

# Teacher Authority in the Classroom: Using Metacognitive Tasks and Cultural Probes for Reflective Self-assessment

TAL 2024  
SDU Odense

Jannek K. Sommer & Elham Kalhor



SDU Business School

# **Jannek K. Sommer, PhD**

Associate Professor and  
program responsible

SDU Business School  
Department of Business  
and Management

T 65 50 34 02

[jaks@sdu.dk](mailto:jaks@sdu.dk)

**SDU**   
Business School



SDU Business School

**Elham Kalhor, PhD**  
Research assistant

SDU Business School  
Department of Business  
and Management

T 65 50 40 45  
elham@sam.sdu.dk

**SDU**   
Business School

# Problem background

- Teacher authority is a pivotal aspect of higher educational dynamics
- Authority is essential for managing classroom environments, motivating students, and achieving educational objectives.
- However, it is influenced by the teacher's gender, nationality, age, accent, and physical condition
  - Younger teachers may struggle to establish authority compared to their older, more experienced colleagues (Kocabas, 2009)
  - Standard accents are sometimes equated with higher competence and authority (Lippi-Green, 2012)
  - Teaching in multicultural environments face challenges in establishing authority if their cultural norms differ significantly from their students (Parrish & Linder-VanBershot, 2010),
  - Even identical teaching performances may be appreciated differently (Arnold & Versluis, 2019)
  - There is potential of bias against women and teachers with non-English speaking backgrounds (Eagly & Karau, 2002)

# Approach

- How can we reduce resistance from predetermined biases, and how can this help increase solidarity towards teachers (and other students)?
- Interventionist approach
  - Metacognitive exercises in class to stimulate self-assessment (Ghanizadeh, 2017; Di Stefano, Gino, Pisano, & Staats, 2015)
  - Cultural probes (Gaver, Dunne & Pacenti, 1999) in order to collect data from both inside and outside the classroom.

# Intervention 1 (30 min)

1. Share your thoughts (10 min)  
Statements about authority on online board (padlet)
2. Draw a map (10 min)  
Map of classroom including thoughts on characteristics
3. Doodle your experience (5 min)  
Experience with exercise and drawings and short notes for 7 days

## Authority

### 1. Share your thoughts (10 min)

Write statements about what makes someone an authority in a given field and share them on the online board here: <https://padlet.com/jaks/authority>

Think about:

- What teacher authority means to you
- How comfortable or uncomfortable you feel challenging a teacher's opinion, and why
- What factors might influence how you perceive a teacher's authority

### 2. Draw a map (10 min)

Draw a map of the classroom and show where authority is (e.g., with the teacher, textbook, peers, or yourself). Include thoughts on various characteristics.

For example:

- Age
- Gender
- Race
- Expertise
- ...

### 3. Doodle your experience (5 min)

Using doodles and short notes, reflect on your experiences in the classes you attend during the next 7 days. Start by making a doodle about your experience with this exercise.

During the next 7 days, please do the following:

- Try to capture your emotional state after each lecture
- Think about how and why you felt comfortable or uncomfortable in the classes you attended.
- Think about how you participate in class discussions and groupwork. Were you reluctant to participate? Why could that be? What role did your teacher have in this?
- How could your teacher motivate you to participate more?

## Authority in the classroom

### Authority

If we take the classroom as an example, the teacher has authority over a student because of their position in the institution, which is gained by proving worthy of it, however, we as students also have some kind of authority as when coming together in a bigger group, we can effect the teachers situation as well. For example, complaining about a class can lead to a reevaluation of the teacher in charge of the course.



### Authority- what does it mean for you

I understand authority in the same way as respect, as in it has to be earned. luckily the teachers here are mostly good

### Authority - what it means for me

- Teacher authority means respect to me. It's not mandatory to be here, so respect the teacher and try to acquire new knowledge



### Comfort in challenging teacher's opinion

I do not feel very comfortable challenging a teacher's opinion, as in my home country that is considered disrespectful and it seems to undermine their authority.



### Authority

#### Teacher authority:

Teacher authority means for me someone you look to for knowlegde. Someone who can teach you something.

#### Challenging a teacher's opinion:

I am not comfortable challenging a teachers opinion, or at least not voice it.

#### Factors influence perceive a teacher's authority:

Their way of behaving with the students. If they also have respect for the students it will increase my respect for them.



### what authority means to me

acknowledgement of a certain power over me be it in knowledge

### Authority

To me, it means that there is respect for the lecturer, which gives them authority over the classroom. Mutual respect between teacher and student also.



### Challenging a teacher's opinion

when I challenge a teacher's opinion, you can be a bit uncertain **because the teacher is typically more experienced and knowledgeable than you.** So I'm either very confident in what i'm about to say, or I challenge the teacher out of curiosity or because I want to see if the theory is valid in practice, for example.

### What teacher authority means to you

The teacher takes a natural lead and guides the class through the learning material. The students challanges the learning material and together, through shared authority, the class rises to a higher standard

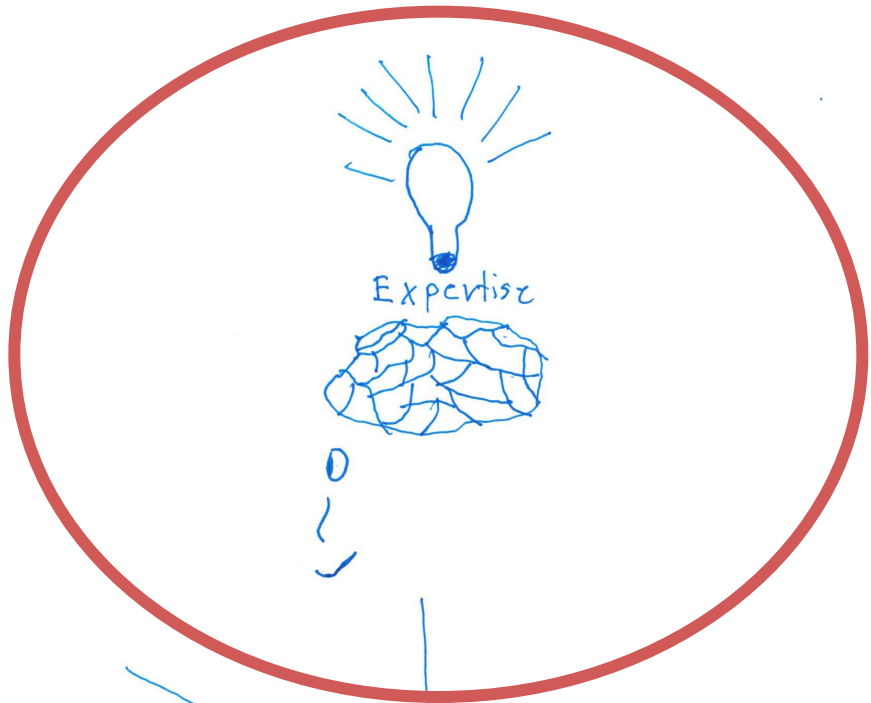


### How

I do not feel comfortable challenging the teachers when i do not agree. I know very little compared to someone who have been studying the topic for years

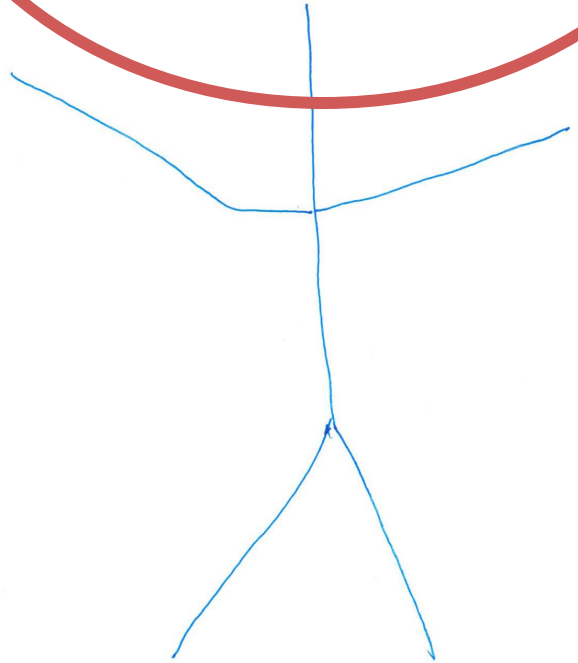


### what authority means to me

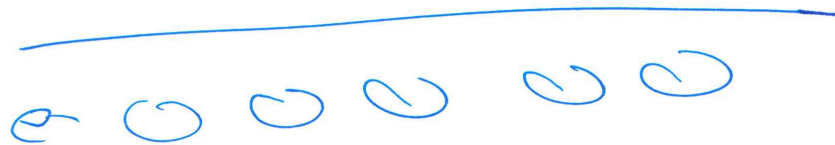
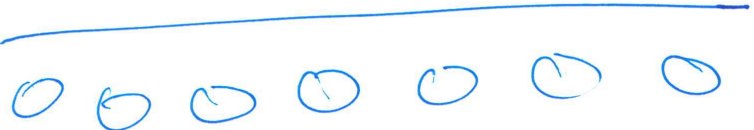
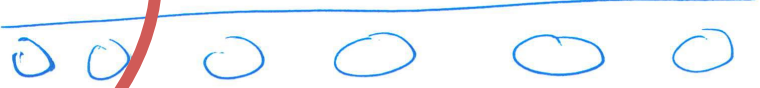
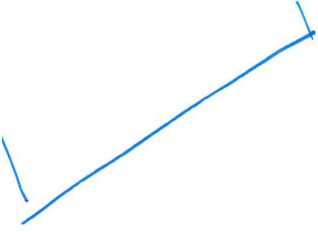


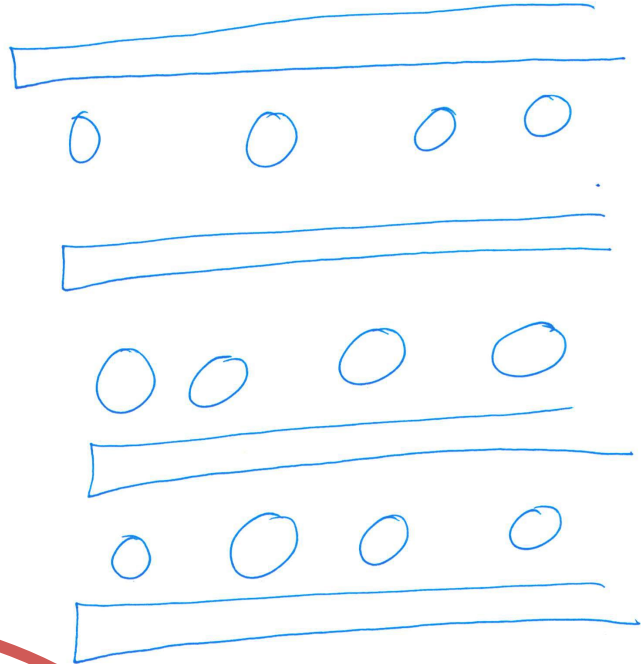
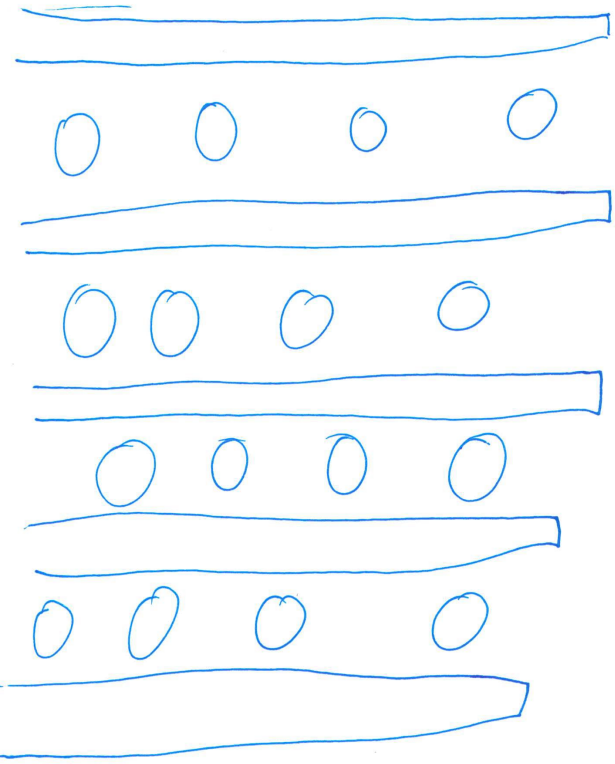
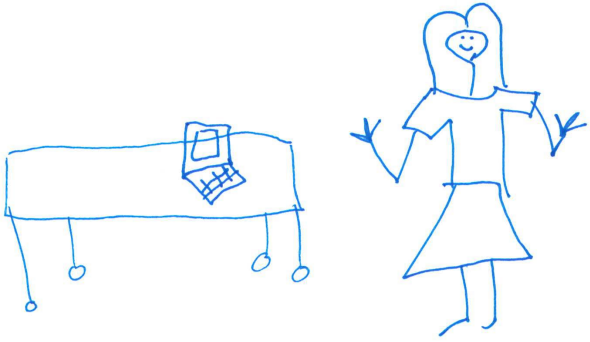
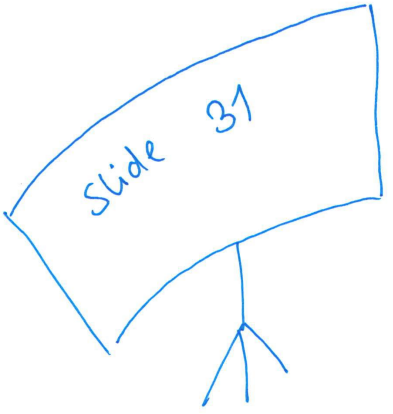
h

0  
~  
~







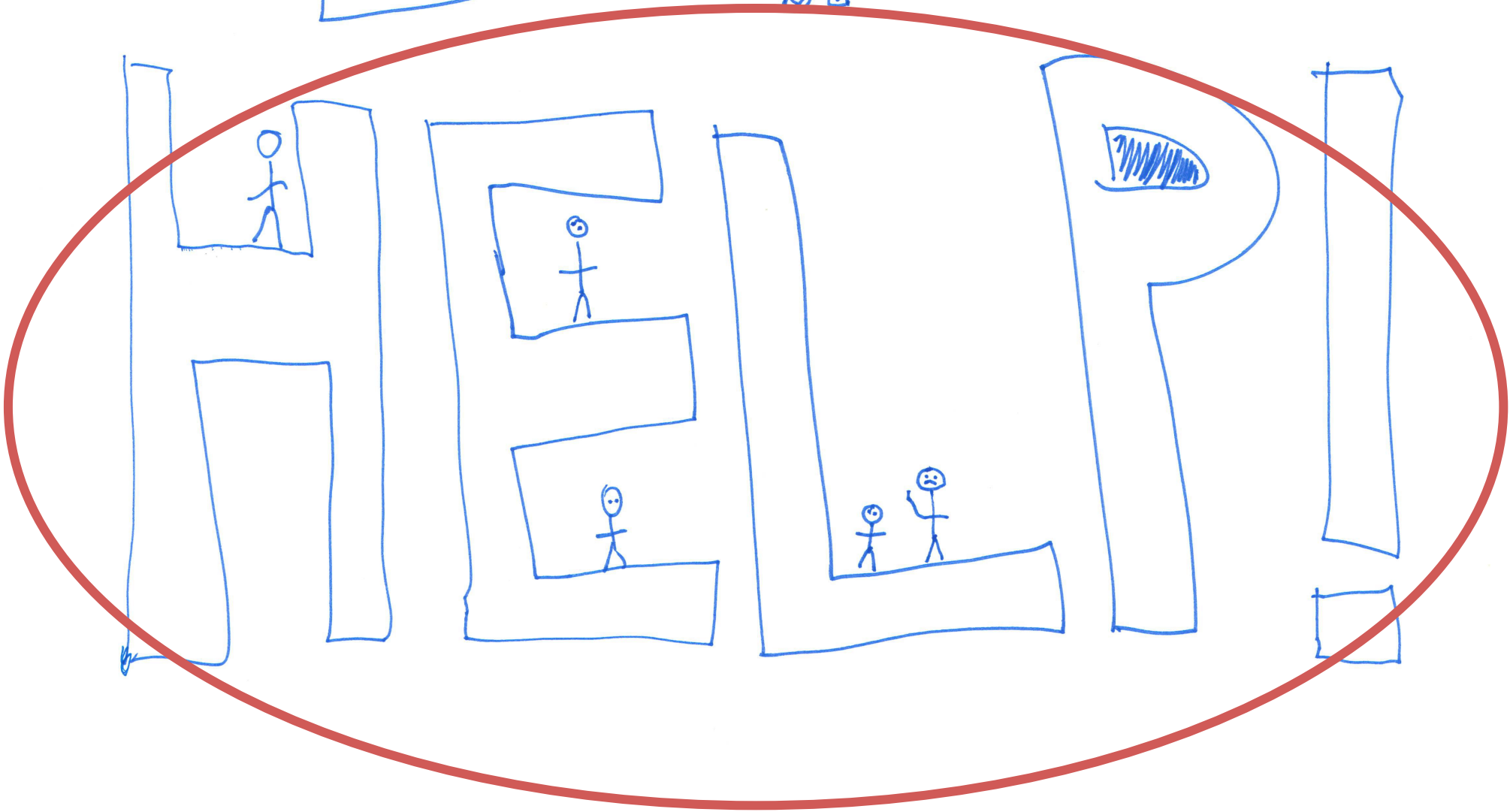


Less Authority

Should be most Authority

more Authority

- ① Age the most
- ② education level/expertise
- ③ Gender - females are smarter



Wisdom

Educate

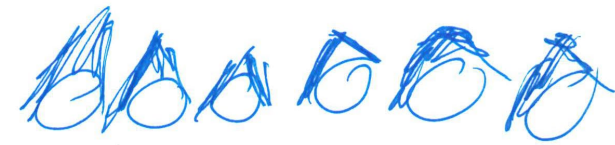
Listen to me!

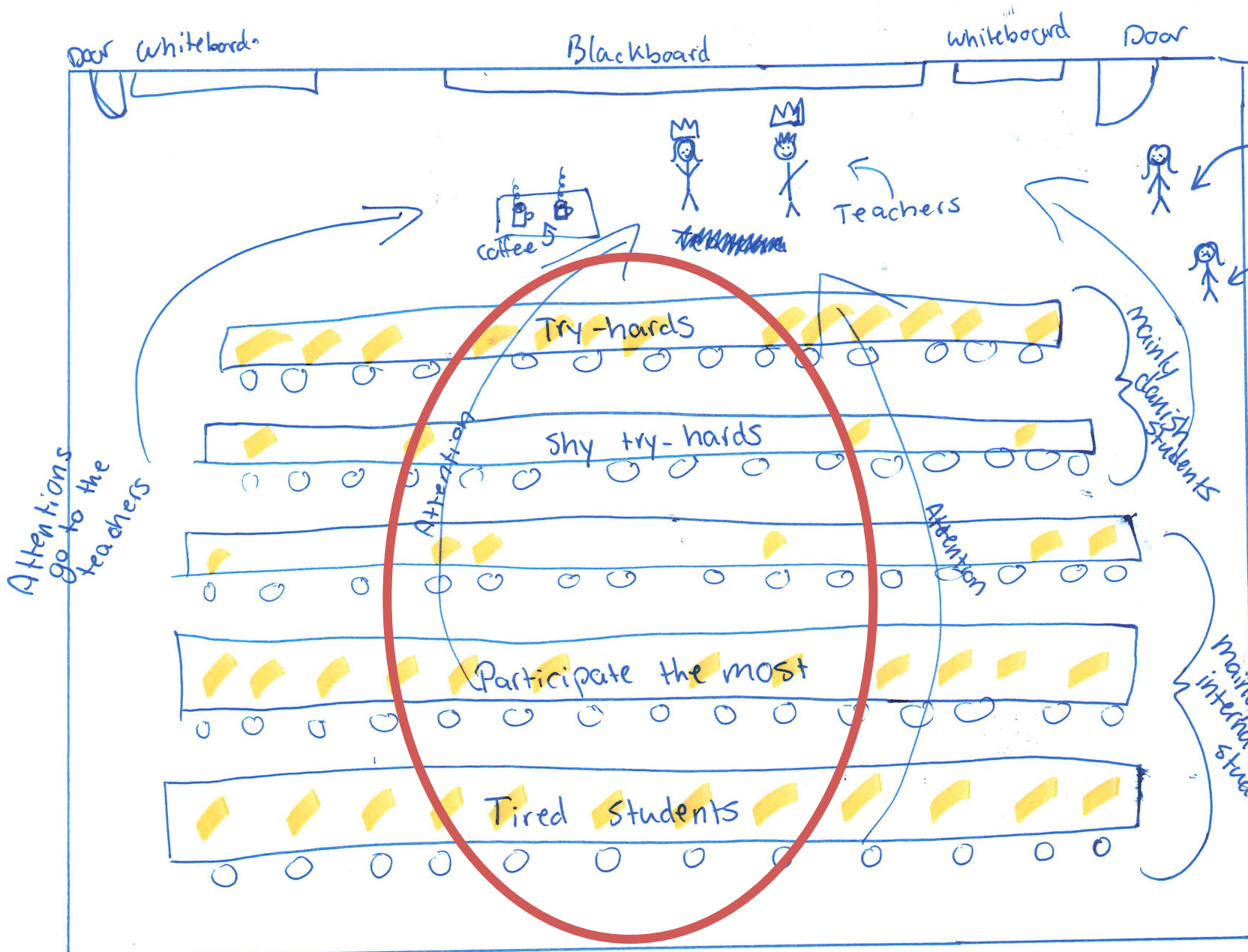


Elham

Respect


Knowledge

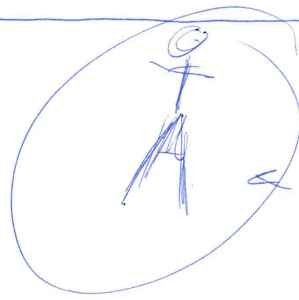




Me, tired after Monday morning but feeling productive (in need of coffee!)

Also me, but after thursdays classes, feeling tired and not as productive :-)

 = present students (most sit in the back)



← Power  
(teacher)

70%

In a classroom  
context

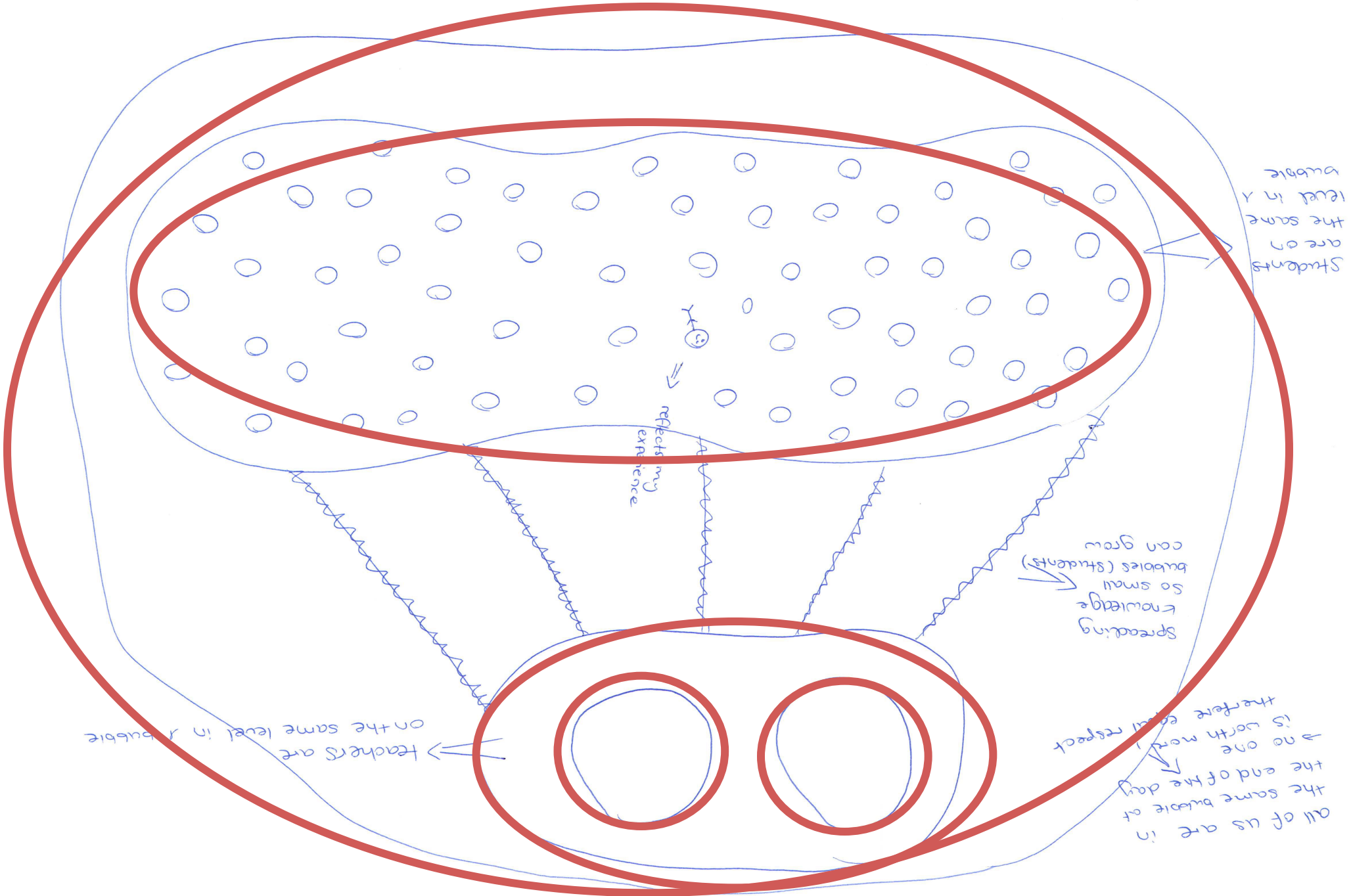


(Students)

Power 30%

If we aggregate





# **Intervention 2 (15 min)**

## **Post-reflection (15 min)**

Reflections on the past week.

Revisit the online board and the map you drew.

## **Authority**

### **1. Post-reflection (15 min)**

Reflect on the past week. You can revisit the online board and the map you drew. Please consider these questions and try to be succinct:

- How did you experience the entire process?
- Where you surprised about something?
- Have you gained new insight about yours and other's opinions on teacher authority? If you haven't, why do you think that is?
- Was the whole exercise a worthwhile task? |



# Preliminary findings/reflections

→ More instruction

→ Hand out journal materials

→ More time for tasks

→ Reflective task too short

→ Strategy for revisiting task missing

→ Access to materials board/drawings

→ Contextual differences (space, course, timing of the semester etc.)

**Thank you!**

