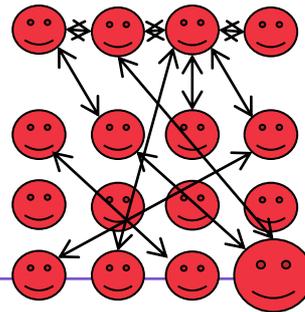
Group instruction



Personal instruction



Group discussion, led by the students



Interaction: to promote learning



Constructive discussion of
difficult issues

Deep processing of
the learned subjects

Fair/equal participation

Positive and safe atmosphere

Remember
the code of
conduct

The importance of listening & questions

Listening is an attitude!

Open questions to stimulate thinking (Aarnio & Enqvist 2002)

Can you explain what you have done so far?

What are you aiming for? (intermediate results in the problem)

How do you consider...?

What is it based on...?

What does it mean...? / What is the meaning of...?

How do you understand...?

What is it all about...?

How do you explain...?

How is it in your point of view...?

What are the consequences of...?

What if...?

What is this... connected to?

How do you feel about...?

What do you think you are going to do...?

What kind of actions...?

Challenges in interaction?

Challenging interaction situation?

- A challenging supervising or advising situation also in teaching often is a challenging interaction situation, taking place between two or more persons
- There are no "right" solutions or a magic tool that would work for every case, but shared practices, and sharing practices, may help
- In the following slides, four steps to approach a challenging interaction situation are presented

Source: [Haastavat ohjaustilanteet CAMPUS CONEXUS.pdf \(helsinki.fi\)](#)

1. Make a difference between observation vs. interpretation

- **Observation:** Student has not submitted tasks, does not show up, fails to do agreed things, does not seem well...
- Potential **interpretations:** The student is *lazy, depressed, has learning difficulties, lacks motivation, is burned out..*



2. Bring up the issue

- Verbalize your observations, do not make interpretations:
 - *"I have been thinking how you are doing.."* /
 - *"I have been wondering.."* /
 - *"I have observed that.."*
- Remember that it is up to the student to set the limits for sharing (e.g., personal life matters)



3. Guide forward, if needed

- If the situation is out of your responsibility, guide forward and make your role clear:
 - *"As a TA, I can help you with... "*
 - *"I was wondering whether you would benefit from..."*
 - *"In similar situations, other students have had benefit from.."*



4. Keep your boundaries and your own role clear

- Remind yourself of your role as a TA
- Discuss with your peers (other TA's) and the teacher of the course
- As a TA you can support and act as a "mirror" and provide constructive, realistic feedback
- Remember that student has the responsibility of their own learning and decisions (also bad ones)



More about communication and interaction*

- **Cross Cultural Communication (communicationtheory.org)**
- **Communication Accommodation Theory (communicationtheory.org)**
- **VUOROTELLEN: Communicating interculturality – Prologos (podcast)**
- **The Principles of Supportive Communication: A Critical Perspective - - Gradinaru (uaic.ro)**

About feedback

Feedback (feed forward)

Constructive

Unconstructive/destructive

Is about an issue/action



Is about a person

Justifies the views



Contains judgements (good/bad)

Is useful for development



Does not necessarily benefit anyone

Takes into account the recipient's state of development, situation, ability to receive feedback etc.



Does not take the recipient into account, is given only from the evaluator's perspective

States observations



Makes subjective conclusions/interpretations

Two-way process, the recipient has an opportunity of responding



One-way process

Examples (1/2)

Constructive	Unconstructive/destructive
<p>Is about an issue/action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Up to here everything looks great... now let me see... ah, there's something we can fix here.</i>	<p>Is about the person</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Can't you understand when I tell you...? What can be so difficult to understand...?</i>
<p>Justifies the views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Consider this from the point of view of...</i>	<p>Contains judgements (good/bad)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>You don't know what you're talking about.</i>
<p>Is useful for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>You did this part very well, now you can practice this part some more...</i>	<p>Does not necessarily benefit anyone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Putting too much emphasis on whether the answers are correct/incorrect</i>
<p>Takes into account the recipient's state of development, situation, ability to receive feedback, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Confirm the situation: <i>Can you explain what you have done...? What do you think about this...?</i>	<p>Does not take the recipient into account, is given only from the evaluator's perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Assume you know the situation: <i>This is how it is, it makes no difference what you say...</i>

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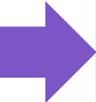
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Examples (2/2)



Constructive	Unconstructive/destructive
<p>States observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>This is what I observed... This looks like... I think this is...</i>	<p>Makes subjective conclusions / interpretations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>This is what you did. This went like this because you thought...</i>
<p>Two-way process, the recipient has an opportunity to respond</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Do you think that you understood what I meant... I hope I understood the question correctly...? Could you elaborate...?</i>	<p>One-way process, no chance to answer or reflect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>This is how it is, it's as simple as that.</i>

Examples (2/2)

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Many types of feedback

- **Oral**
- **Written**
- **Immediate**
 - Reward-based learning strategies
- **Delayed**
 - Working memory

A shift from teacher to student-centred learning

- Peer feedback, group feedback
- Automated feedback?

Offering feedback

- Be appreciative
- Be realistic
- Be sensitive to the goals of the recipient: LISTEN
- Be timely!!
- Be descriptive, not judgemental
- Be positive

When in doubt, lead with kindness.

BREAK

What type of feedback have you received?

Phase 1. Recall a moment when you received constructive or unconstructive feedback and analyse it.

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

Phase 2. Based on your analysis, discuss in pairs.

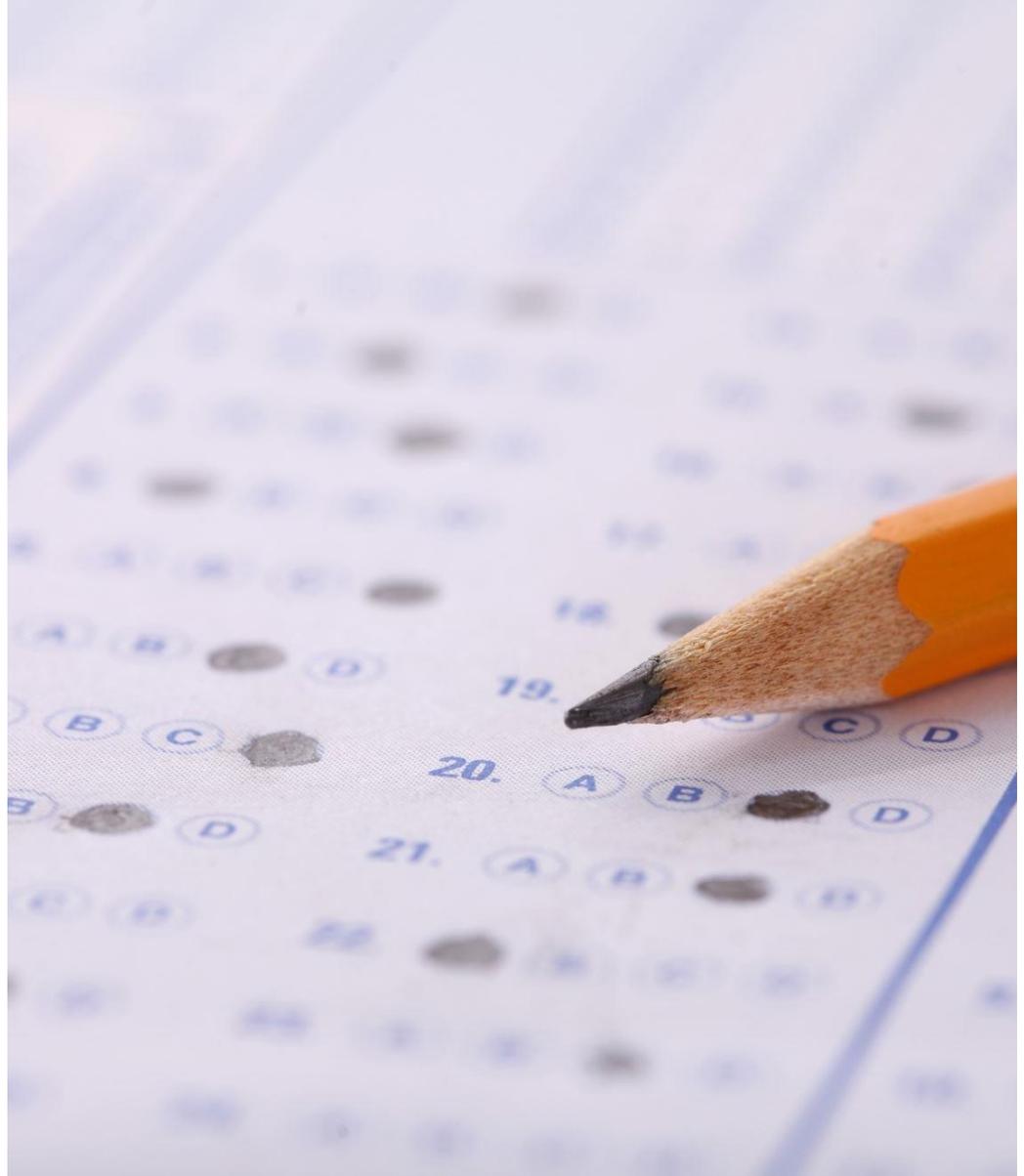
Phase 3. Small group discussion (3 groups)

What type of feedback have you received?

Phase 3. Small group discussion (3 groups) – 15mins

- Reflect briefly your observations of the pair discussions
 - Come up **with 3 points** that you will take with you, in terms of feedback, as a TA
 - There will be a facilitator in each group wrapping up your group findings
-

**Learning
assignments
for the next time**



Learning assignment for the next time

1. Video observation (DL 9.11.)
2. Reading assignment
3. Group meeting & group reflection of the readings (DL 9.11.)

Learning assignment #1

Video observation (DL 9.11)

- Watch two short videos (in MyCourses) of teaching sessions.
- Observe teaching and focus on **interaction**.
- Note down at least the following:
 - How do you see interaction in (recorded) teaching?
 - How was it created?
 - Did the teacher provide opportunities for interaction and discussion? How did the participant(s) react to the activation?
 - How the teacher took into account students who watch remote teaching?
 - What approaches were used?
 - Which aspects you found supported students' learning process? You can add reflections and insights of your own.
- Use the form on MyCourses to write down your reflections. You can add reflections and insights of your own.

Learning assignment #2

Reading assignment:

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 small group and next time in the class.

Learning assignment #3

Group meeting & group reflection of the readings (DL 9.11)

- Arrange a meeting with your small group.
- In the meeting discuss about the article.
- Submit your notes and reflections as a group in MyCourses (Teaching session 2):
Group meeting & group reflection of the readings (DL 9.11.)

Groups for the group reflection

Group A:
Thilini
Etna
Francis
Heikki

Group B:
Richa
Mohammed
Juha
Allu

Group C:
Charles
Dima
Mila
Mehr

Group D:
Kaapo
Marcel
Joe
José

Group E:
Joel
Meishan
Zahra

Group F:
Matilde
Alex I
Tom

Teaching assistant as a learning instructor (2cr)

Course timeline 13.10.2022-15.12.2022

Pre-assignment
DL 10.10.2022

Session 1:
Thu 13.10.2022
12.15-14.00
(campus)
Introduction

Session 2:
Thu 27.10.2022
12.15-15.00
(campus)
*Interaction and
feedback*

Session 3:
Thu 10.11.2022
12.15-15.00 (online)
*Approaches to
learning, levels of
thinking about
teaching*

Session 4:
Thu 24.11.2022
12.15-15.00
(online)
*Different kinds of
students*

Session 5:
Thu 15.12.2022
12.15-15.00
(campus)
*We as teaching
assistants*

Reading
assignment
& group
reflection

Reading
assignment
& group
reflection

Final
feedback

Individual assignments in MyCourses (e.g., questions for visitors)

Video observation (DL
9.11.) VIDEO

Teaching observation (DL 13.12.)
AUTHENTIC

Individual reflecting & processing during the course

Feedback of the day

1. Think of something that you learned today. What would be a take-home message of the day?
2. What would have you wished to hear more on today's session?

Share your thoughts:

Go to: <https://www.menti.com/al4n7bkfagef>

Or in www.menti.com insert the code: 1684 6844

Or use the qr-code:

