The Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness in the context of Task-Based Learning

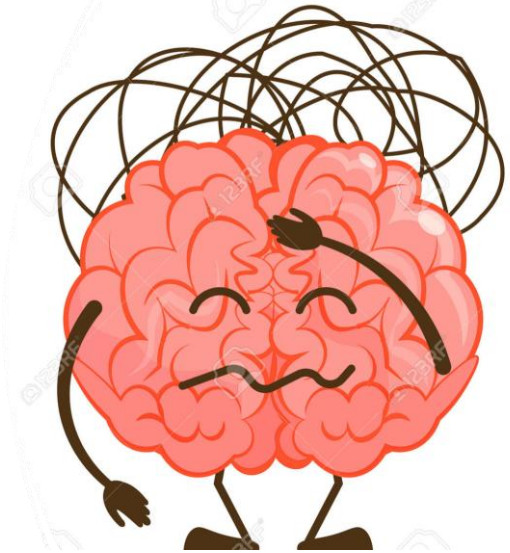
September Seminars 1-4/09/2026
English Inspectorate
Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth

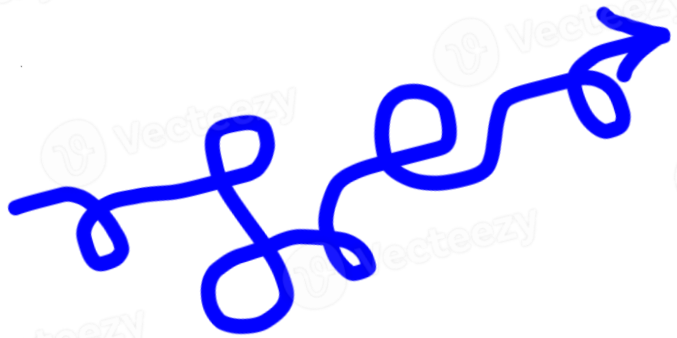
With the students in mind ...

Learning is not linear!

It is a multi-level messy process:

- It does not happen in a perfect step-by-step order.
- A student's progress moves in unpredictable waves.





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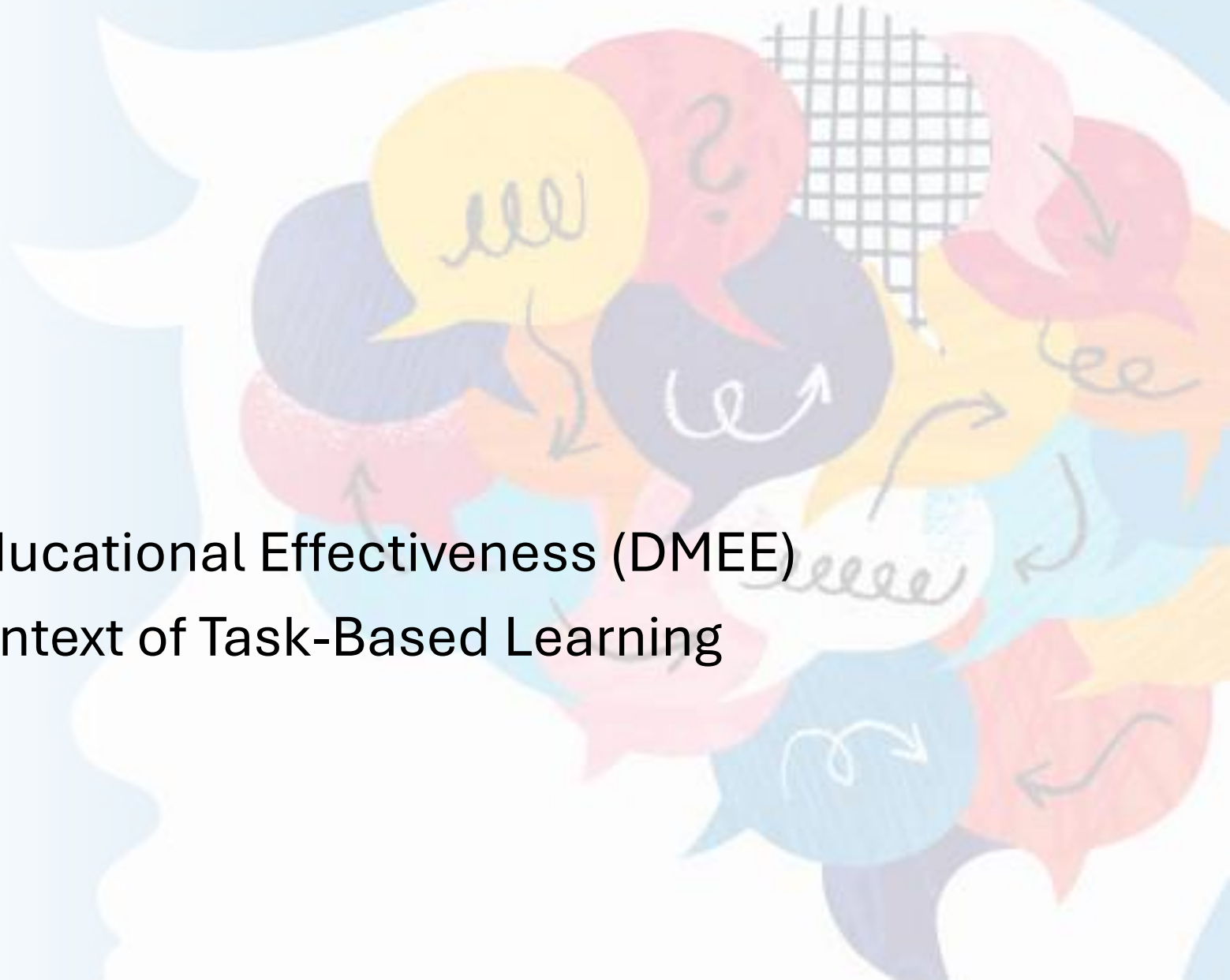


- The Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness (DMEE)
- Using the DMEE in the context of Task-Based Learning
- Two case-studies
- Discussion

The Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness

in the context of

Task-Based Learning

Learners often **master** a rule,

forget it when a new one is introduced,

plateau for months, that's when progress seems to stop completely,

and then suddenly **experience a breakthrough in fluency.**

Why?

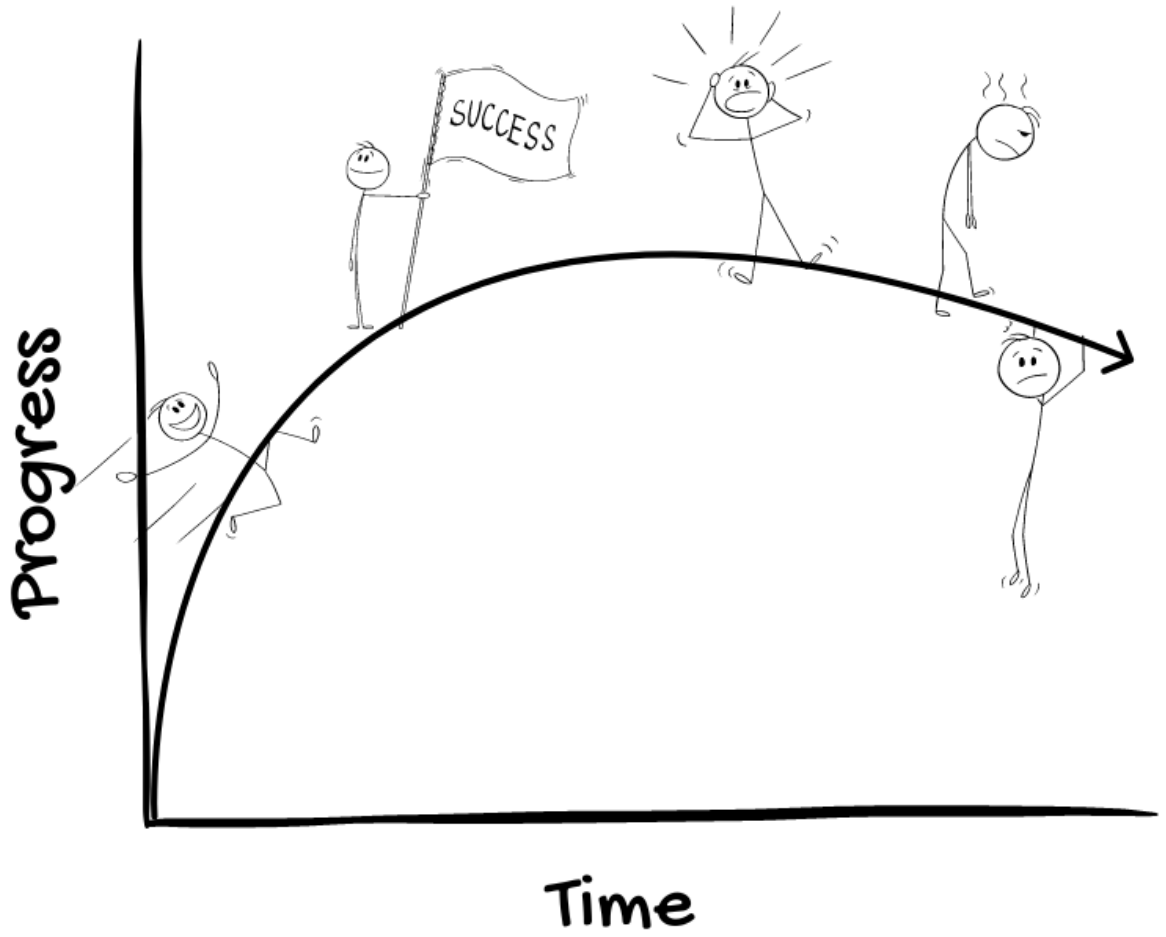
Comfort Zone(s)

Students tend to learn enough to ‘**survive**’ and communicate basic needs, so their brains get comfortable and **stop pushing** to the next level.

Teachers:

- Make lesson plans, research material
- Correct homework
- Organise class games, activities
- Assign projects
- Set tests and quizzes, give feedback and grades
- Attend seminars, staff meetings, meet parents
- Enter students in competitions, apply for European programmes
- Provide guidance, explanations, encouragement

… and yet students remain stuck on plateaus!



Example: Passive Vs Active Vocabulary

Students **understand** hundreds of advanced words when reading

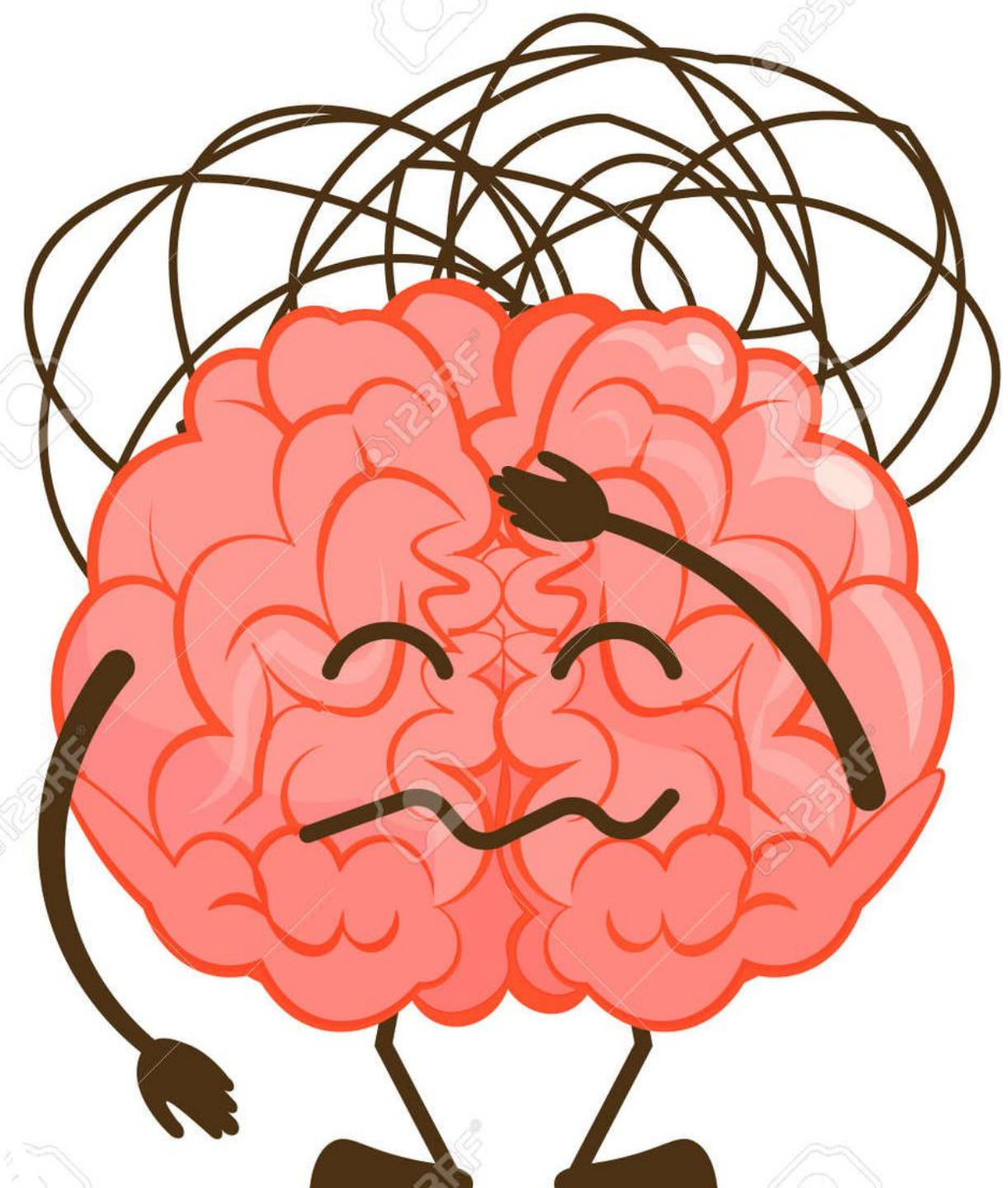
(passive),

but their brains take a long time to **start using** them naturally in speech or in writing.

(active).

The Illusion of No Progress:

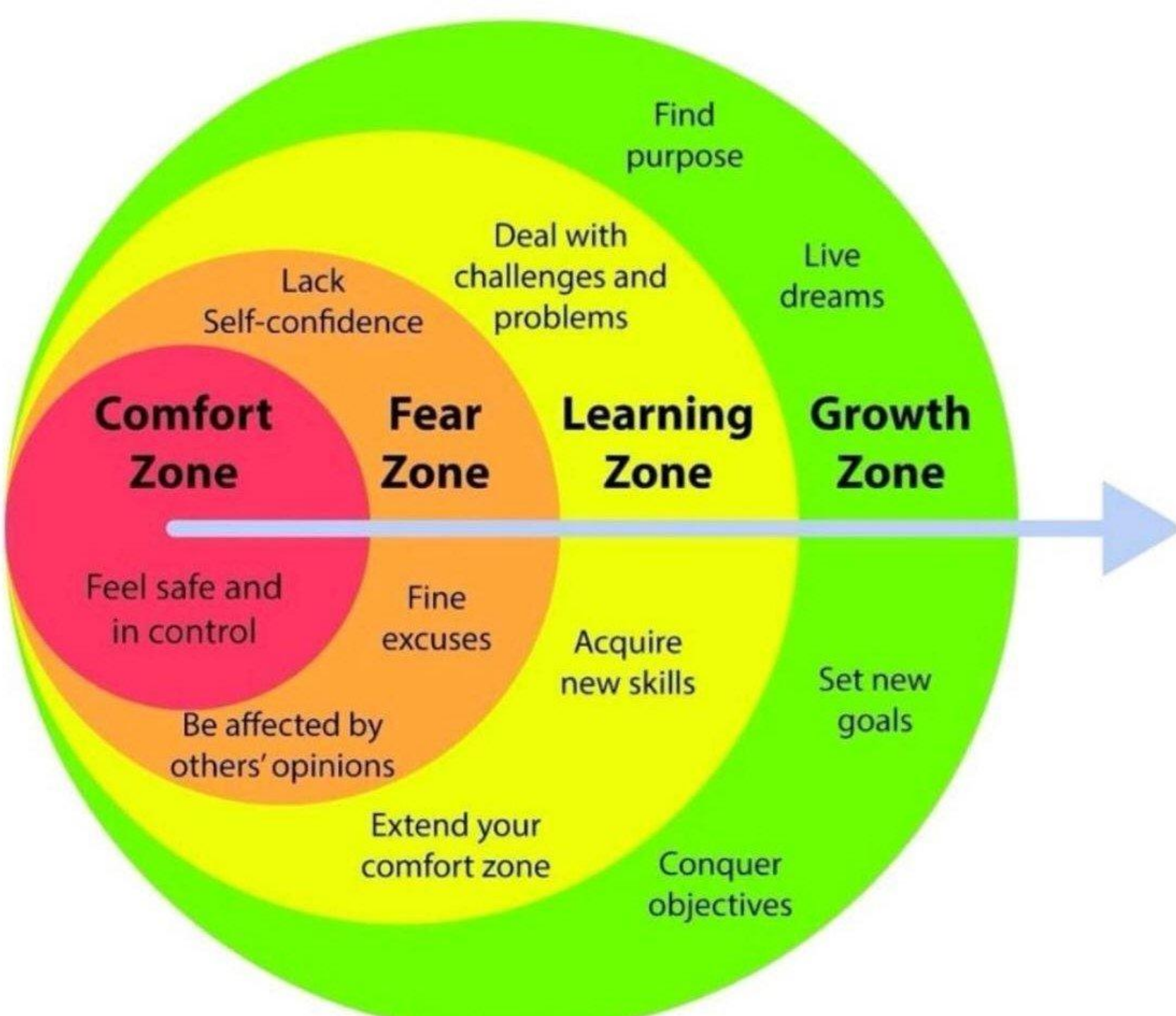
On the outside, nothing looks different…



However, …

… on the inside, the brain is quietly organising / reorganising rules and vocabulary…

Zone of Proximal Development (Lev Vygotsky)



A safe port?

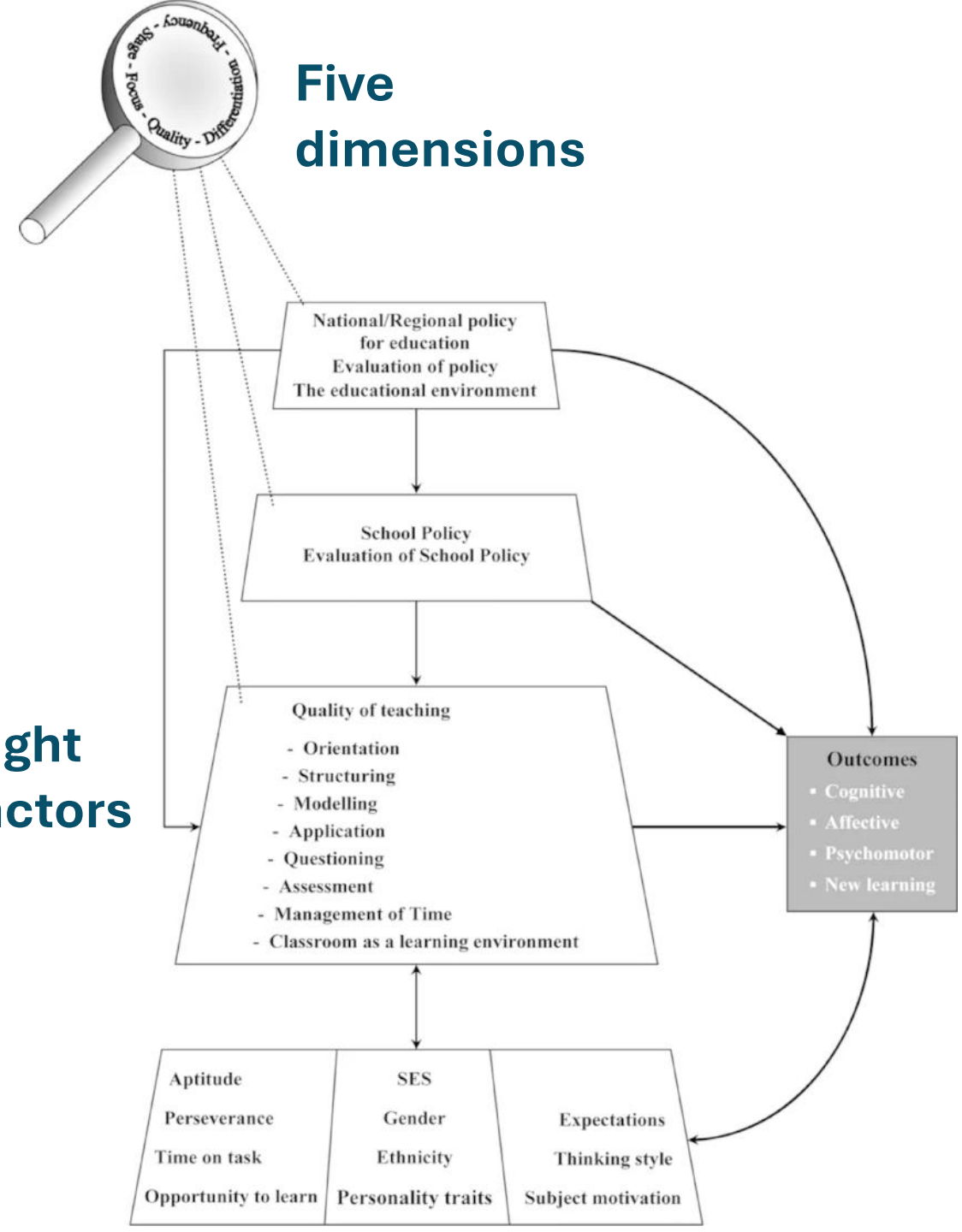
The Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness

By Creemers and Kyriakides.

The Dynamics of Educational Effectiveness: Contributing to Policy, Practice, and Theory in Contemporary Schools **(2008)**

Five dimensions

Eight factors



Eight factors of quality teaching:

1. Orientation
2. Structuring
3. Questioning
4. Modelling
5. Application
6. Management of time
7. Classroom as a learning environment
8. Assessment

The five **dimensions** used to evaluate each factor:

1. Stage
2. Focus
3. Quality
4. Differentiation
5. Frequency

1. **Stage:** The developmental phase of the practice, moving from basic to advanced.
2. **Focus:** The specific target or purpose of the action.
3. **Quality:** How well the practice is executed.
4. **Differentiation:** How well practices are adapted to meet individual or group needs.
5. **Frequency:** How often a specific behaviour or practice occurs.

The Eight Classroom-Level Factors

1. **Orientation**: Introducing lessons, clarifying objectives, and explaining why specific tasks matter.
2. **Structuring**: Organising lesson content logically, reviewing prior knowledge, and summarising main points.
3. **Questioning**: Using varied question types at appropriate difficulty levels, giving wait-time, and handling student answers.

The Eight Classroom-Level Factors

4. **Modelling**: Demonstrating learning strategies, cognitive processes, or problem-solving steps for students to follow.
5. **Application**: Providing practice activities directly tied to the lesson objectives to check understanding.
6. **Maximising on-task learning time** and minimising organisational downtime or disruptions.

The Eight Classroom-Level Factors

7. **Classroom as a Learning Environment**: Establishing positive peer relations, clear behavioural expectations, and an orderly climate.
8. **Assessment**: Using formative feedback and diagnostic evaluations to track progress and adjust instruction.

Outcomes:

- **Cognitive** (subject matter)
- **Affective** (attitudes, emotional growth)
- **Psychomotor** (skills, physical coordination)
- **New learning** (active construction of deep knowledge, metacognition)

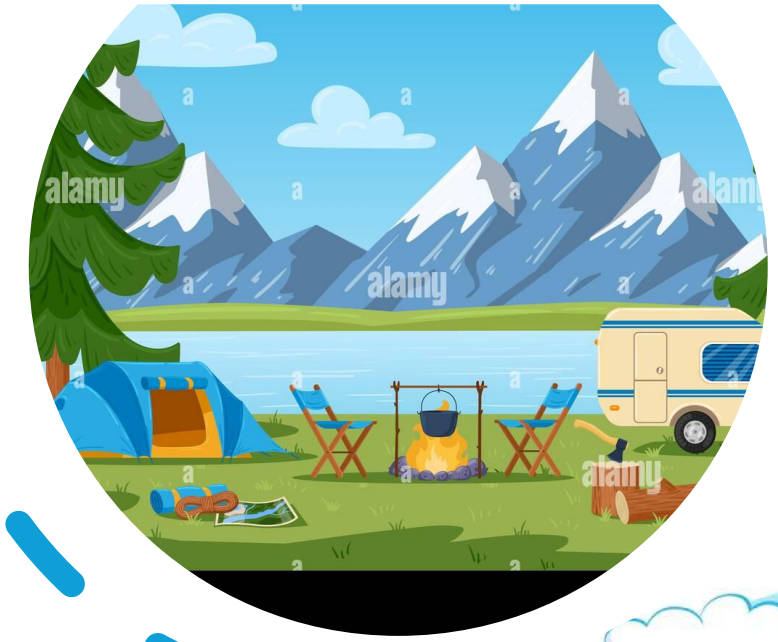
At B1 CEFR level, learners can **maintain a conversation** and **express thoughts**, but they **easily default to extremely simple vocabulary** and **very safe sentence structures**. (*the Intermediate Plateau)*


ADDED
VALUE

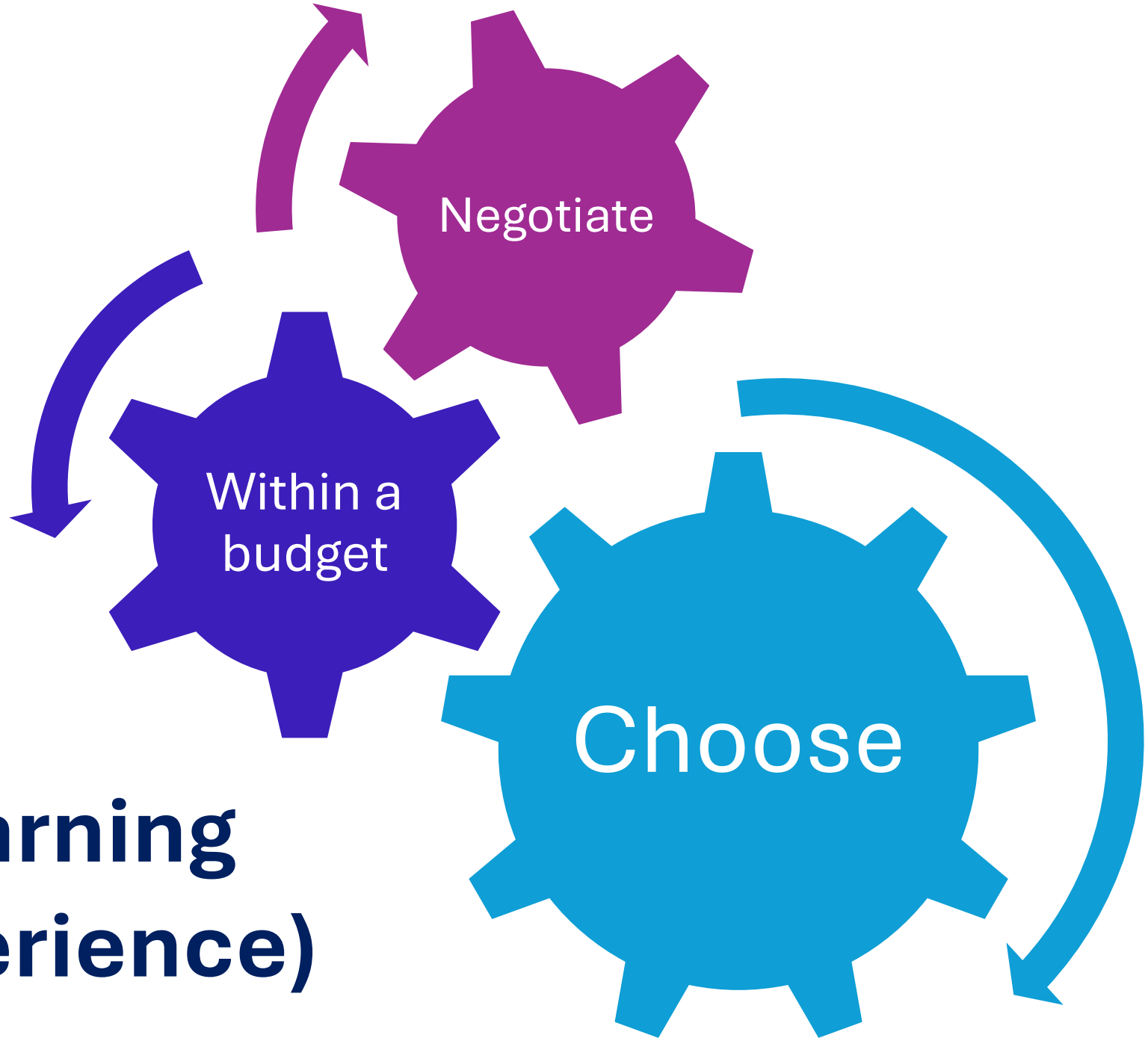
AIMS:

- **Use a Task-based learning scenario**
- **The methodology of the Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness**
- **Increase student involvement and on-task time**
- **Guide students to break beyond their comfort zones**

Topic:
The Travel Dilemma



Students work **in pairs** to **negotiate**
and **choose** one holiday package out of three complex options, keeping a **strict budget** and **conflicting preferences** in mind.



Task-based Learning (hands-on experience)

Orientation

sparks student curiosity when they hit a boring plateau!

We use orientation to …

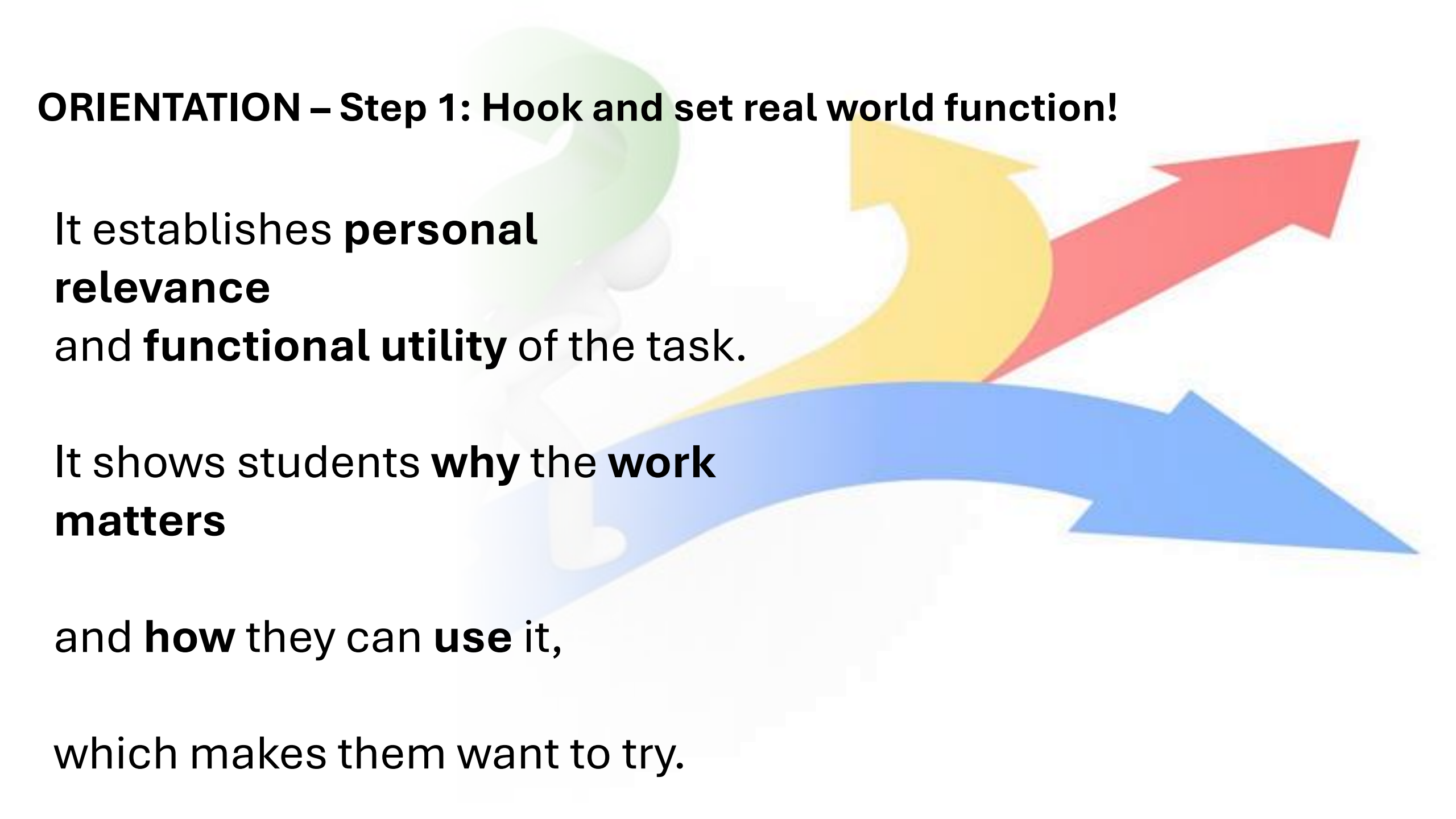
- **introduce** the **lesson** or **unit,**
- **clarify objectives** and **procedures** (what, how),
- **increase focus** on **quality**
  (**why** and how specific tasks need to be done).

- guide students so that they can set their **own focus points and success criteria.**

Orientation can be used **at any stage** of the lesson/unit.

It is a powerful framework which stops the brain from regressing to its comfort zone!

ORIENTATION – Step 1: Hook and set real world function!



It establishes **personal relevance** and **functional utility** of the task.

It shows students **why** the **work matters**

and **how** they can **use** it,

which makes them want to try.

If we skip orientation, students will most likely complete the task using very basic language, such as:

- I choose Option A. It is good.
- Okay, I like Option A, too.

The task gets done, but there is no learning!

Orientation helps bring students back on track!

We need to **interfere** and help students **realise** that the **true task** is not just to choose a holiday! It is to **navigate a complex social negotiation using upgraded English** (at the targeted CEFR level).

Avoid saying: 'I choose A It's good"! This is not what the tasks asks you to do!

The task asks you to negotiate! Not to express an opinion! Use the graphic organiser to help you!

Structuring is how the teacher organises and scaffolds the lesson content.

Questioning forces the brain to think deeply and break comfort zones.

We do not give students all the information at once!
Students need time to process instructions, so we need to scaffold both our material and the procedures!

Step 1: Input Structuring (Pre-Task – Whole Class)

1. Before students begin negotiating, the teacher shows a brief video or text of two people negotiating **badly** and asks the class to **spot the errors**.
This activates prior knowledge from past weeks.

2. The teacher provides a **graphic organiser** on the board with useful expressions and completes it with students' suggestions.

This visually splits language into structural categories:

To propose:	"How about we…?"	"Why don't we…?"
To reach a compromise: "	I see what you mean, but…"	"Suppose we agree on that. What if…"
To highlight a problem:	"The issue is…"	''Above all, we should (not)…''
_____	_____	_____

Step 2: Process Structuring (During the Task –Pair Work)

To ensure maximum student engagement on task instead of allocating 15 minutes to open discussion, the teacher structures the task into strict, **micro-steps**:

- Minutes 1-3: **Individual reading** and highlighting pros/cons.
- Minutes 4-7: **Presenting own choice** to partner using target phrases.
- Minutes 8-12: **Negotiating** – to reach a compromise.

The teacher moves around the room and steps in to disrupt the comfort zone where necessary.
For example: (Teacher points out) “You cannot just say ‘OK let’s go to the beach’. You need to structure your counter-argument using a concession phrase.”

Step 3: Output Structuring & Review (Post-Task, Whole Class Activity)

This is where learning is **consolidated**.

1. **Students need to share outcomes**
   - Students share their final decision, and
   - justify why they chose it.
2. **The teacher correct the loops** by
   - highlighting common errors heard during the task and
   - asking the class to correct them collectively

This process helps avoid the fossilization of messy language.

Structuring matters because it provides the "railings" for the messy, non-linear learning process.

It acknowledges that students will make errors and get stuck when pushed out of their comfort zones.

By structuring the task into clear steps and providing visual language templates, we give students' brains the exact framework needed to successfully complete the cognitive loop and move toward more advanced-level fluency.

Questioning is effective if we use:

- different **types** of questions –both **product** and **process** questions,
- at appropriate **levels**,
- give students the necessary **wait-time**, and
- provide meaningful **feedback/ feed-forward**.

Product Questions (Low Cognitive Load):

These questions seek a **direct, correct/incorrect answer**.

Example: “Which holiday package is the cheapest?”

EFL Impact:

Good for checking basic reading comprehension, but they are not an indication of deep learning.

Process Questions (High Cognitive Load):

They require students to **explain how** they reached a conclusion, justify their thinking, or manipulate language.

> Example: "*Why do you think Option B is a better compromise than Option A, despite the higher cost?*"

EFL Impact: Process questions **force learners out of their comfort zones** because they cannot give a one-word answer; they must use complex language structures (conditionals, cause-and-effect, etc.) to explain their abstract thoughts.

Managing ‘Wait-Time’

On average, teachers wait **less than one second** after asking a question before they call on someone or even answer the question themselves.

- **Language learning** is non-linear and **requires internal processing** (‘translation’ and grammatical sorting)
- Effective questioning requires **extending wait-time to 3 – 5 seconds** (sometimes even longer).
- This **silence gives** the brain the **space** it needs to construct more complex and accurate sentences instead of hurrying to give a safe, basic phrase.

According to the DMEE questioning is a precision tool.

- If we only ask simple, product-based questions, our students will **stay trapped** in their comfort zones because they only need basic vocabulary to answer us.

- When we ask **deep process questions** and intentionally give them **5 seconds of silent wait-time**, we force their brains to work harder, dig for complex vocabulary, and leap to the next level of fluency.

Handling Student Answers

According to DMEE if a student says,

> "***Option A is good because beach***,"

the teacher uses **scaffolding questions** and reminds the student to use their graphic organiser:

> *"Good start. Can you rephrase that using our new vocabulary? For example: 'Option A is better / more appealing because…?'"*

Re-orientation enhances metacognition!

Very often students know vocabulary but have not mastered **how to use** it in new contexts under pressure.

Modelling

demonstrates the exact **mental steps** needed to upgrade fluency.

Modelling does not simply mean to show-case a perfect example.

It means to actually **demonstrate** students

- **how to think**,
- **select words**, and
- **solve** language **problems** in **real time**.

It is the **act** of **making the invisible thinking process visible**.

Effective modelling requires:

A. **The "Think-Aloud"** Teacher Demonstration Phase

B. **Scaffolding** the Strategy (Co-Construction)

C. **Fading** (Transition to Independent Practice)

A. The “Think-Aloud” Teacher Demonstration Phase (whole class activity)

Instead of just giving students a handout of useful phrases, the teacher stands at the board and **expresses their internal thoughts out loud**, **presenting the whole process from the students’ point of view**.

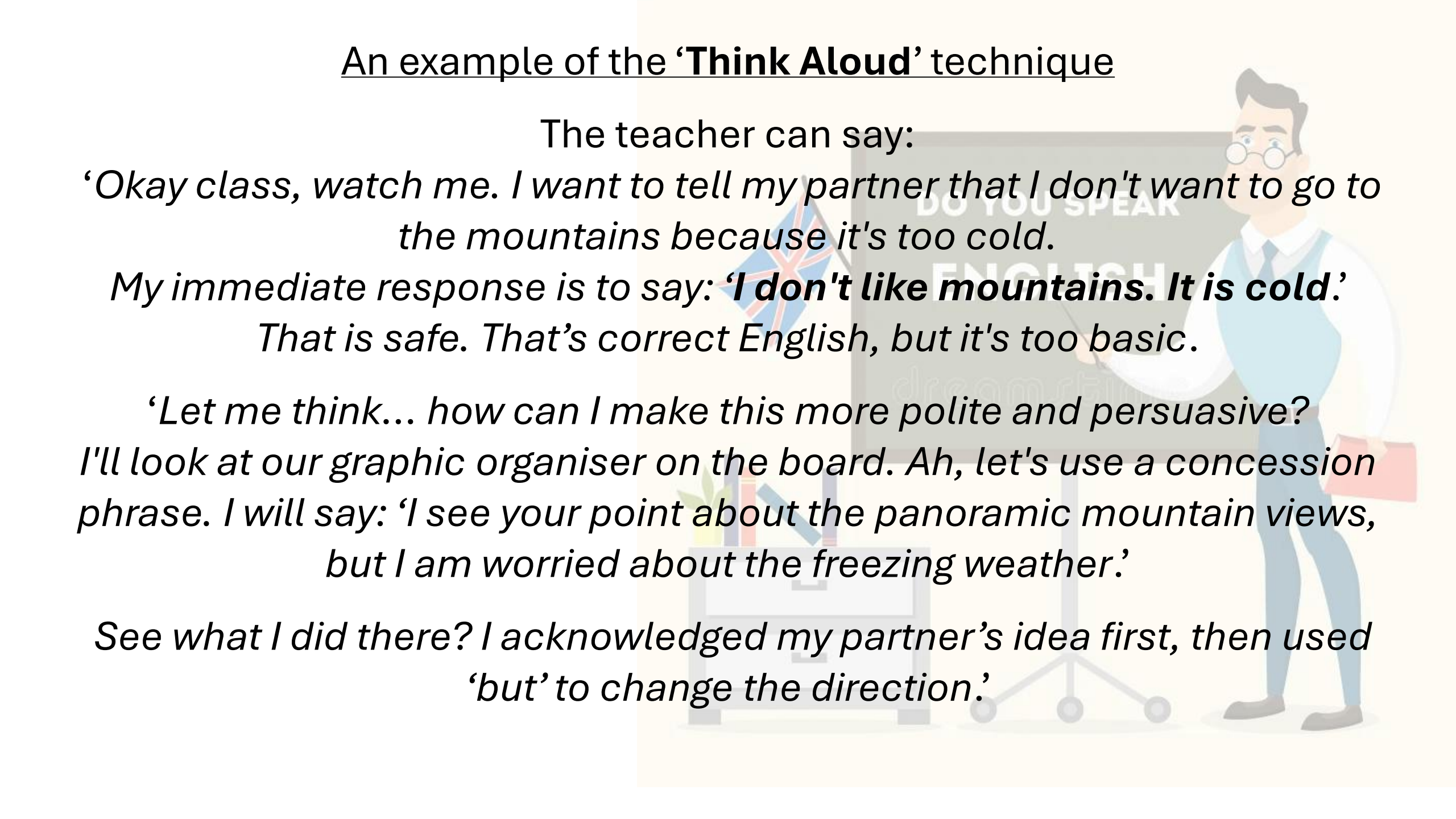
An example of the '**Think Aloud**' technique

The teacher can say:

'Okay class, watch me. I want to tell my partner that I don't want to go to the mountains because it's too cold.
*My immediate response is to say: '**I don't like mountains. It is cold**.'*
That is safe. That's correct English, but it's too basic.

'Let me think... how can I make this more polite and persuasive?
I'll look at our graphic organiser on the board. Ah, let's use a concession phrase. I will say: 'I see your point about the panoramic mountain views, but I am worried about the freezing weather.'

See what I did there? I acknowledged my partner's idea first, then used 'but' to change the direction.'



B. The Scaffolding the Strategy phase (whole class activity)

The teacher involves the class in modelling a second example and limits him/herself to the role of the ‘secretary’ while the students guide the mental process.

Imagine your partner wants a luxury hotel, but it's too expensive.
What is our first mental step?
You need to disagree politely instead of saying 'No, too expensive.' What can you say instead?

The teacher writes the student's answer on the board so that they can all copy it.

C. The Fading phase leads to independent practice (pair work)

Once the strategy is clear, the teacher steps back, leaving the modelled examples visible on the board as a temporary safety net while students begin their paired task.

Why Teaching-Modelling Breaks the Plateau

- When students are stuck on a plateau, they are often terrified of making mistakes or sounding foolish.
- Giving them an explanation of grammar is not enough; **they need to see the implementation**.
- By modelling the exact messy process of rejecting a basic word and choosing a more complex one, the teacher normalises the effort it takes to speak a second language.
- **They show students that fluency isn't a magical gift – it is a series of deliberate, step-by-step mental choices that require effort**!
- **It sometimes means they reject their first basic linguistic response and try to construct a more demanding one which is beyond their comfort zone**.

Application

provides practice opportunities which correspond to the lesson objectives and are tailored to the student's needs at the current stage.

• It is the stage where students **actively use, test, and experiment** with the newly modelled language structures.

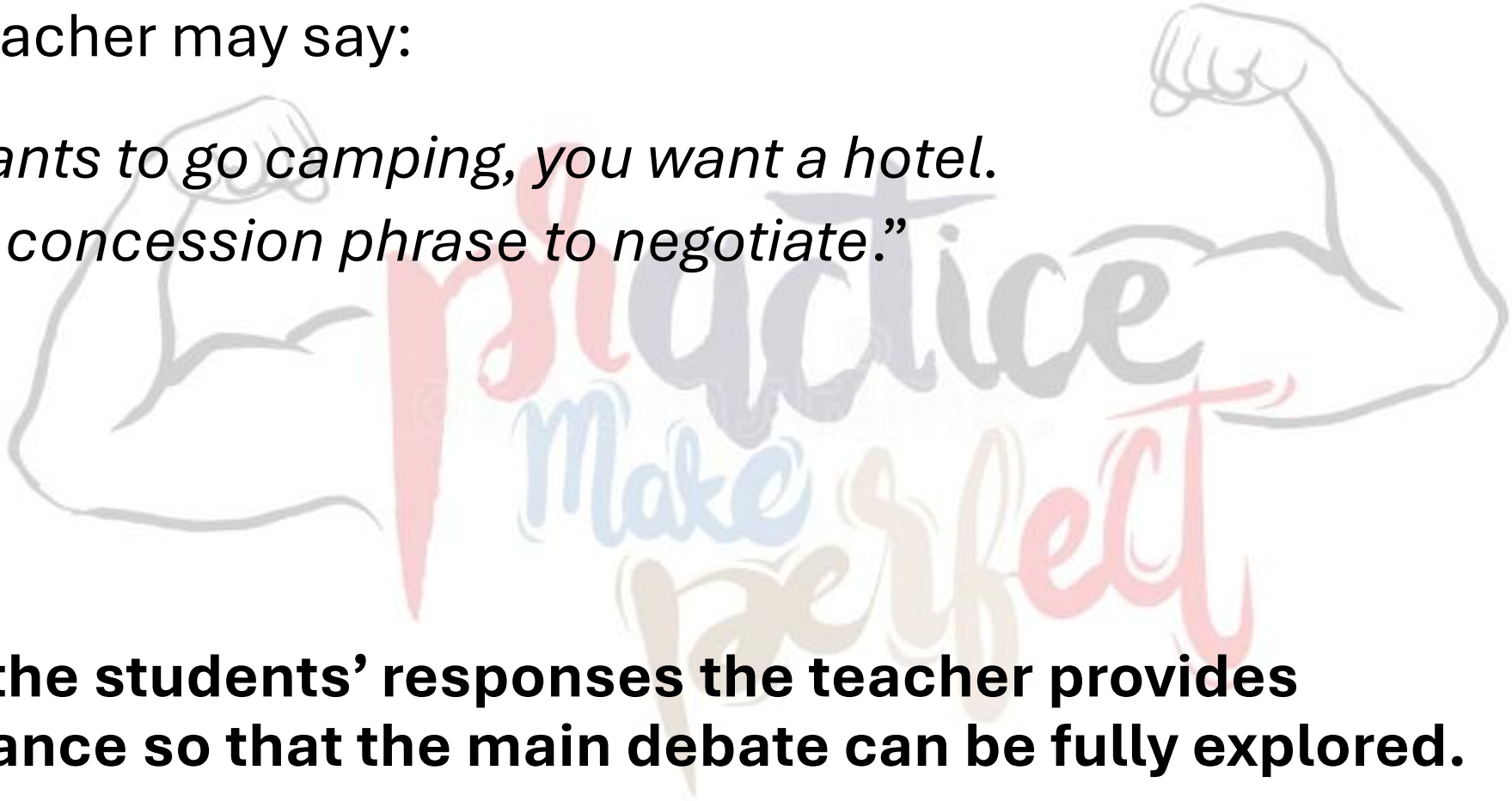
• It is **not just** "**doing** an exercise"; it is the 'arena' where the **messy**, **non-linear learning process** takes place and it is welcomed as the necessary step towards improvement and deep learning.

• Application is effective if it is **immediate** and if it requires **different levels of cognitive challenge** to pull students out of their comfort zones.

A. Stepping into Independent Application (Pair work)

Students are given a **micro-scenario**, a **short** and **easy** practice activity **to help them test a new speaking rule** before the big debate.

- For example, the teacher may say:
  - "*Your partner wants to go camping, you want a hotel.*
  - *Use exactly one concession phrase to negotiate.*"



According to the students' responses the teacher provides clarifications/ guidance so that the main debate can be fully explored.

B. Independent Application (The Real-World Task)

- This is the main negotiation task.
- In pairs, students must follow the scenario, use their budget and **debate for 7 minutes according to their roles**.

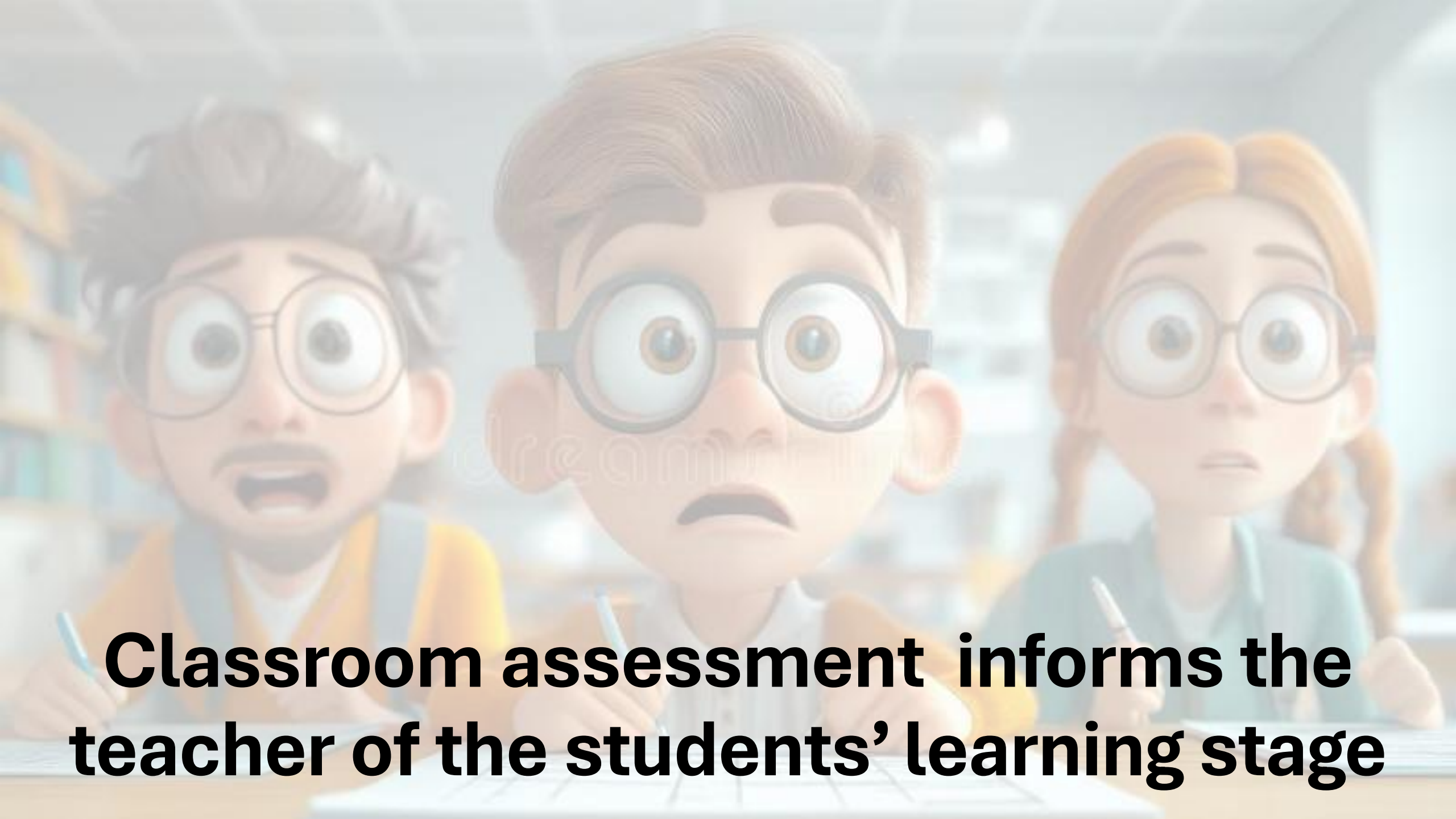
- Students debate in their groups without the teacher's constant help. They **act independently** and **choose** when to deploy **their language skills**. This drives them to push past their usual vocabulary limits.

C. Extended/Differentiated Application (Breaking the Plateau)

- If some students finish early or fall back into basic language ("*Option A is good*"), the teacher must immediately escalate the application with a '**Twist**'.
- For example, the teacher walks over to advanced or plateaued pairs and drops a surprise variable card: "Attention: Your flight was just cancelled. You now have €100 less. Re-negotiate your plan."
- This sudden complication completely breaks their automated, safe responses. Their brains are forced to work hard again and solve the new problem.

- If we model a beautiful language strategy but then give students a **passive, fill-in-the-blank grammar worksheet**, we have **failed the application factor**.
- For students to break through a plateau, **application must be active, communicative, and challenging**.
- We must design tasks where students are forced to apply the language to solve a shifting problem.
- Students are **expected to struggle** during this phase! **Struggling** is good! It **indicates cognitive reorganisation** in action!

Application is where the magic or and the mess –happens!



Classroom assessment informs the teacher of the students' learning stage

Classroom Assessment is a diagnostic tool.

- It is the mechanism by which a teacher **collects data** on student performance, **analyses** it on the spot, and **immediately adapts instruction**.
- It is the **ultimate tool for managing non-linear progress**. Without dynamic assessment, a teacher cannot tell the difference between a student who is failing and a student who is simply in a “cognitive loop.

There are three functions of classroom assessment:

A. Real-Time Diagnostic Monitoring (During the Task, Pair work)

- While students are actively involved in the task (debating their holiday options for about 15’), the **teacher moves through the room and takes notes** on an assessment grid.
- The process must not be interrupted!
- The aim is not for the students to reach perfection (not yet) but to remain focused and keep working on their tasks.

B. Immediate, Non-Punitive Feedback (Formative Loop, whole class – pair work – whole class)

- At the end of the negotiation task, the teacher provides **feedback / feedforward**.
- The teacher **writes 3 or 4 errors heard** during the room monitoring on the whiteboard **anonymously**.

  e.g., "*I like Option A because it is more cheap*."

- Students are given **one minute to discuss with** their **partners** and '**upgrade**' the expressions which are written on the board.
- This type of feedback **reinforces** the **standard immediately after the behavior** occurred.

C. Student Self-Assessment (Reflective Meta-Cognition)

- Involving students in their own assessment helps build independent learners.
- Learning is non-linear and students need to realise that their own progress is happening, even if it feels messy.
- In the **final 2 minutes of the lesson**, students complete a 3-question self-audit card:
  - **Did I use at least two of our target negotiation phrases today? (Yes / No)**
  - **What was one phrase my partner used that I want to steal for next time?**
  - **On a scale of 1-5, how hard did I work to get past my usual "safe" words**?

Management of time maximises active on-task time!

Management of Time is not about keeping an eye on the clock or finishing the lesson before the bell rings!

It isn't about rigid control; it is about protecting our students' right to practise and be actively engaged in high-quality learning tasks.

It is defined as maximising the task-on-time while minimising administrative friction and dead time.

If a teacher manages time poorly, the application phase is always the first thing to get cut short and students never get the chance to push past their safe comfort zones.

Language acquisition requires intense, focused cognitive processing time.

Eliminate transition drag to protect application time

In a standard 45-minute lesson, it is common to lose 10 to 15 minutes to administration: taking attendance, handing out papers, organising pairs, and giving messy instructions.

The Trap: If a teacher spends 25 minutes lecturing and 10 minutes on administrative transitions, **only 10 minutes remain for the assigned task.**

How can you shrink transition time from 15’ to 3’?

By using tight routines (e.g. when handing worksheets) and countdown timers for transitions

Use Time-Chunking to prevent cognitive fatigue and regressions

If you give students a loose, open-ended instruction . For example: "*You have 15 minutes to talk about these travel packages*," two negative things happen due to their non-linear nature:

They will use basic language to agree in 3 minutes

(e.g."*I like Option A*." "*Me too!*")

Then spend the remaining 12 minutes speaking in their native language or sitting in silence, or …

After 5 minutes of trying to use complex phrases, they feel **tired** and **drift backward** into comfortable, lower-level vocabulary.

How does time-chunking work?

The **teacher** explicitly **chunks** the **application phase** into tight **micro-deadlines using** a **visible classroom timer**:

First 3 minutes: "***Read*** *your secret travel profile alone and highlight three personal priorities*."

Next 3 minutes: "*Take turns to* ***explain*** *your ideal package using at least two target phrases. Do not let your partner interrupt you*."

Next 6 minutes: "***Negotiate*** *a compromise. You must reach an agreement before the timer goes off.*"

Creating “Artificial Urgency” to Force Spontaneous Output

When students are given a **generous, unstructured amount of time**, they spend too much time **overthinking** or **translating word-for-word** in their heads. This **protects their comfort zone.**

Applying a **strict, fast-paced time limit** creates **artificial cognitive urgency**.

When the clock is ticking down, the brain is forced to **stop over-analysing** and **start producing language spontaneously.**

This urgency forces learners to bypass the slow translation loop and immerse themselves in the linguistic structures modelled earlier in the lesson.

Classroom Environment builds a safe space where making messy errors is normal.

- The **Classroom as a Learning Environment** is not just about having colorful posters on the wall or having students sit in groups.
- It is defined as the creation of a **safe**, **low-anxiety psychological climate** characterised by **positive teacher-student interactions**, **strong student-student relationships**, and a shared focus on **learning as a cooperative journey**.
- This factor is the ultimate foundation for the entire lesson. Because **non-linear learning is emotionally risky**.
- **If a student is terrified of looking foolish** while trying to navigate a “cognitive loop” or breaking out of a “plateau,” they **will stay silent.**
- **If they stay silent, they won’t learn!**

A. How can you avoid that the whole task falls into silence?

Students are highly self-aware. They know what they want to say, but they also know they might make a mistake (like saying “goed”). If the classroom culture mocks mistakes, they will default to basic, safe language.

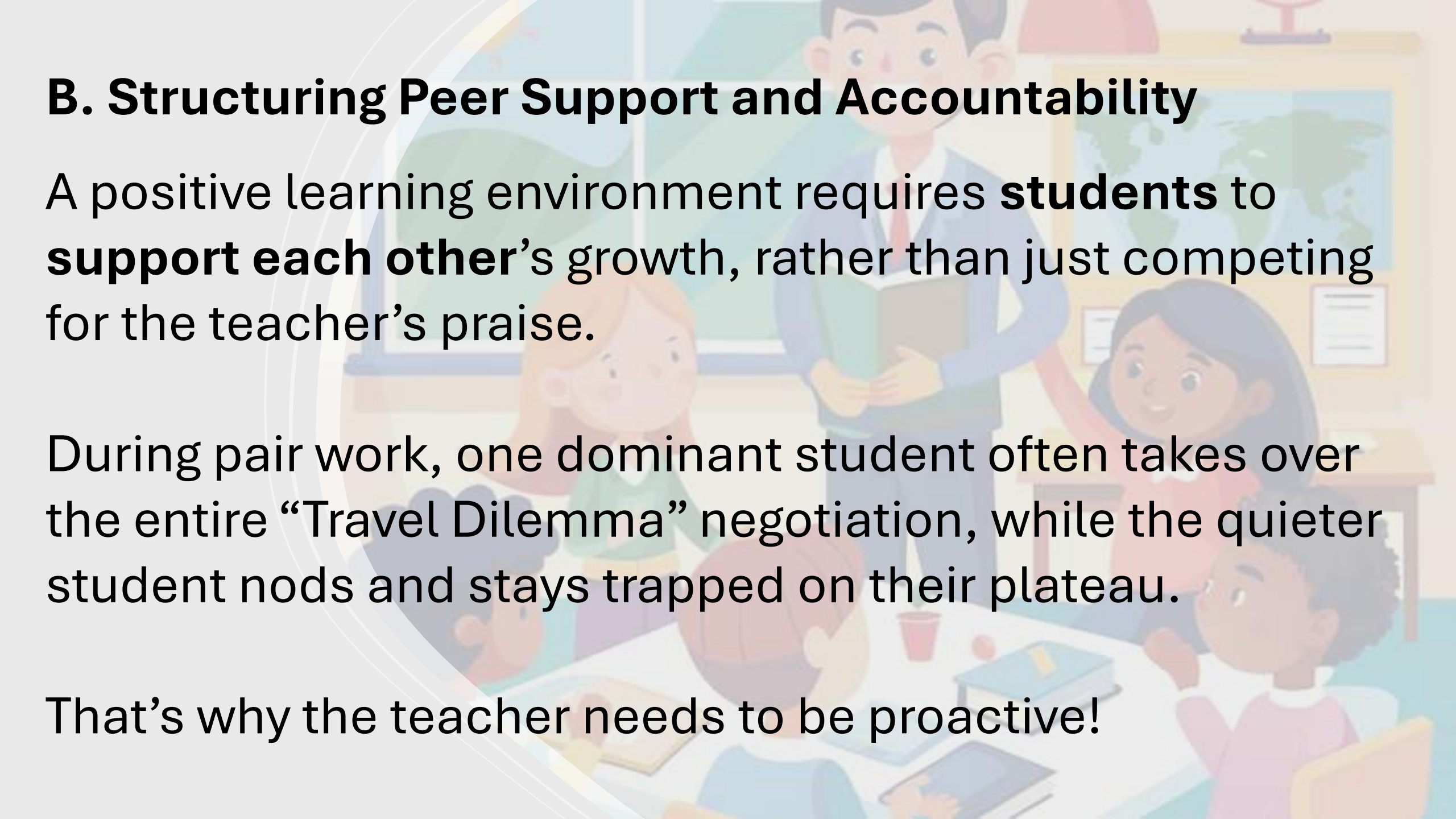
In the DMEE class **making mistakes is a sign of hard work**, it is **part of the process**. Not a default destination, nor an end in itself.

B. Structuring Peer Support and Accountability

A positive learning environment requires **students** to **support each other**'s growth, rather than just competing for the teacher's praise.

During pair work, one dominant student often takes over the entire "Travel Dilemma" negotiation, while the quieter student nods and stays trapped on their plateau.

That's why the teacher needs to be proactive!



The teacher designs the activities so that **cooperation is mandatory**.

He /She assigns explicit, supportive peer roles. For example:

Student A is the “Language Scout”: Their job is to gently cheer when Student B tries to use a complex concession phrase.

Student B is the “Time Tracker”: They ensure both partners get equal speaking time.

This shifts the **classroom dynamic from an individual performance test to a collaborative team challenge**.

Normalizing the Struggle During Monitoring

How a teacher moves through the room during the “Application” phase determines the classroom climate. If a teacher hovers over a pair with a red pen or an aggressive posture, the environment shifts from a “learning zone” to an “assessment zone.”

The teacher’s physical presence should signal safety. He /She can sit, bend slightly or stand in such a way that they are to eye level with the students.

If they hear a student get stuck in a cognitive loop trying to formulate a sentence, they **should not interrupt** to penalise them.

An **encouraging nod or a gentle prompt** (such as “You've got the idea, keep going, what was that connector we practiced?’’) **reinforces the positive feeling of the classroom as a laboratory for experimentation, not a courtroom.**

Teachers can **plan the perfect task**, **master** their **timing** down to the second, and **model** the target language beautifully.

But if their students walk into a room where they are **terrified of making a mistake**, all the preparation goes out the window.

Non-linear learning requires **immense cognitive bravery**.

When a student tries to leave their comfortable plateau, they are stepping into a zone of confusion and potential errors.

Classroom Environment means building a **psychological safety net**. Classooms must be places where a messy, imperfect sentence is treated like a badge of honor, because a mistake means the brain is actively rebuilding itself."

Case Study 1: The Grammar Loop (Maria)

Observation: Maria used to use irregular past tense verbs ("went", "broke") perfectly. After you taught the past tense unit on regular -ed verbs, her accuracy dropped. She is now consistently saying "goed" and "breaked" on writing tasks.

What is actually happening cognitively? (Choose one):

A) Failure to study / forgetting material

B) A cognitive loop (overgeneralising a new rule during a consolidation phase)

Action Plan:

Which DMEE factor will you deploy to help her resolve this loop? How will you execute it?

My DMEE Factor Choice: _____

My Classroom Strategy: _____

For Maria, the correct cognitive diagnosis is **B) A cognitive loop (overgeneralising a new rule during a consolidation phase)**.

To fix this, deploy the **Orientation/Structuring** or **Application/Practice** factor from the Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness by providing targeted contrastive feedback and differentiated practice.

Cognitive Analysis

- **Cognitive Status:** Maria shows **overgeneralisation** of the regular "-ed" rule.
- **Brain Process:** She is actively **restructuring** her linguistic system.
- **Learning Phase:** She is in a temporary **consolidation stage** where the new rule overrides past irregular forms.

Action Plan

- **DMEE Factor Choice: Application (or Orientation)** focusing on quality of teaching.
- **Classroom Strategy:** Use **contrastive drills** pairing irregular verbs with regular verbs side by side.
- **Execution Steps:**
  - Highlight irregular past forms in red on the board.
  - Have Maria sort verbs into two columns: regular and irregular.
  - Give her a focused editing task where she finds and fixes her own overgeneralizations.

Case Study 2: The Vocabulary Freeze (Ahmed)

Observation: Ahmed is highly fluent at a B1 level and confidently participates in discussions. However, for the last four months, he has used the words *"good"*, *"bad"*, and *"nice"* to describe every single idea, movie, text, and opinion. He knows higher vocabulary but won't use it.

What is actually happening cognitively? (Choose one):

A) He has reached a low-effort "Brain Comfort Zone" (Intermediate Plateau).

B) He lacks the intellectual capacity to learn advanced synonyms.

Action Plan: Which DMEE factor will you deploy to shake him out of his linguistic safety net?

My DMEE Factor Choice: _____

My Classroom Strategy: _____

For Ahmed, the correct cognitive diagnosis is: **A) He has reached a low-effort "Brain Comfort Zone" (Intermediate Plateau)**.

To break this habit, deploy the **Orientation/Structuring (specifically setting challenging goals)** or **Questioning/Application** factor from the Dynamic Model of Educational Effectiveness to raise his linguistic stakes.

Cognitive Analysis

- **Cognitive Status:** Ahmed is experiencing the **fossilisation** of simple vocabulary.
- **Brain Process:** His working memory relies on **low-effort retrieval paths** because his current vocabulary is already successful for basic communication.
- **Learning Phase:** He has stalled at a **comfort plateau**, meaning he has no internal cognitive drive to risk using harder words when easy ones work.

Action Plan

- **DMEE Factor Choice: Orientation** (via Goal Setting) or **Application** (via Task Demand).
- **Classroom Strategy:** Implement **"Forbidden Words" (Taboo)** challenges and **tiered rubric expectations** for his speaking and writing.
- **Execution Steps:**
  - Ban the words "good," "bad," and "nice" from specific speaking activities.
  - Provide him with a **visual word bank** of advanced alternatives (e.g., *profound, detrimental, compelling*) to use instead.
  - Adjust his personal grading rubric so that he cannot score the highest mark unless he uses a minimum number of advanced synonyms.


Thank you
for your
attention