

The psychology of assessment - informing best practice through insights into positive psychology

Alex Thorp

How are you?

What did you bring with you today....?

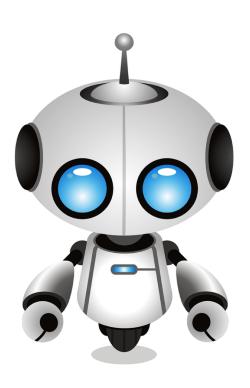


Any classroom or assessment task is a 'psychological experience' for the learner



Embracing our learners

Language learning automaton



Language performing automaton



The depth factor

No one best method – "Success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more **on what goes on inside and between people in the classroom**"

Stevick 1980

Only learner the knows the experience of learning and assessment, whether it is engaging and has meaning. Teachers should facilitate a psychological environment conducive to meaningful experiences that will enable learning.



Some general assumptions....

Pre-service
teacher training
offers little
engagement
with educational
psychology

Teachers rely more on intuition than evidence-based practice when addressing learner psychology

There is a degree of institutionalised scepticism – psychology the remit of therapy or 'happiology'

Learner psychology is talked about but has a limited impact on practice

The pandemic has brought learner well-being sharply into focus









Outline

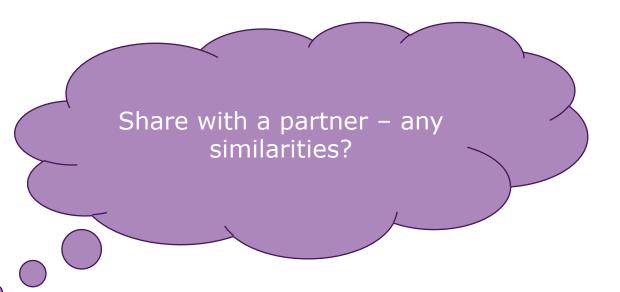
- Contemporary Assessment
- Background Positive Psychology Models
 - PERMA
 - HERO
 - Hope
 - Self-Efficacy
 - Resilience
 - Optimism
- Summary a way forward
- Q&A



Assessment tasks – a 'typical' example

Write a macro-skill and a common assessment task on a piece of paper (summative)

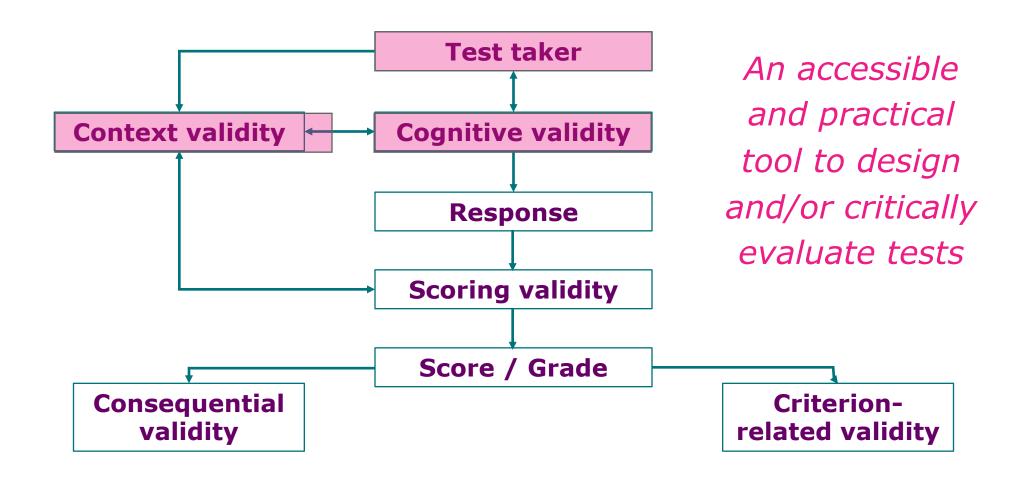
Consider, what is the effect of undertaking this task on the test-taker



- How did you answer?
- Did you review the task positively?
- What framework of reference did you use?

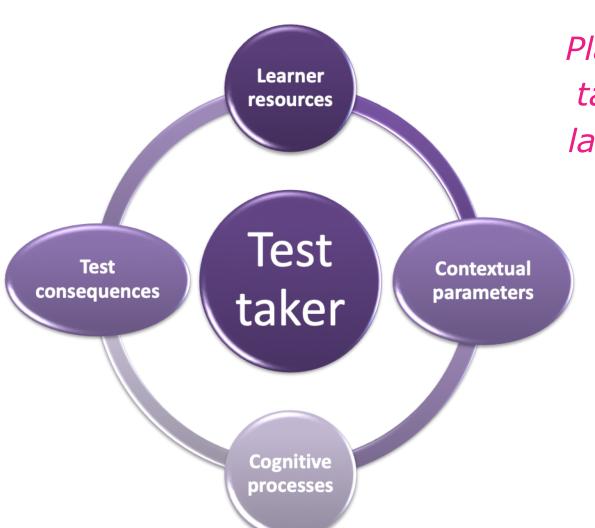


Socio-cognitive framework





Contemporary test development



Placing the individual test taker at the heart of the language testing agenda.

O'Sullivan 2011



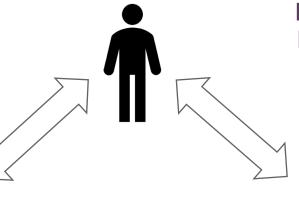
Test or test task – fit for purpose? The three C's

Centrality of learner psychology

Purpose and Format Linguistic context and socio-cultural context to task (Setting and Demands)

Context validity

Candidate When characteristics









What individual brings to test

S Physical /
Experiential /
Psychological

Cognitive processing and information sources called upon – relevance to realworld

Cognitive validity



Assessment tasks

Assessment tasks – a typical example Choose a macro-skill (S/L/R/W) and a common summative assessment task. Write this on a piece of paper Imagine one of your students (or yourself) doing this task Share with a partner(s) – any similarities? How did you answer? Did you review the task positively? Did you review the task positively? What framework of reference did you use?

Do contemporary tests really place the test taker at the heart of the test taking agenda?

Are our teachers really equipping Ss to achieve their best in assessment scenarios?

In assessment there is often a disconnect between theory and practice.



And in the classroom....?





The psychology landscape

The educational psychology landscape

Behaviourist

'Conditioning / stimulus

response - e.g. audio lingual

Skinner: reinforcement



Information Processing

Working memory

Baddeley: Phonological loop

Constructivist

Construct meaning from experience

Piaget: assimilation / accommodation

Bruner: personal construct theory

Kelly: Construct from

hypothesis **Salmon:** Social constructivism

Humanist

'Holistic – feeling emotional'

Maslow: Hierarchy of needs, self-actualisation

Rogers: fully functioning pers

functioning person **Hamachek**: learning

= identity

Stevick: 'what goes

on inside and between...'

Socioculturalist

'Individual in collaboration, learning a social process'

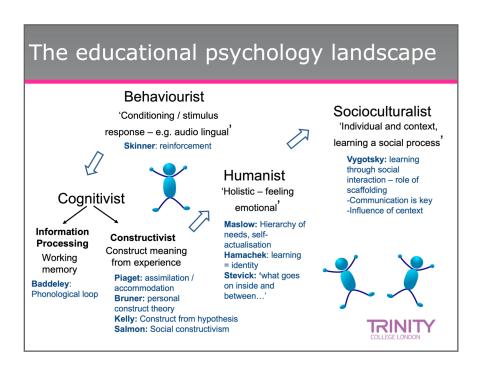
Vygotsky: learning through social interaction – role of scaffolding

- -Communication is key
- -Influence of context





The educational psychology landscape



Complexity perspective

'Individual and context, the learner in the environment – highly complex'

Gibson: The person and the context – affordances

Lier: interconnections between learner, their perceptions, actions and contexts

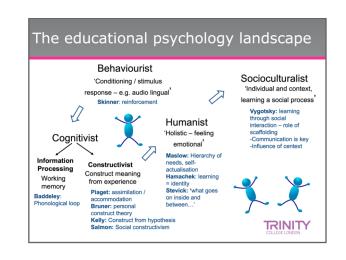
- Recognition of complexity, futility of prescriptions
- -Complex systems interact and are in flux



The educational psychology landscape

Deficit perspectives

'Addressing
dysfunction –
reducing misery and
despair'





Positive Psychology

Potentiality perspectives

'Facilitate a meaningful life, realise potential, maximise well being'

Positive psychology in language assessment

What is positive psychology?

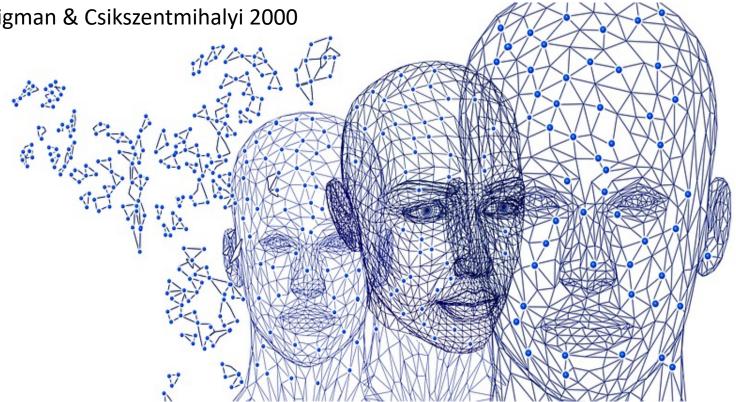
Evidenced impact on SLA and assessment

"... the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on multiple levels that include the biological, personal, relational, institutional, cultural, and global dimensions of life.

Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000

"... Positive psychology has an added dimension of practice and application that can further inform both the teacher and learner development sides of SLA.

McIntyre et al 2016



Application of Positive psychology

Task and test design

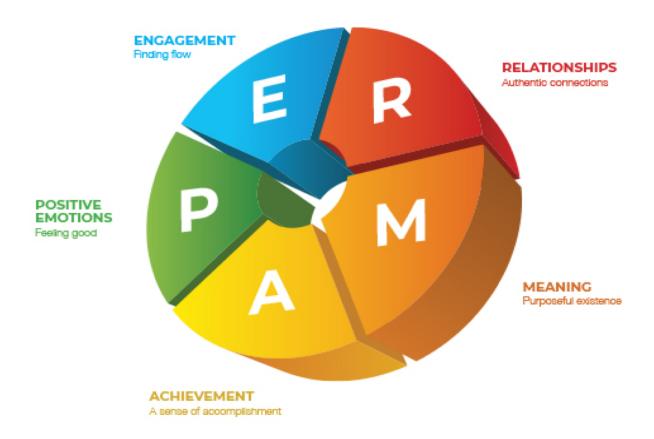
1: PERMA

Learner development

2: HERO



1: PERMA model of well-being (Seligman 2011)



Classroom and assessment application

PERMA provides tools to truly engage in humanistic language teaching (Helgesen 2016)



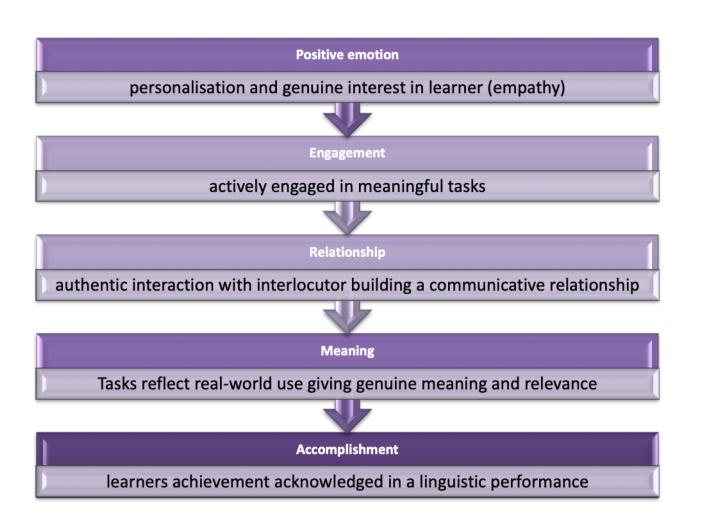
Evidence-based teaching – Effect sizes

Positive emotion
Engagement
Relationship
Meaning
Achievement

1.	Generating graphical representations	1.24
1.	Note Making (not taking)	0.99
7.	Feedback	0.81
	Whole Class Interactive Teaching	0.81
7.	Review	0.75
→ .	Peer Assessment	0.63
	Challenging Goals	0.59
→ .	Co-operative learning	0.59
→ .	Problem solving (deep learning)	0.54
→ .	Advance Organizer	0.46

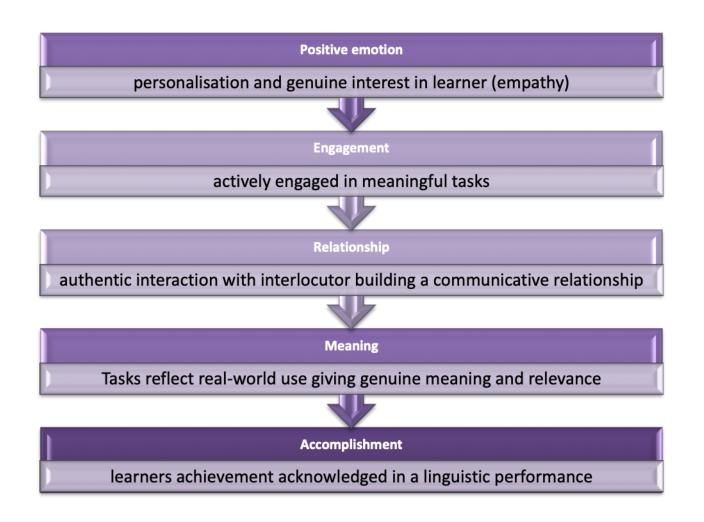


PERMA model applied to assessment



Given topic to give monologic performance	Select personal topic for dialogic discussion

PERMA model applied to assessment



Given topic to give monologic performance	Select personal topic for dialogic discussion
× /?	√
× /?	√
× /?	√
× /?	V
✓	√

1: PERMA model applied to assessment

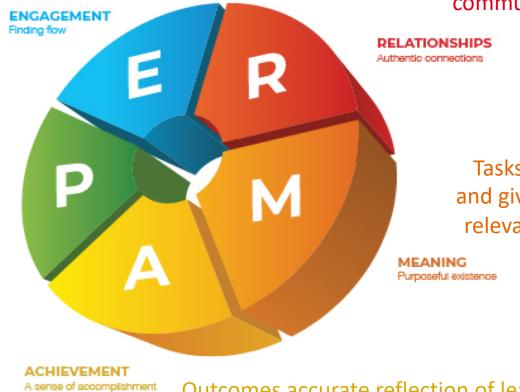
Learners actively engaged in tasks relevant to life –

a co-constructed discourse relating to

the individual

Setting at ease and personalisation together with genuine interest in learner lead to a positive affective experience – scope for formative feedback





Tasks require authentic interaction with interlocutor building a communicative relationship

Tasks reflect real-world use and give genuine meaning and relevance to life of candidate

Outcomes accurate reflection of learners achievement in a linguistic performance – including formative feedback

2: HERO model - Positive Psychological Capital

Hope

Positive Organisational Behaviour [Luthans 2002]

'psychological states that are open to development and have impact on desired attitudes, behaviours, and performance' What met scientific inclusion criteria:

Four psychological 'resources'

Not personality traits but dynamic learning processes





HERO – bridging theory and practice

Developed psychological capital can enhance language learning and performance

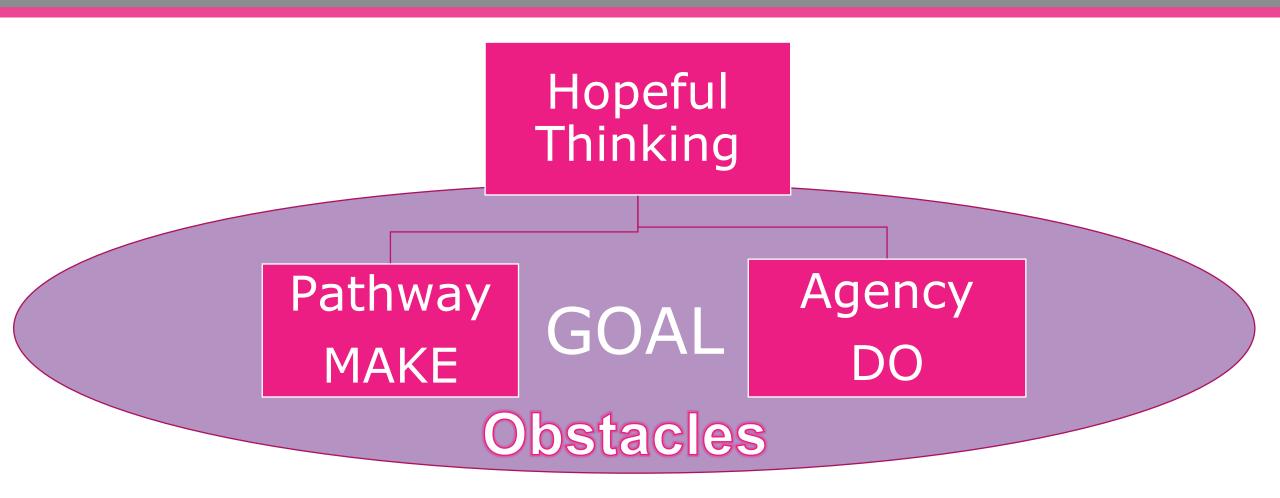
There are tools to audit – but focus needed to develop not measure

Teachers can foster psychological capital – no silver bullet

Articulation and dialogue – explicit understanding crucial [The question is how]



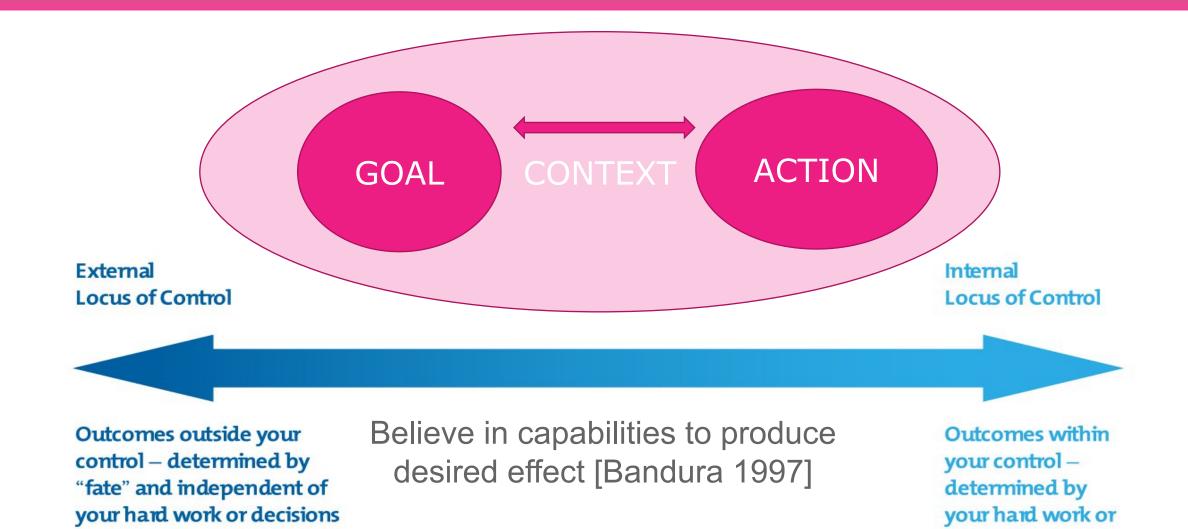
Hope – Definition



Goals target of mental action sequences [Snyder 2000]



Self-Efficacy – Definition



decisions

Optimism- definition

A global expectation that more good (desirable) things than bad (undesirable) will happen in the future (Scheier and Carver, 1985).

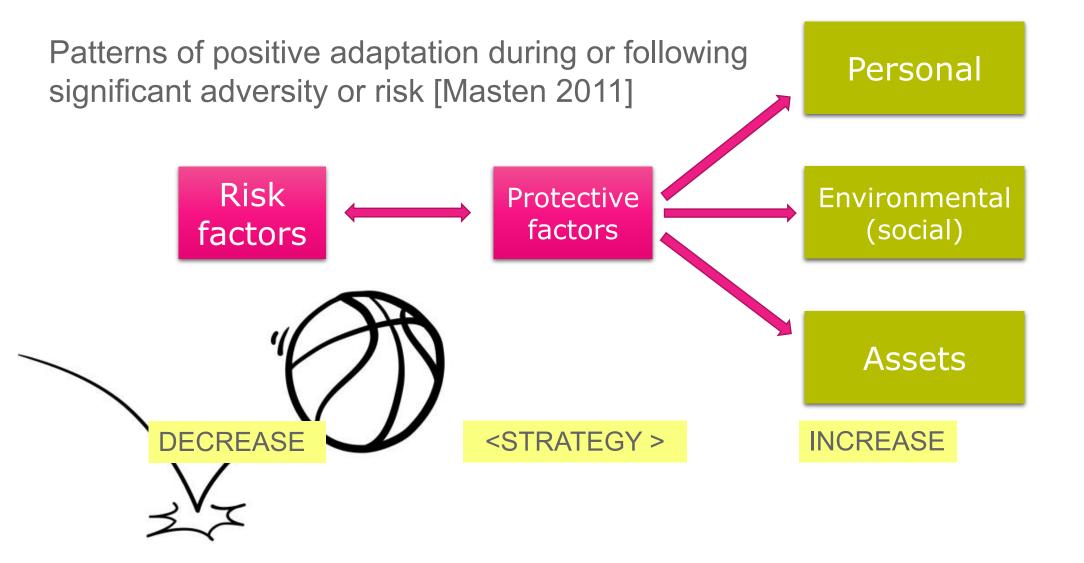
Are you Optimistic?

Optimist coping strategies	Pessimist coping strategies
Seek to solve problem	Wishful thinking
Acceptance	Denial
Positive re-framing	Distraction
Humour	Escapism
	Giving up

Carver et al 2011

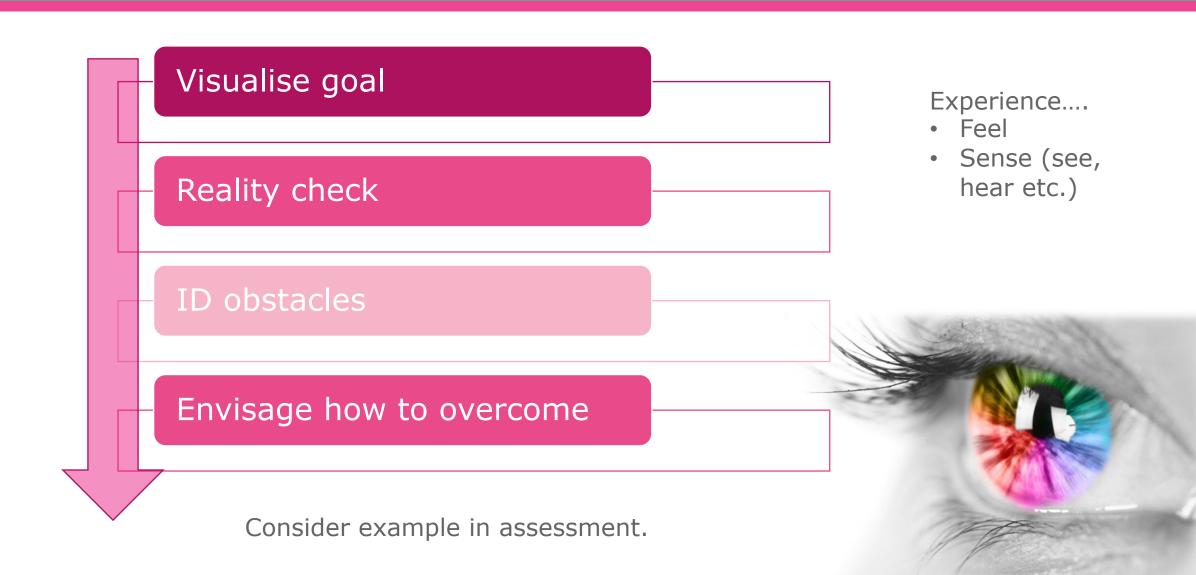


Resilience - Introduction





HERO in the classroom - Hope



Hope Stories Activity (individual or group)

Stories - high-hope children [McDermott, et al 1997]

Discussing hope and goal-setting

Hearing stories about high-hope children

Identify the protagonist's goals and methods to reach them

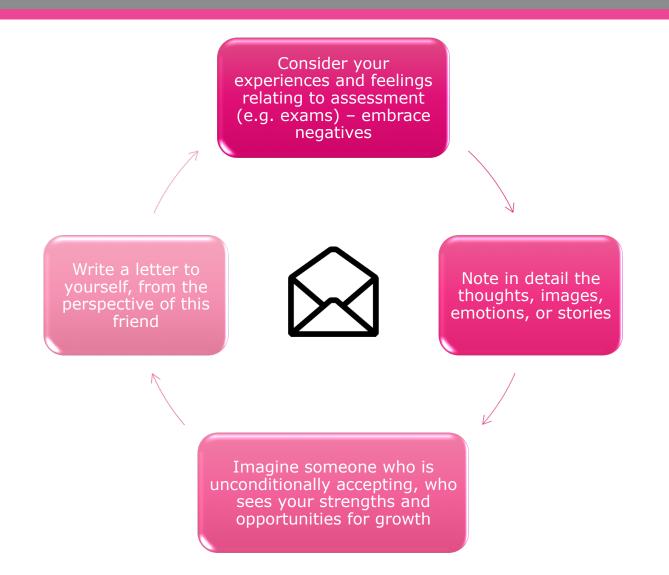
Recontextualise to their own expereince

Contextualise – local assessment scenario

Personalise – own assessment scenario



HERO in the classroom - Resilience



Emergent themes of encouragement, support, compassion and acceptance.

Review periodically – near assessments.



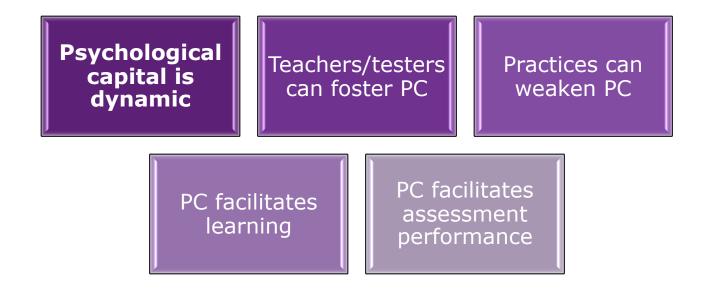
HERO in the classroom - Optimism



Consider problem / challenge- review emotive output and consider impact on outcome with each perspective. We have agency to choose!



HERO Summary - Positive Psychological Capital



Hope

Self-Efficacy

Resilience

Optimism

Classroom and assessment practice



Summary – The psychology of assessment

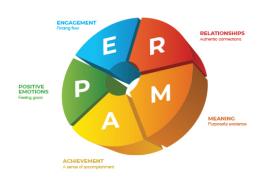
Testing: move towards centrality of test-taker

Awareness of learner as psychological entity

Contemporary psychology models inform practice Assessment to engage psychological individual

Test-taker: fulfills true potential in performance

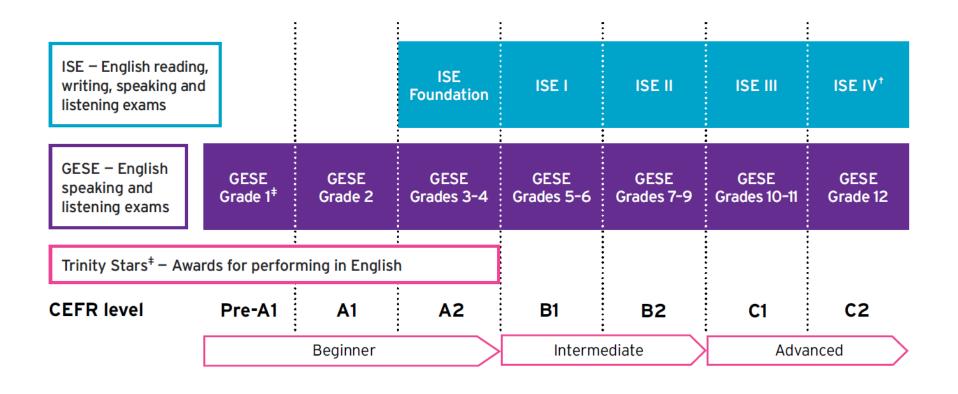
- Positive psychology Facilitate NOT fix.
- Engage aspects of positive psychology in everyday practice to fully engage learner
- Help foster psychological capital to help optimise learning and performance







A personalised assessment experience



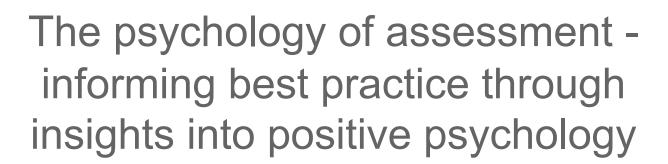
CEFR = Common European Framework of Reference



[‡]Not mapped to the CEFR |

[†]ISE IV (C2) has a different format





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