



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

Alex Thorp

How are you?

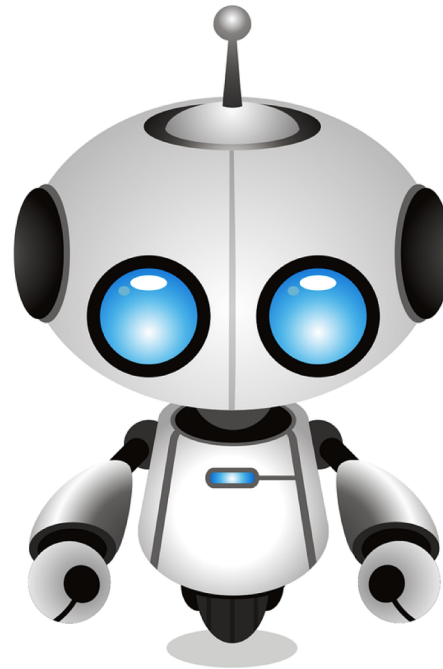
What did you bring with you today.....?



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)

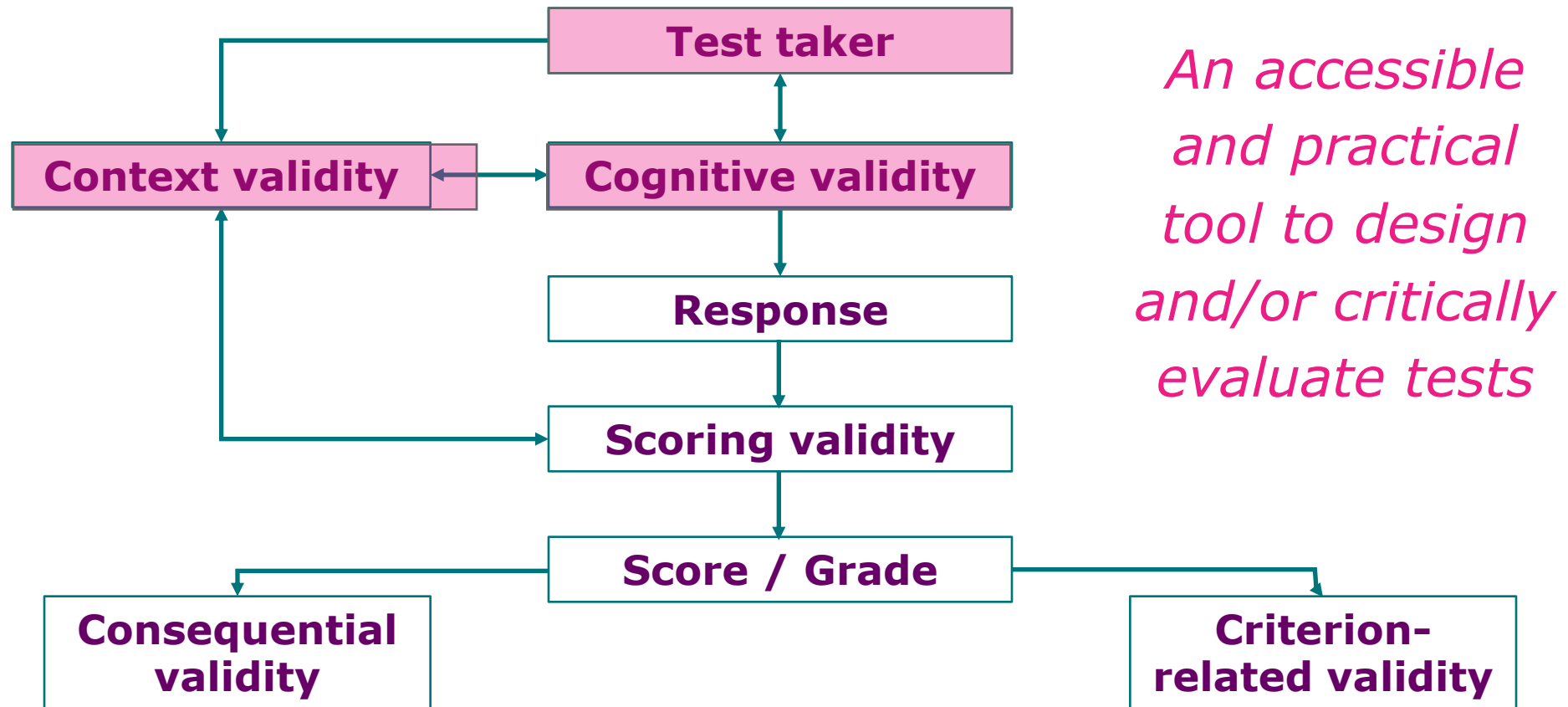
Consider, what is the effect of undertaking this task on the test-taker



Share with a partner – any similarities?

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

Socio-cognitive framework



(Weir 2005f)

Contemporary test development

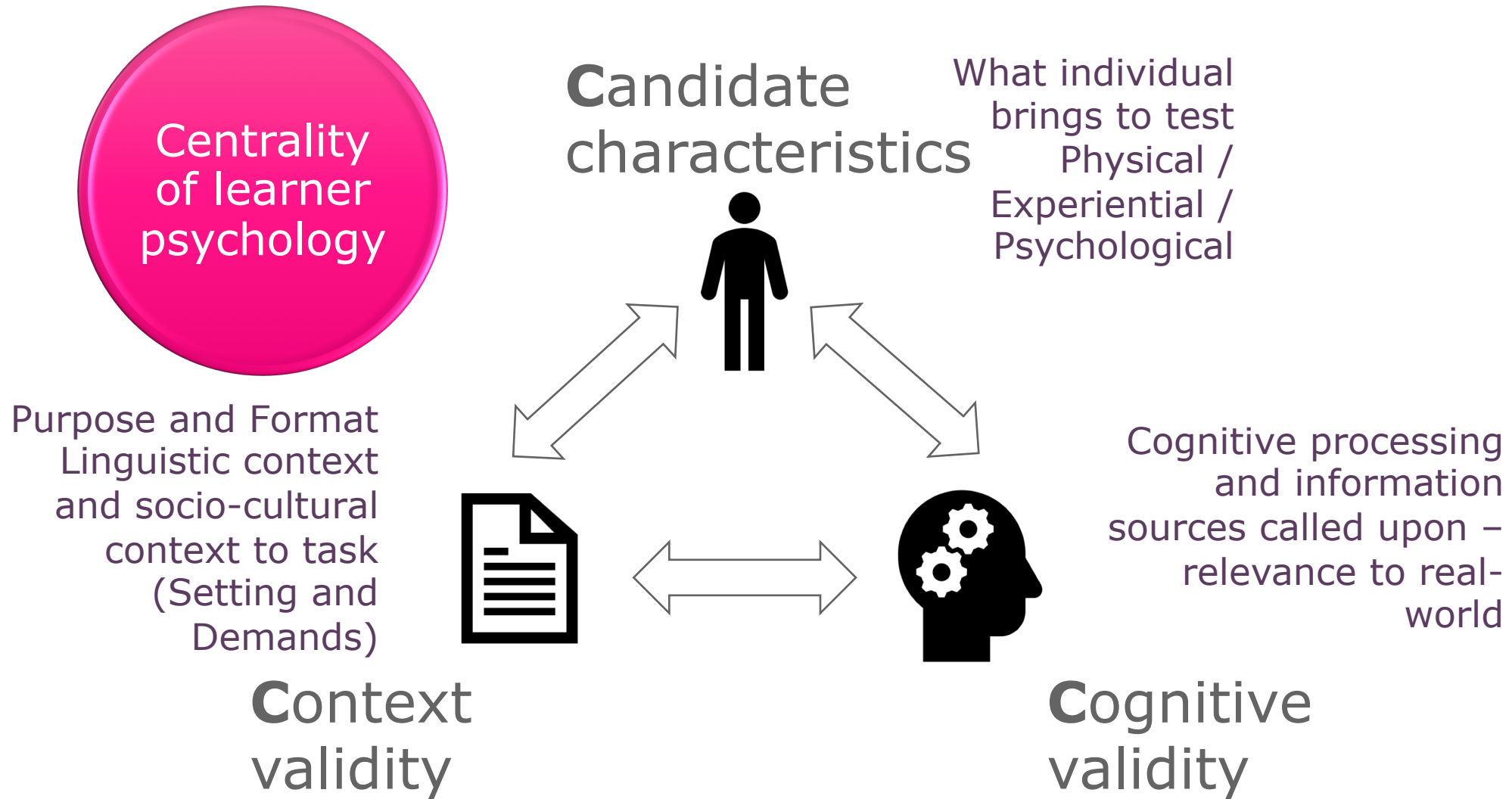


Placing the individual test taker at the heart of the language testing agenda.

O'Sullivan 2011

Test or test task – fit for purpose?

The three C's



Taylor 2017

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?

In undertaking the task, what is the effect on the test-taker?

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

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



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

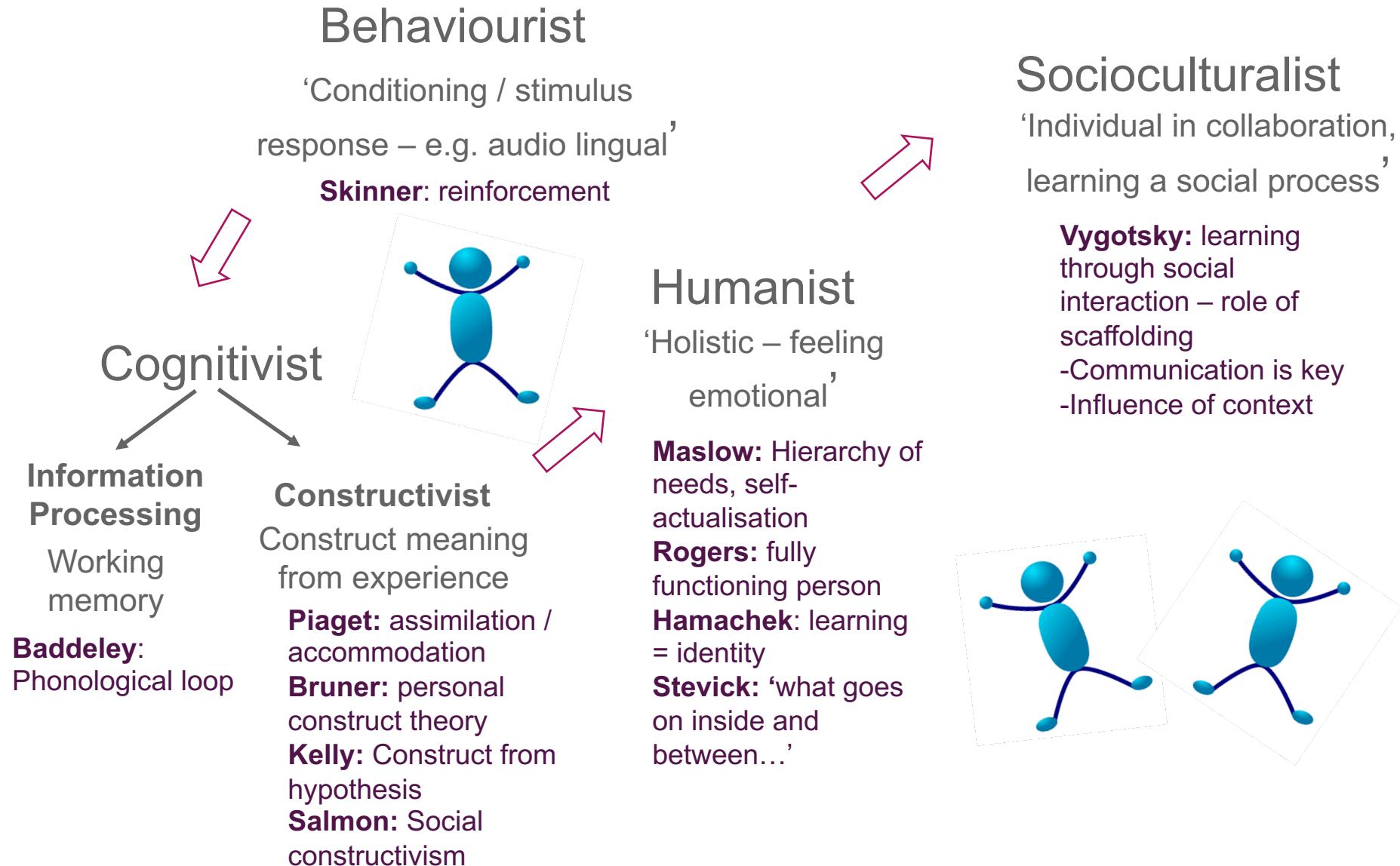
Are our teachers really equipping Ss to achieve their best in assessment scenarios?

And in the classroom.....?



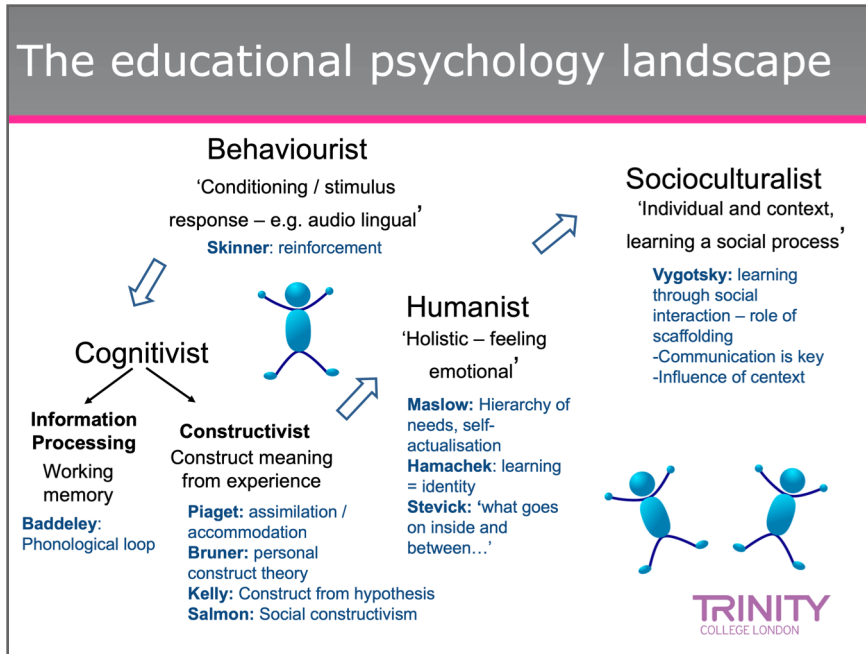
The psychology landscape

The educational psychology landscape



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

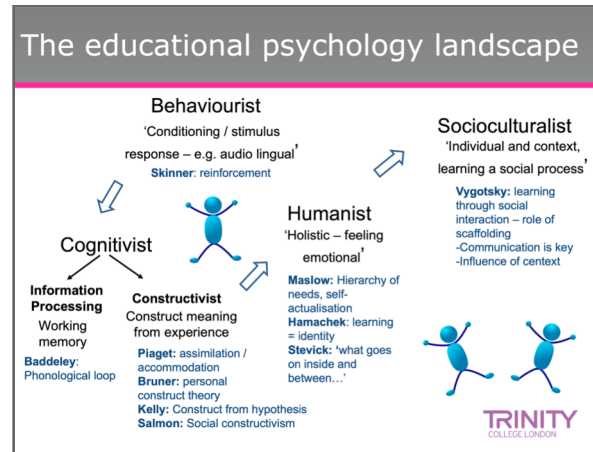
-Recognition of complexity, futility of
prescriptions

-Complex systems interact and are
in flux

The educational psychology landscape

Deficit perspectives

‘Addressing dysfunction – reducing misery and despair’



Potentiality perspectives

‘Facilitate a meaningful life, realise potential, maximise well being’

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology in language assessment

What is positive psychology?

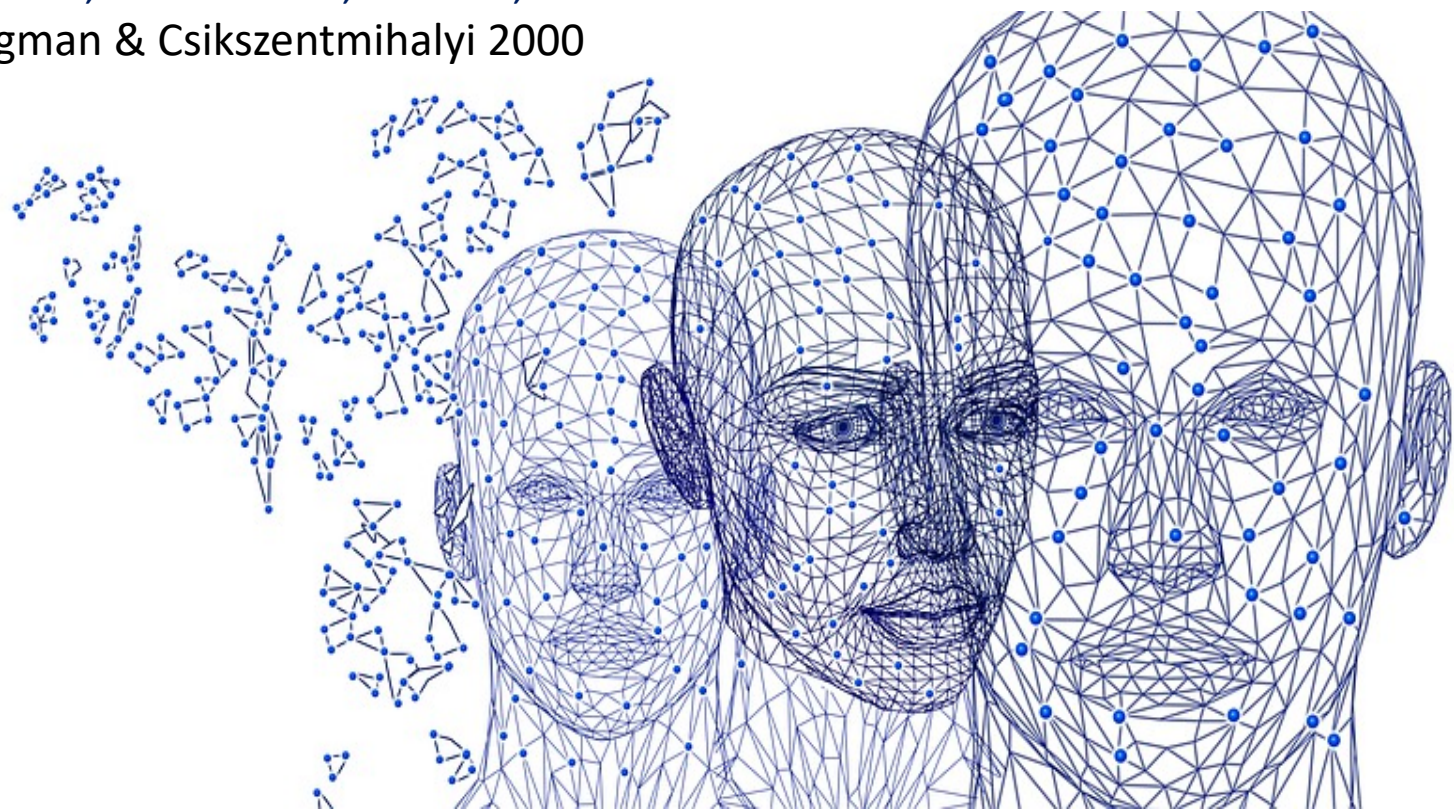
Evidenced impact on SLA and assessment

"... 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.

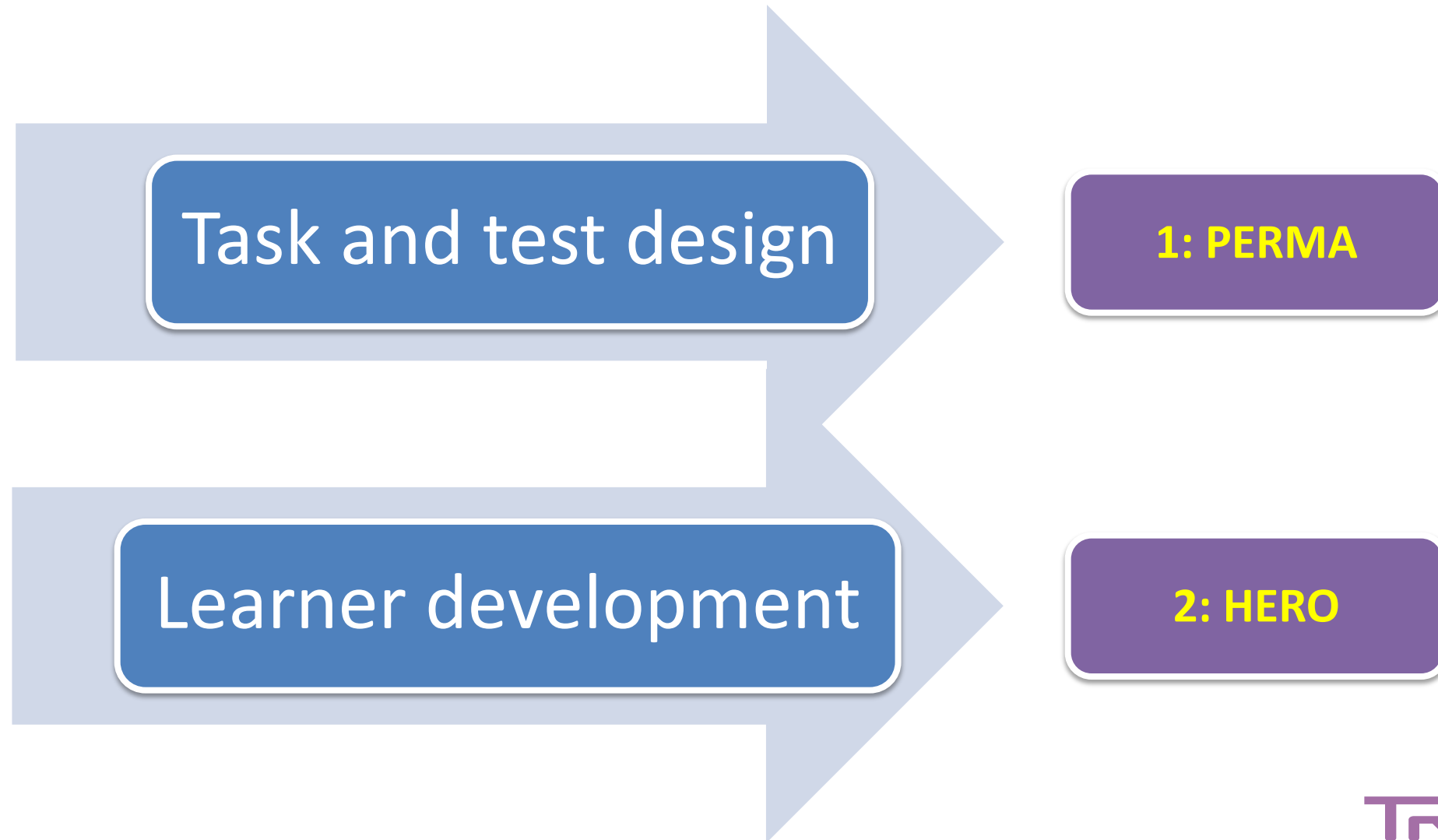
Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000

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

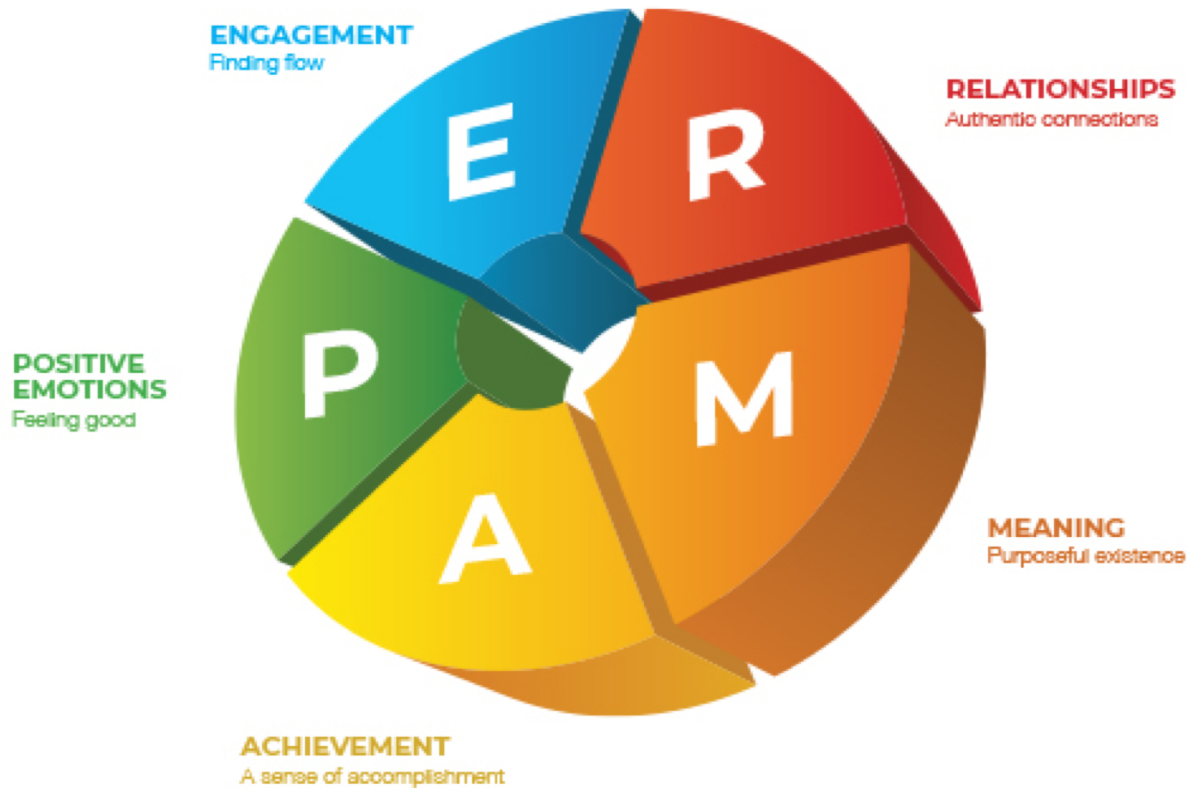
McIntyre et al 2016



Application of Positive psychology



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

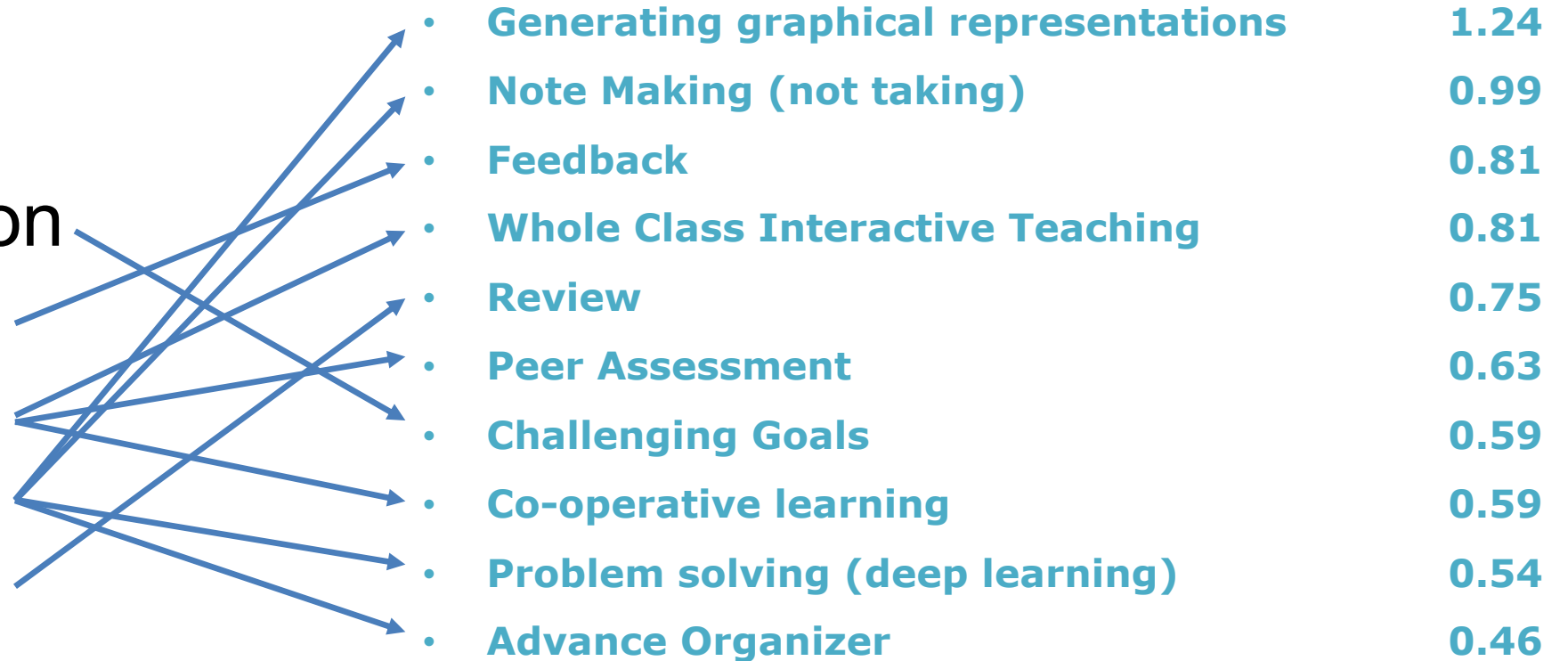
Positive emotion

Engagement

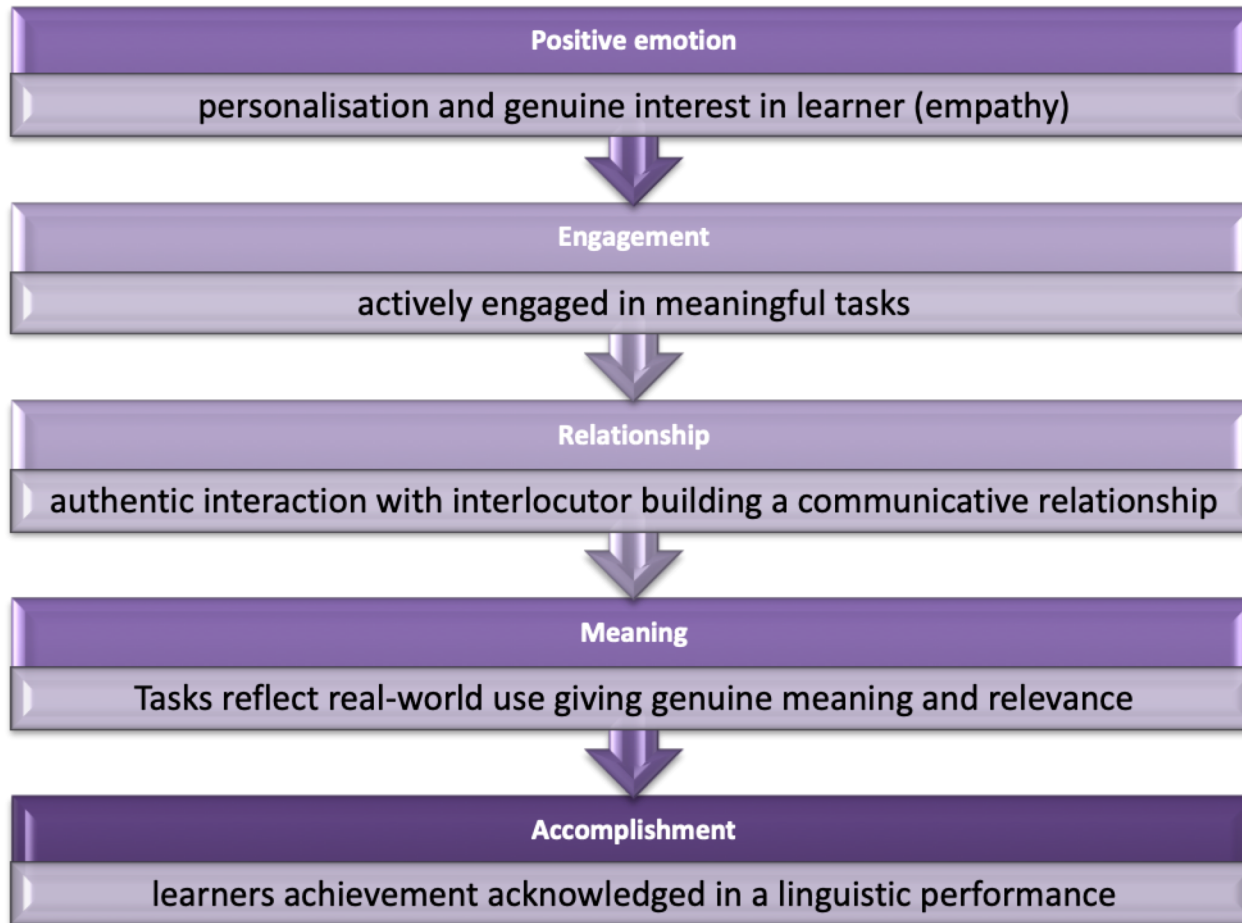
Relationship

Meaning

Achievement

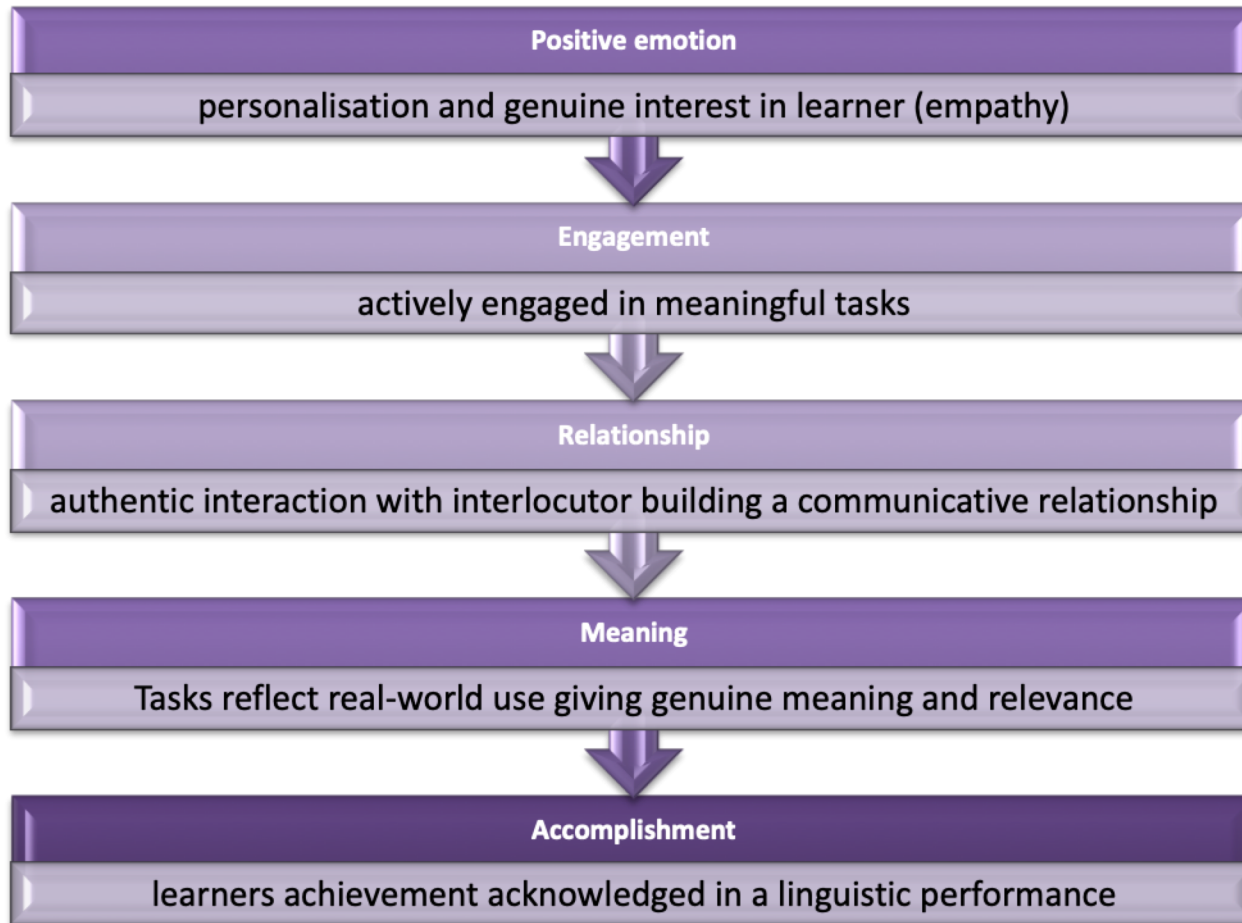


PERMA model applied to assessment



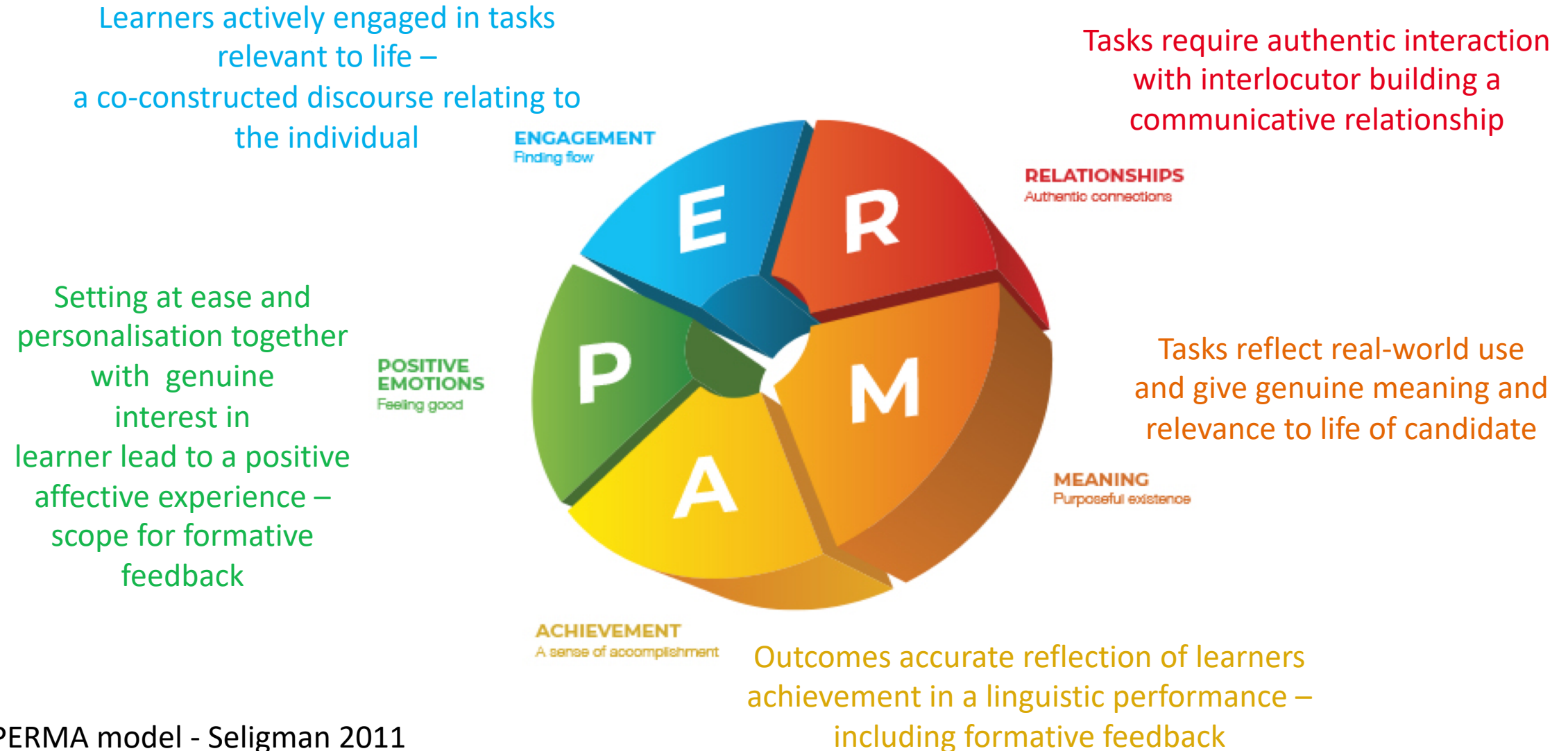
Given topic to give monologic performance	Select personal topic for dialogic discussion

PERMA model applied to assessment



Given topic to give monologic performance	Select personal topic for dialogic discussion
✗ / ?	✓
✗ / ?	✓
✗ / ?	✓
✗ / ?	✓
✓	✓

1: PERMA model applied to assessment



2: HERO model - Positive Psychological Capital

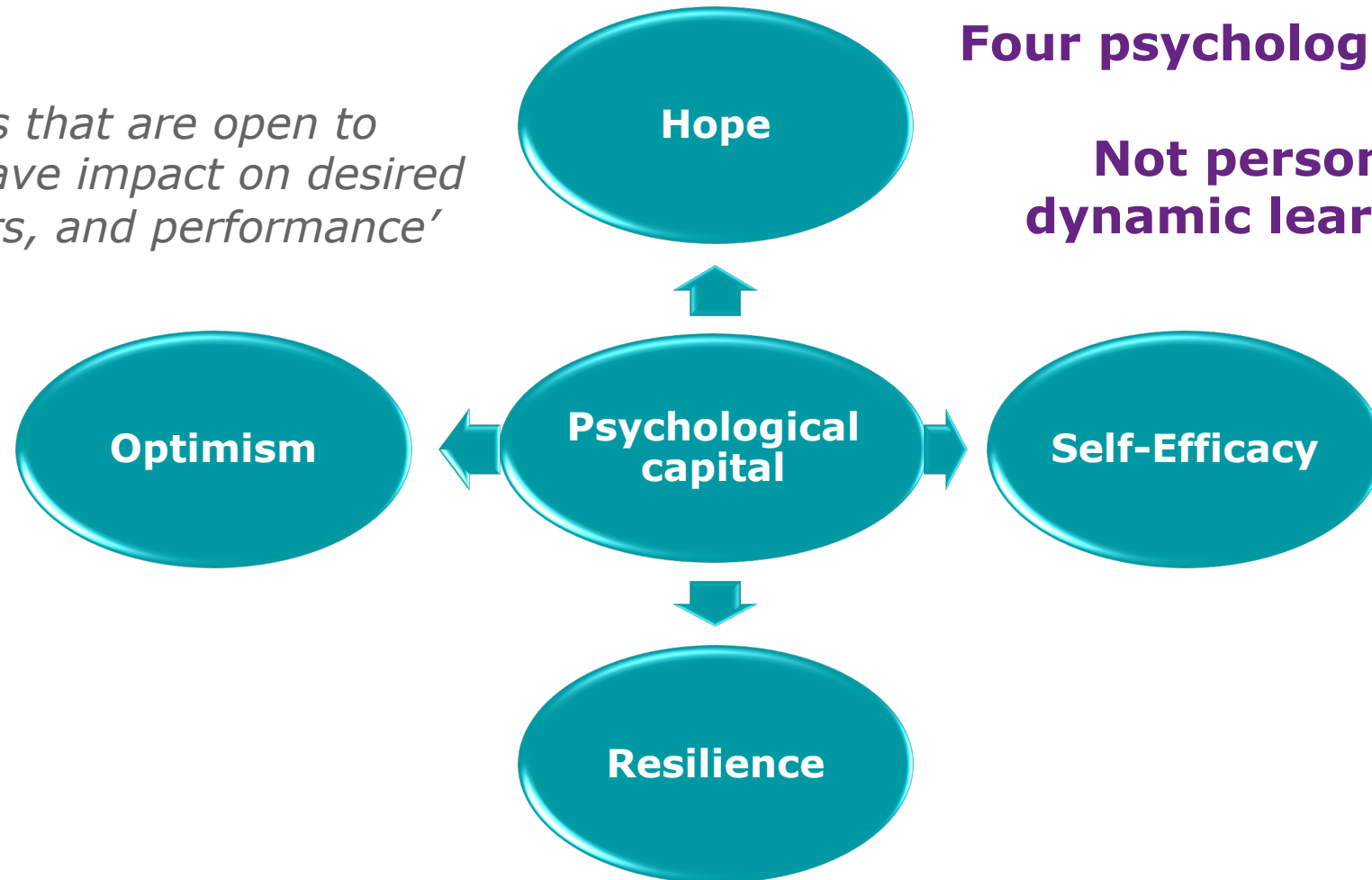
Positive Organisational Behaviour
[Luthans 2002]

'psychological states that are open to development and have impact on desired attitudes, behaviours, and performance'

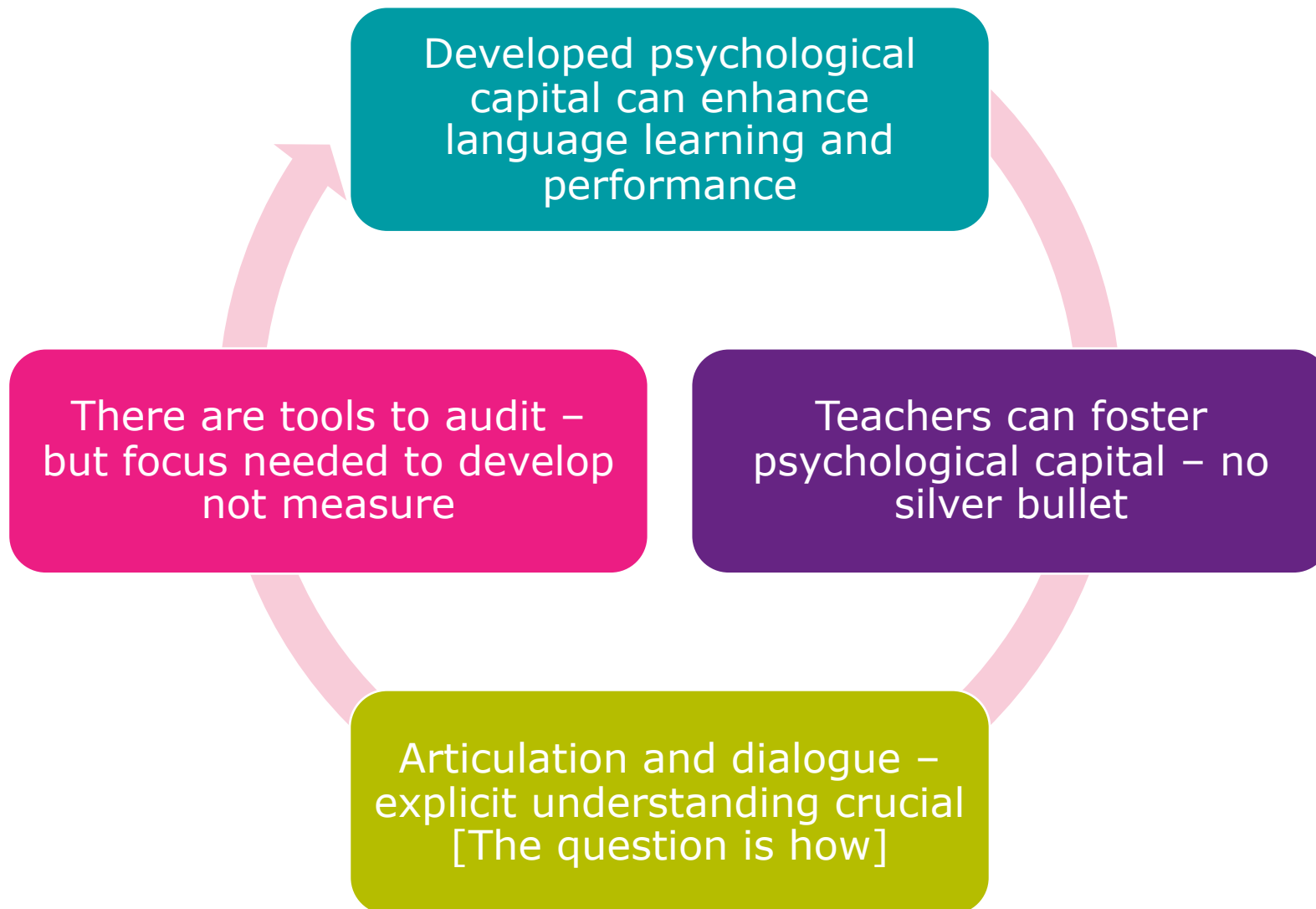
What met scientific inclusion criteria:

Four psychological 'resources'

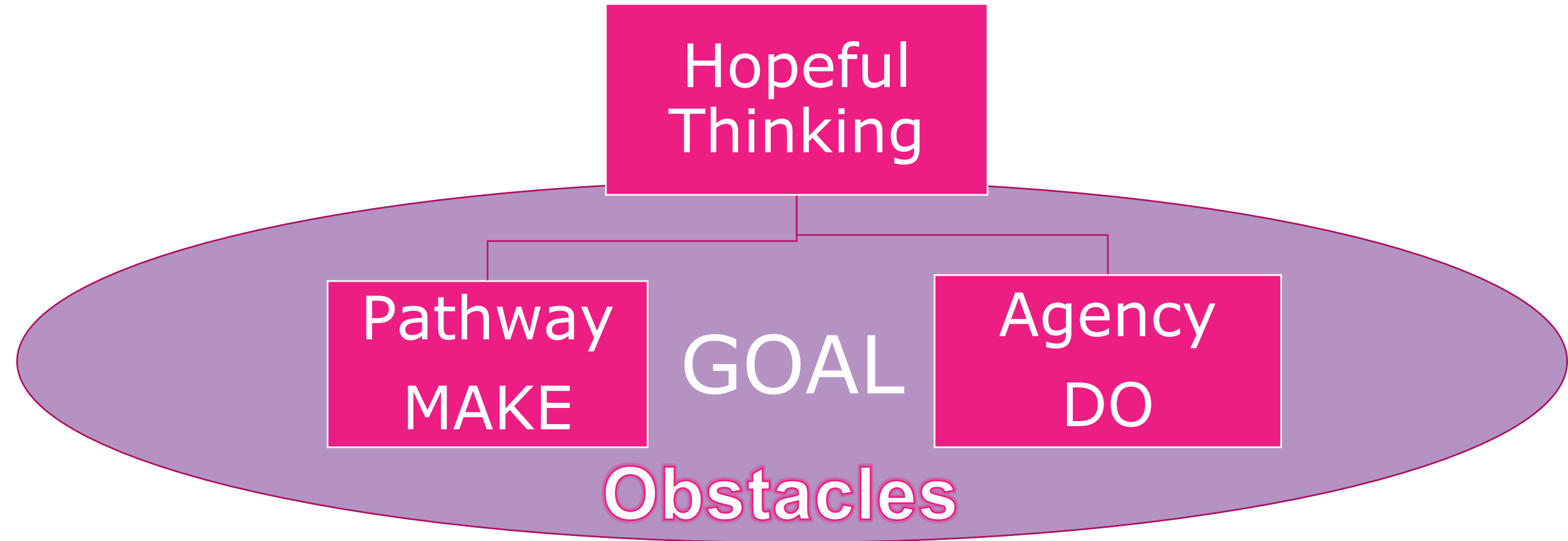
**Not personality traits but
dynamic learning processes**



HERO – bridging theory and practice

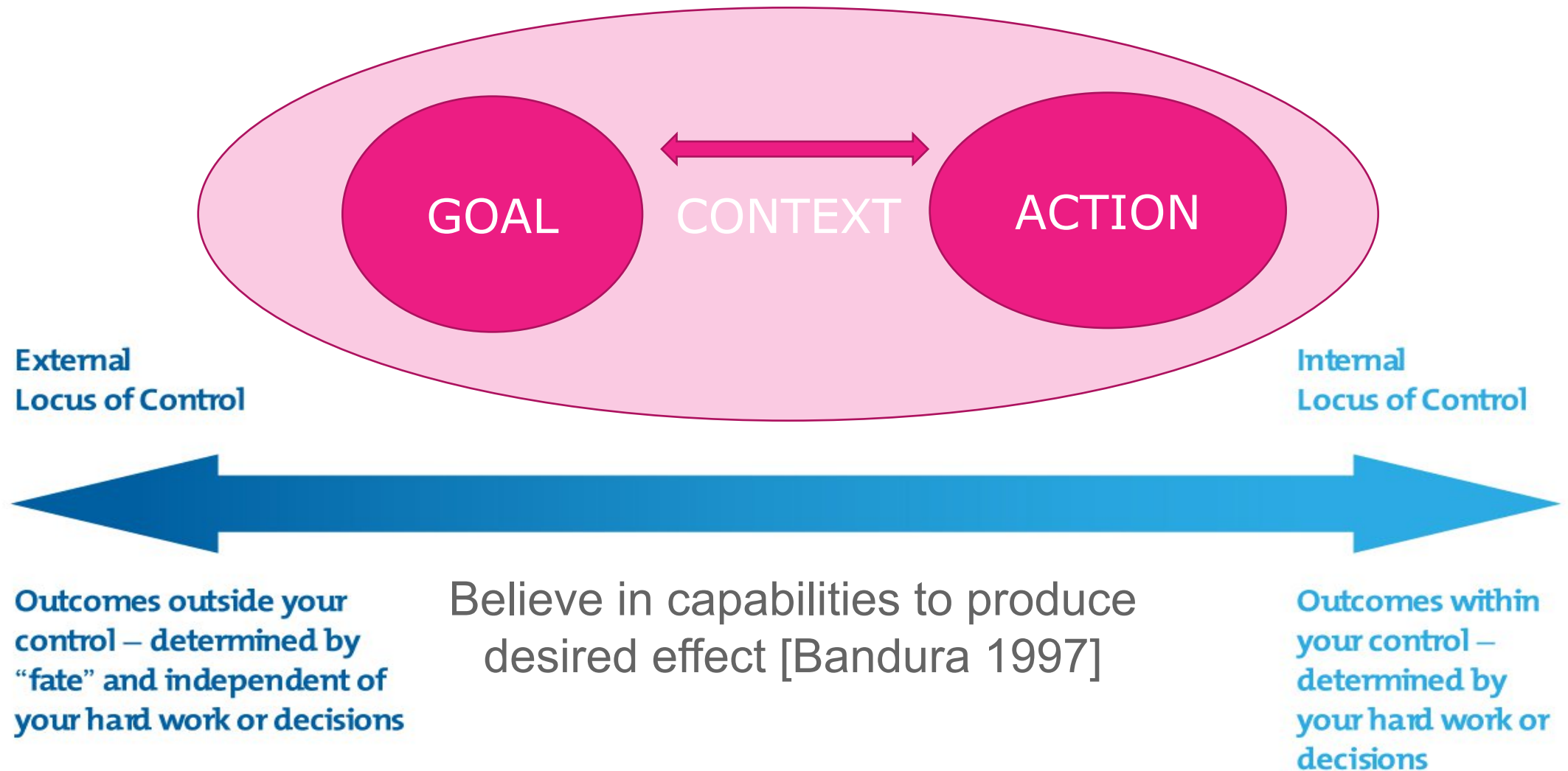


Hope – Definition



Goals target of mental action sequences [Snyder 2000]

Self-Efficacy – Definition



Optimism- definition

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

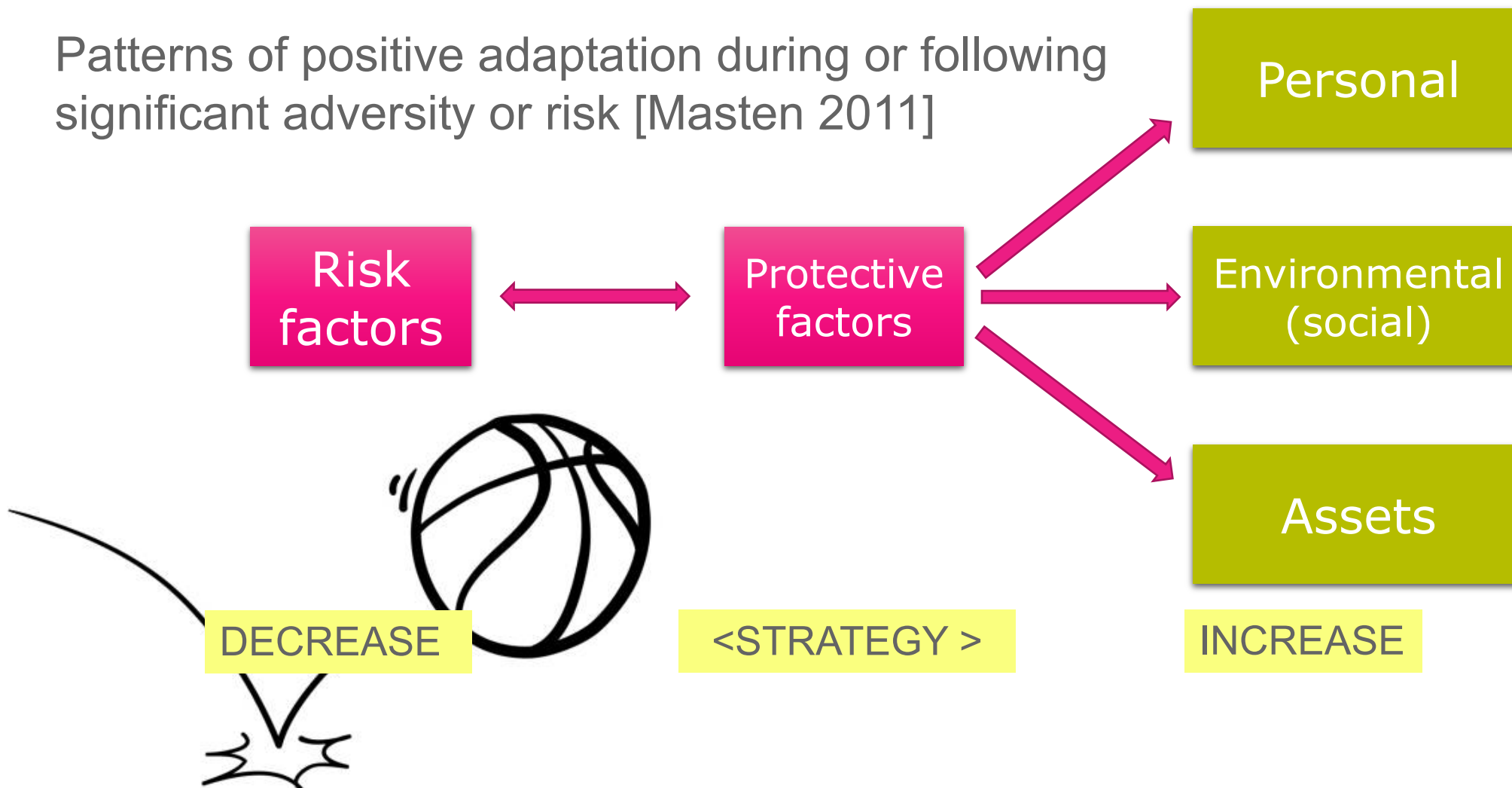
Are you Optimistic?

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

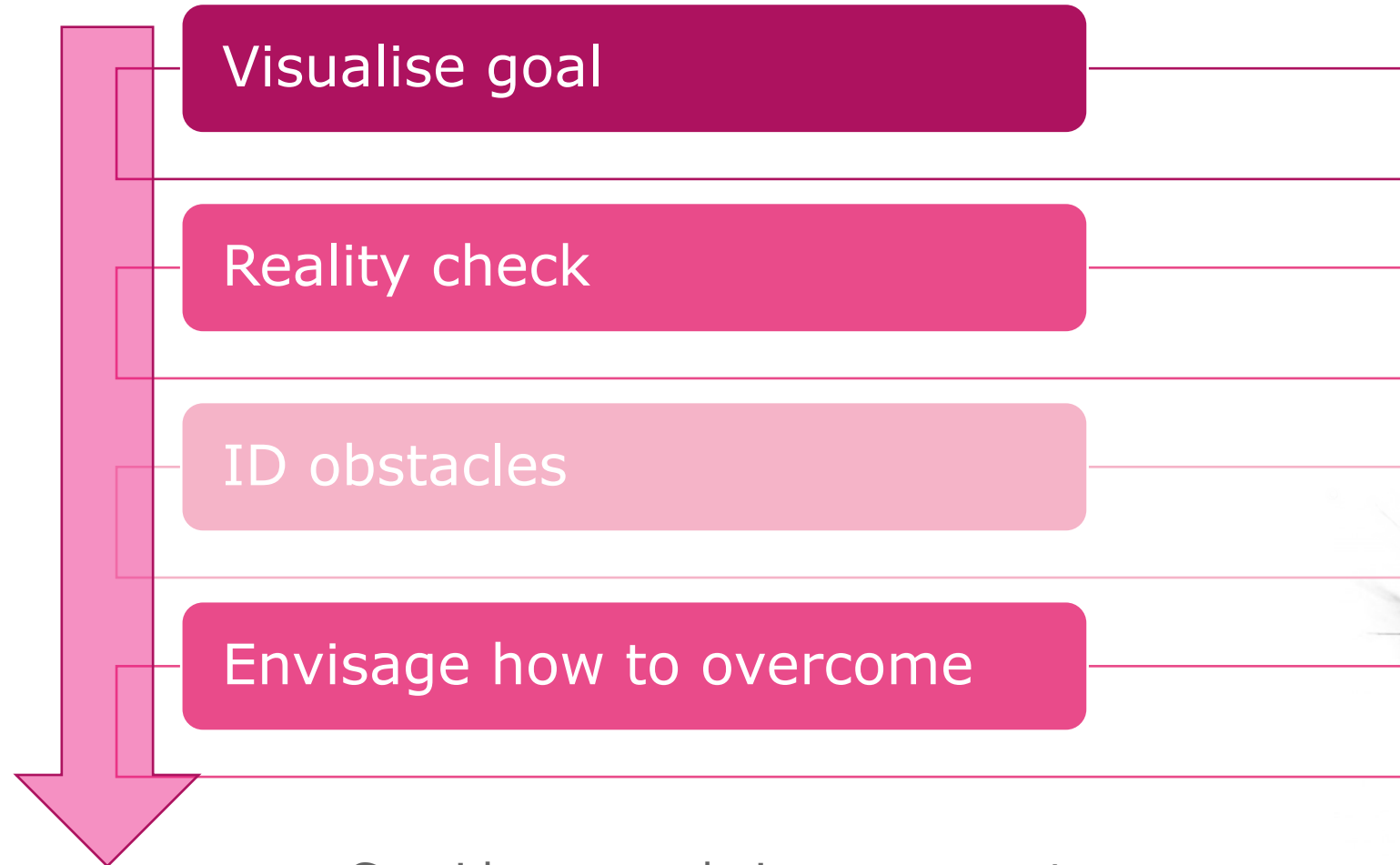
Carver et al 2011

Resilience – Introduction

Patterns of positive adaptation during or following significant adversity or risk [Masten 2011]



HERO in the classroom - Hope



Experience....

- Feel
- Sense (see, hear etc.)

Consider example in assessment.



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

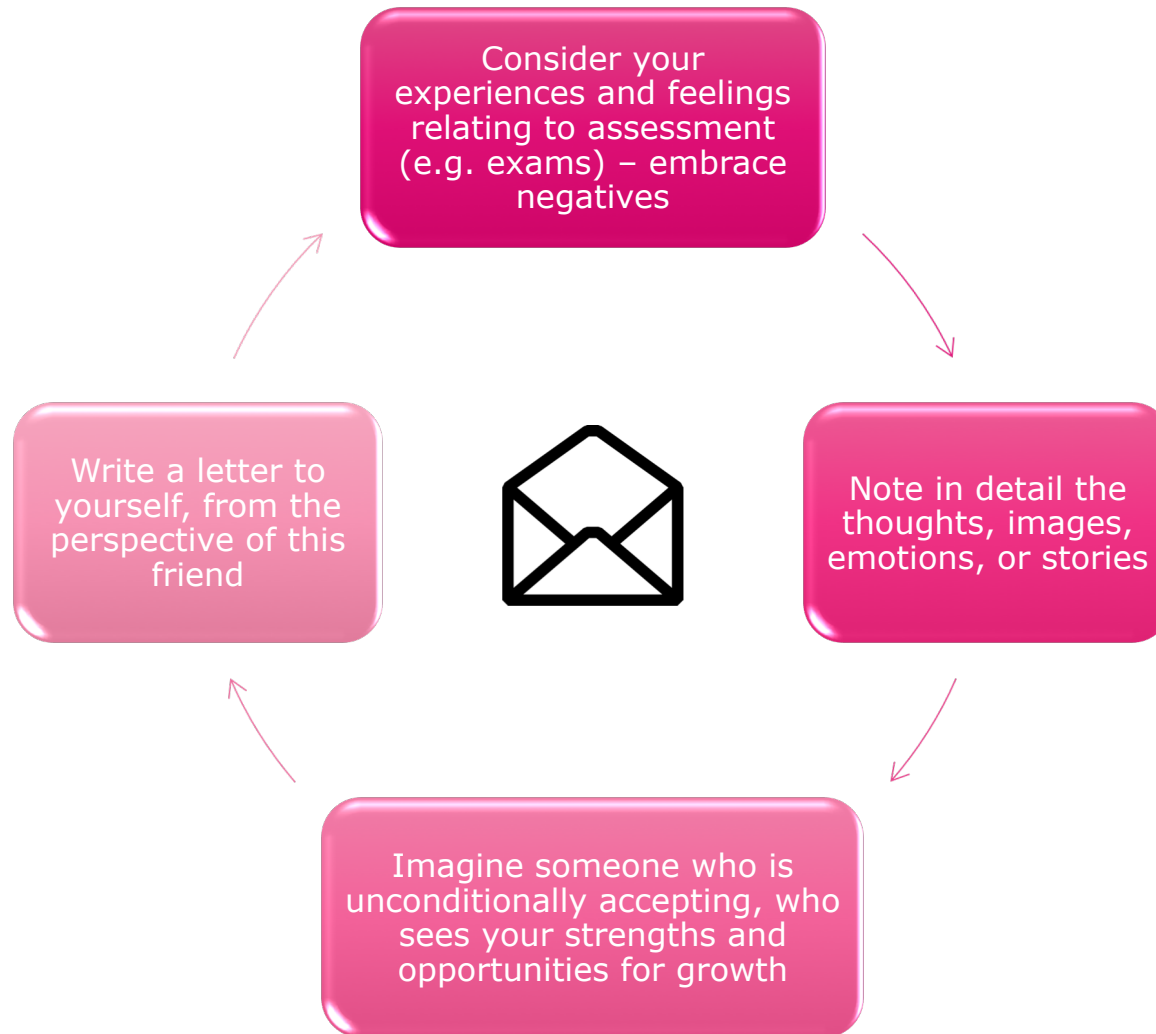
Identify the
protagonist's goals
and methods to
reach them

Recontextualise to
their own
experience

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

Optimist



Realist

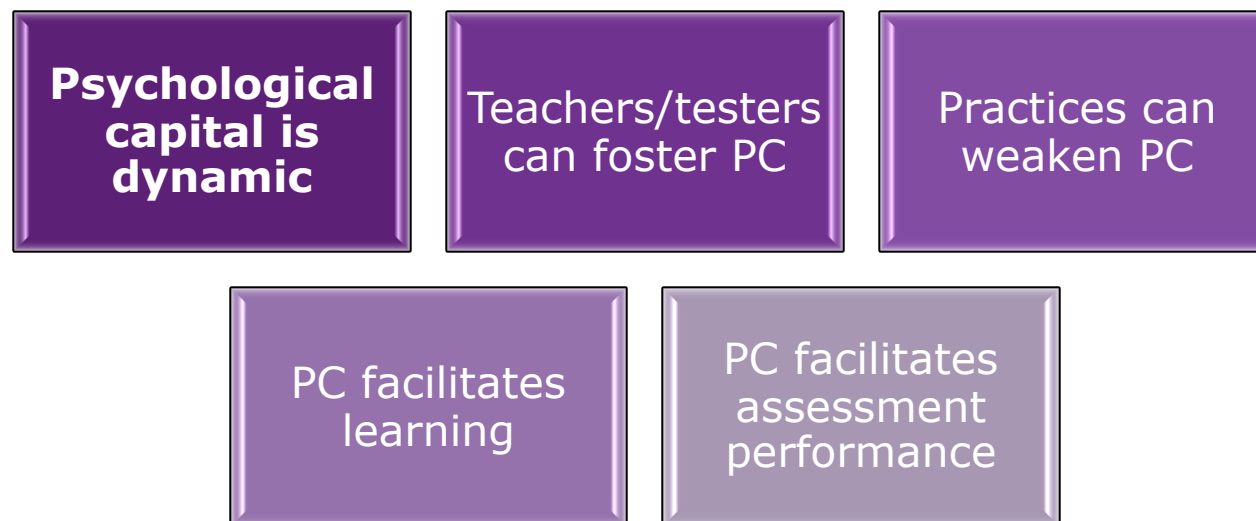


Pessimist

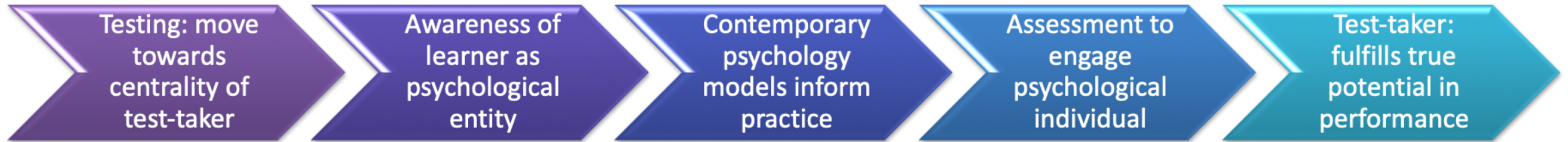


Consider problem / challenge– review emotive output and consider impact on outcome with each perspective. We have agency to choose!

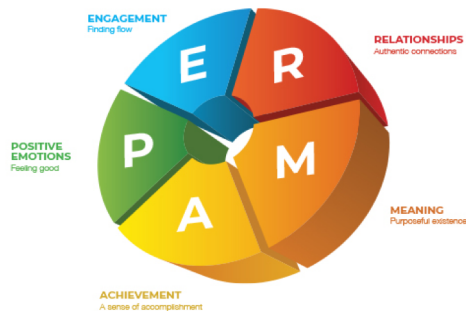
HERO Summary - Positive Psychological Capital



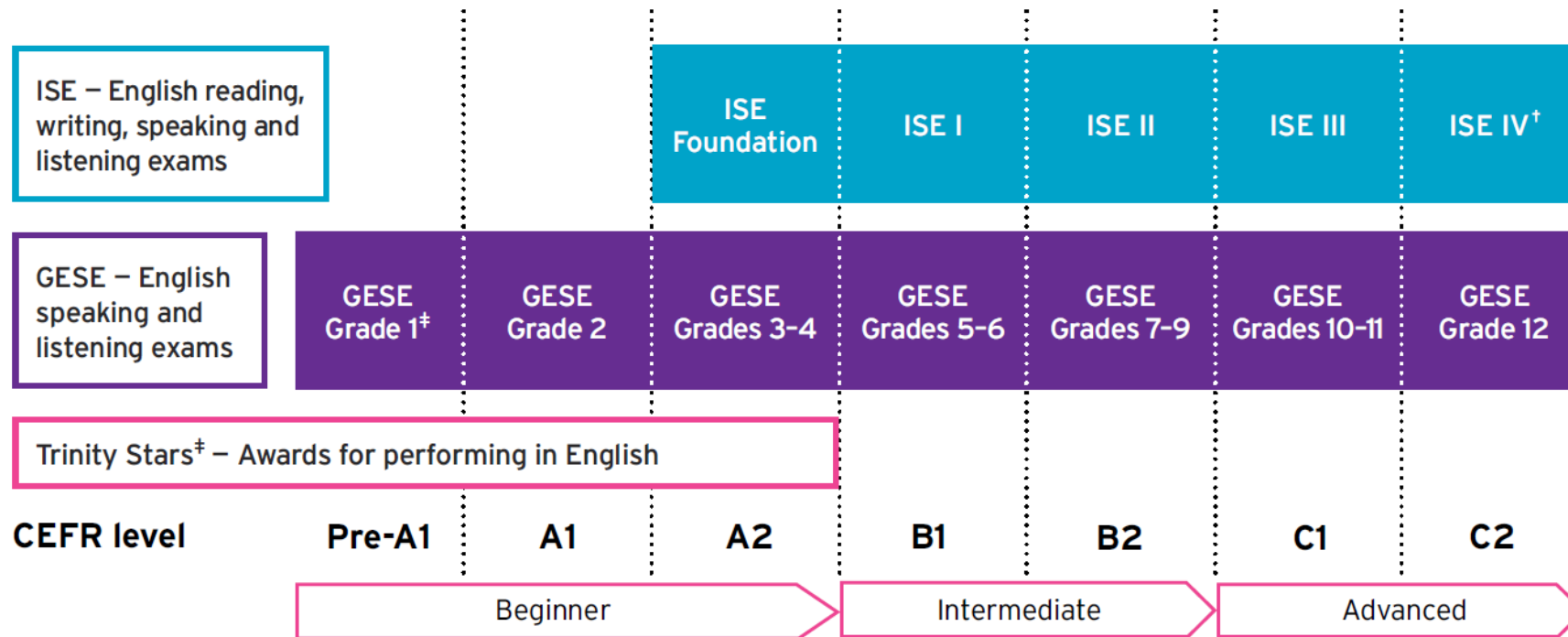
Summary – The psychology of assessment



- 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



[†]ISE IV (C2) has a different format | [‡]Not mapped to the CEFR | CEFR = Common European Framework of Reference

CEFR = Common European Framework of reference



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