



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
ESOL Examinations

Cambridge English

Assessing Speaking

An approach grounded in theory
and practice

Evelina D. Galaczi

Jill Buggey



PART OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT
GROUP





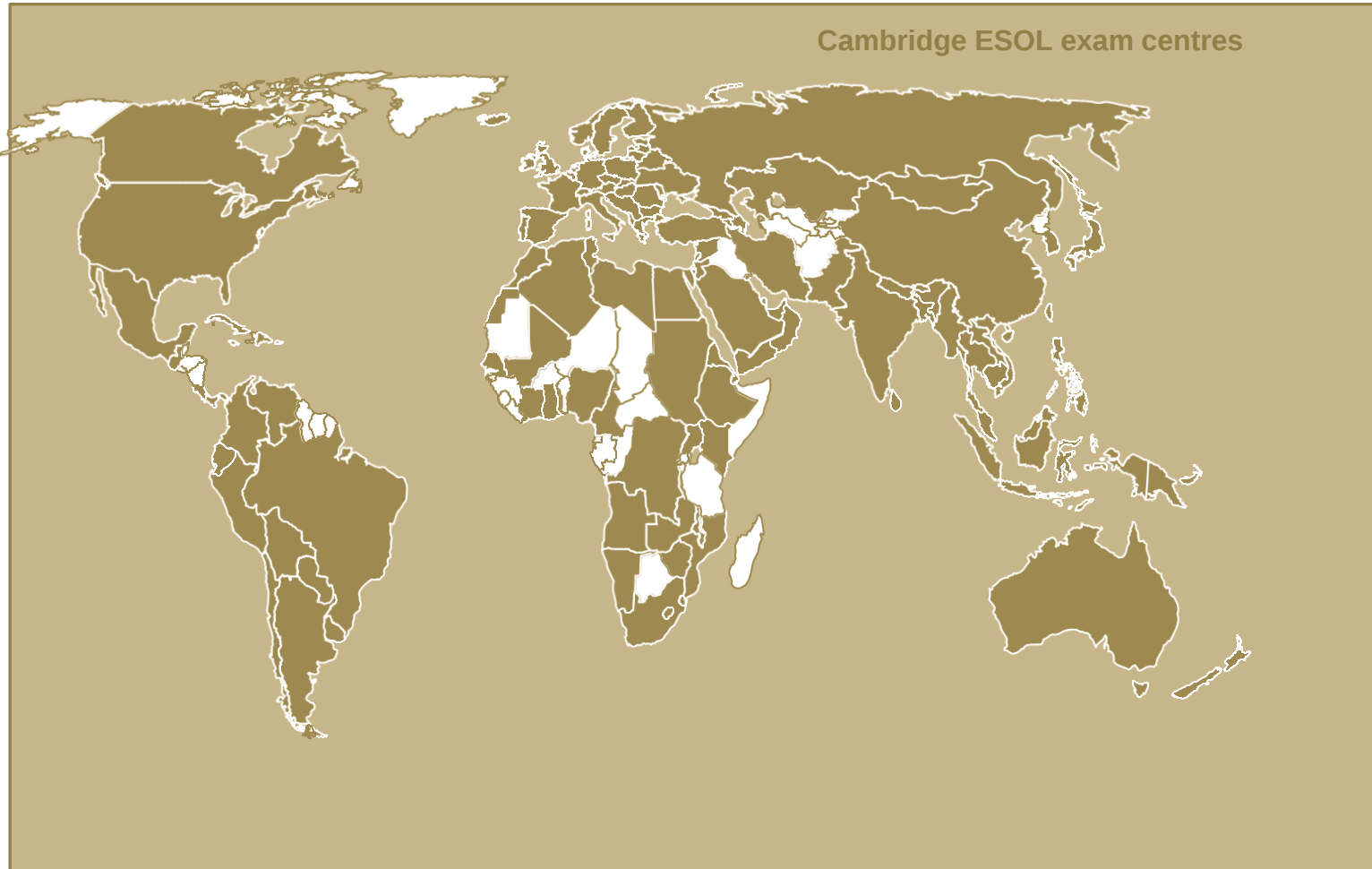
Who are you?

- A. I'm a teacher.
- B. I'm the co-ordinator/director of studies.
- C. I'm a learner.
- D. I'm a parent.
- E. I'm a researcher.

Cambridge English



Where are you?





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Cambridge English

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Delhi

Chennai

Shanghai

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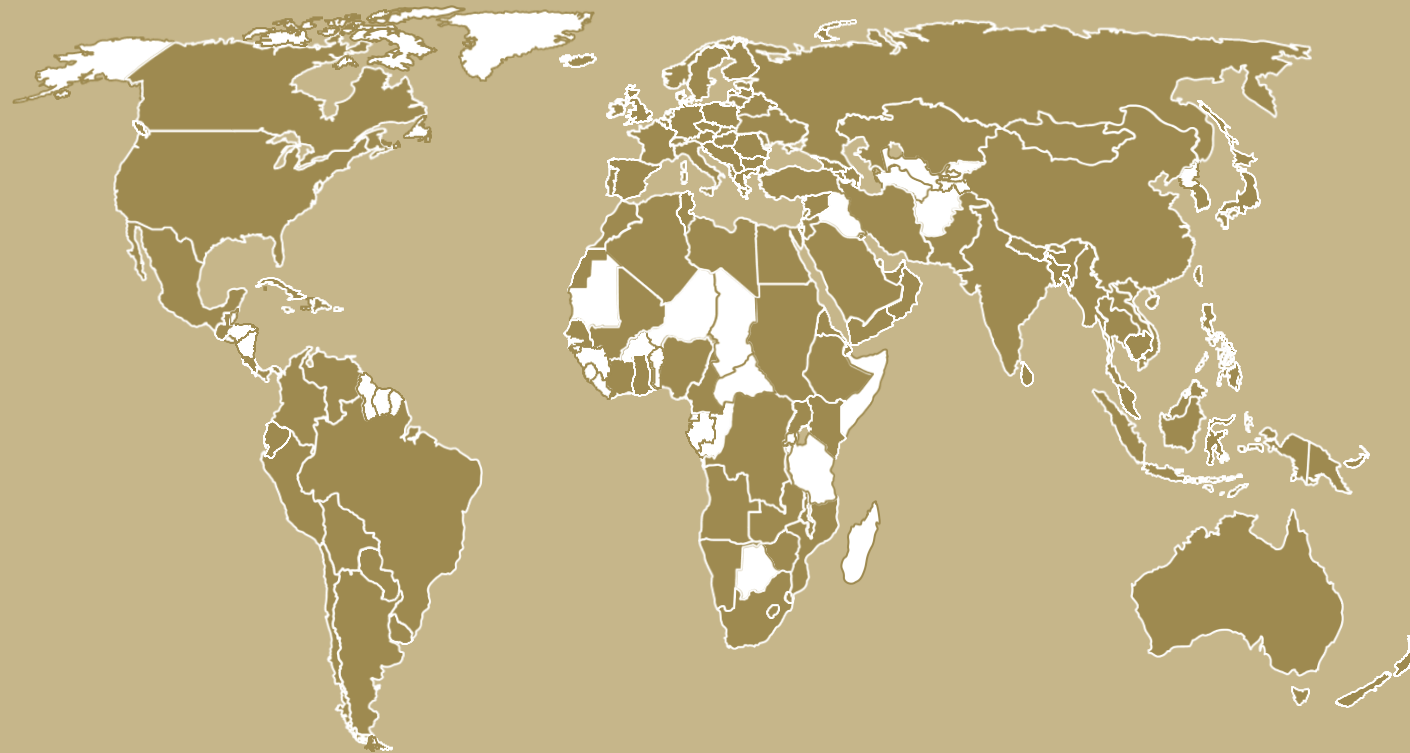
Taipei

Ho Chi Minh City

Kuala Lumpur

Sydney

Cambridge ESOL exam centres

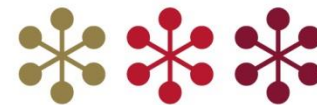


4 m candidates
130 countries

18,000
Speaking Examiners
700
Team Leaders

43
Regional Team Leaders
23
Professional Support
Leaders

2,700
test centres
50,000
preparation centres



Our task in this session

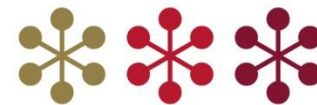
- to overview different speaking test formats
- to explore paired speaking tests in terms of research and practice
- to explore implications for the classroom



How can speaking ability be assessed?

Direct formats

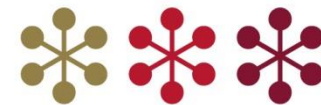
Semi-direct formats



How can speaking ability be assessed?

Direct formats

- interaction with a live examiner:
 - one-to-one
 - paired
 - group
- scored by human raters



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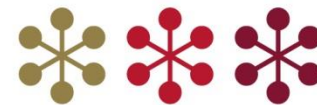
Semi-direct formats

- computer-based:
test taker speech is elicited by a machine
- scored by human raters
or machine scored



Why direct assessment of speaking?

- Direct speaking tests focus on **production** and **interaction**
- Computer-based testing lacks **co-construction** and **interaction**



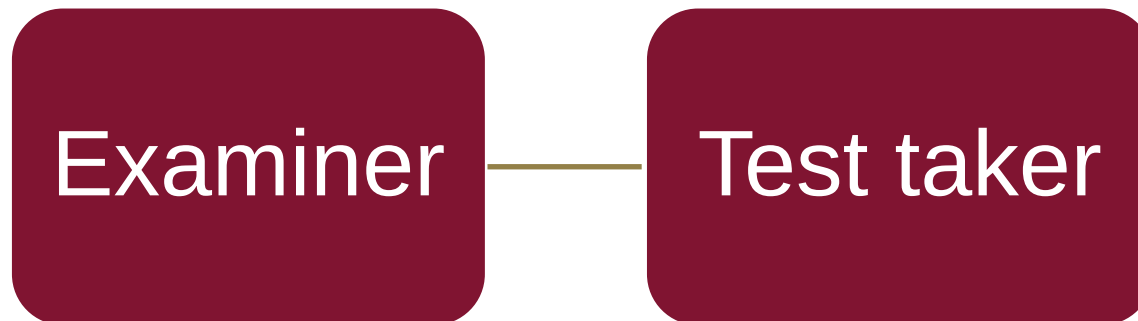
No 'best' way to test speaking

- each format has its unique advantages and limitations
- each format is suitable for different purposes



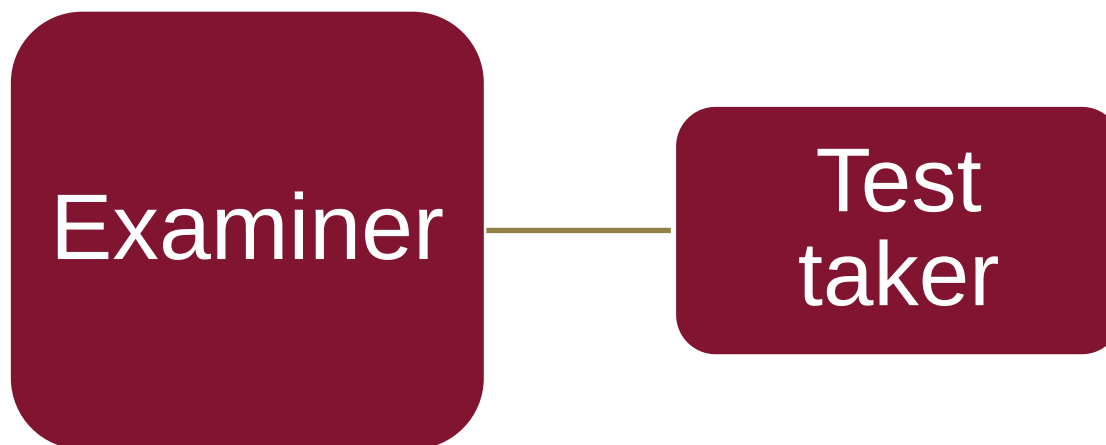
Traditional approach to speaking tests

The direct individual speaking test format





Issues with the individual speaking test format



- More restricted tasks and types of interaction
- Unequal rights between examiner and candidate
- Unbalanced power distribution



What's the solution?

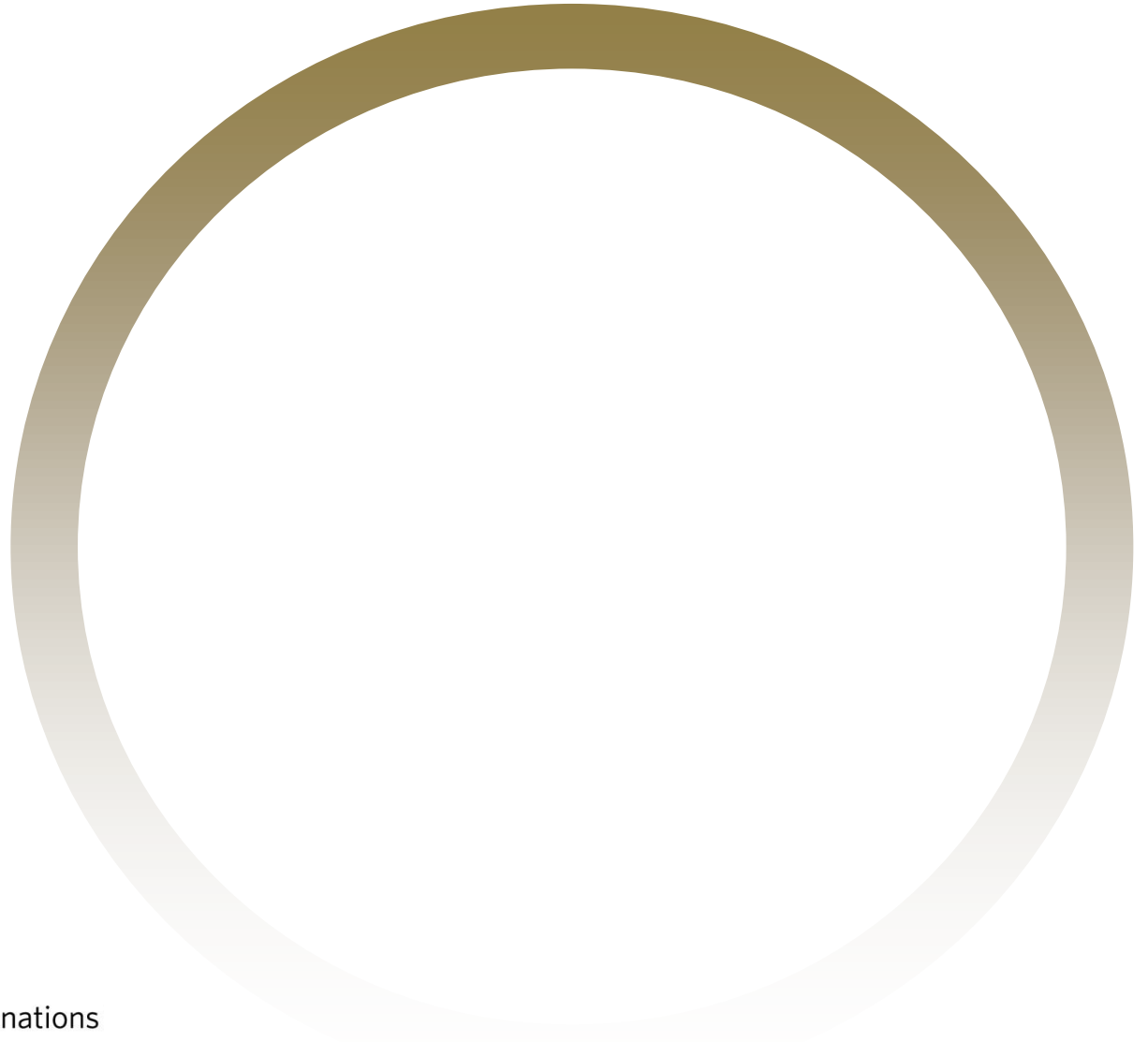


What about a paired format?





Positive effects of paired tests



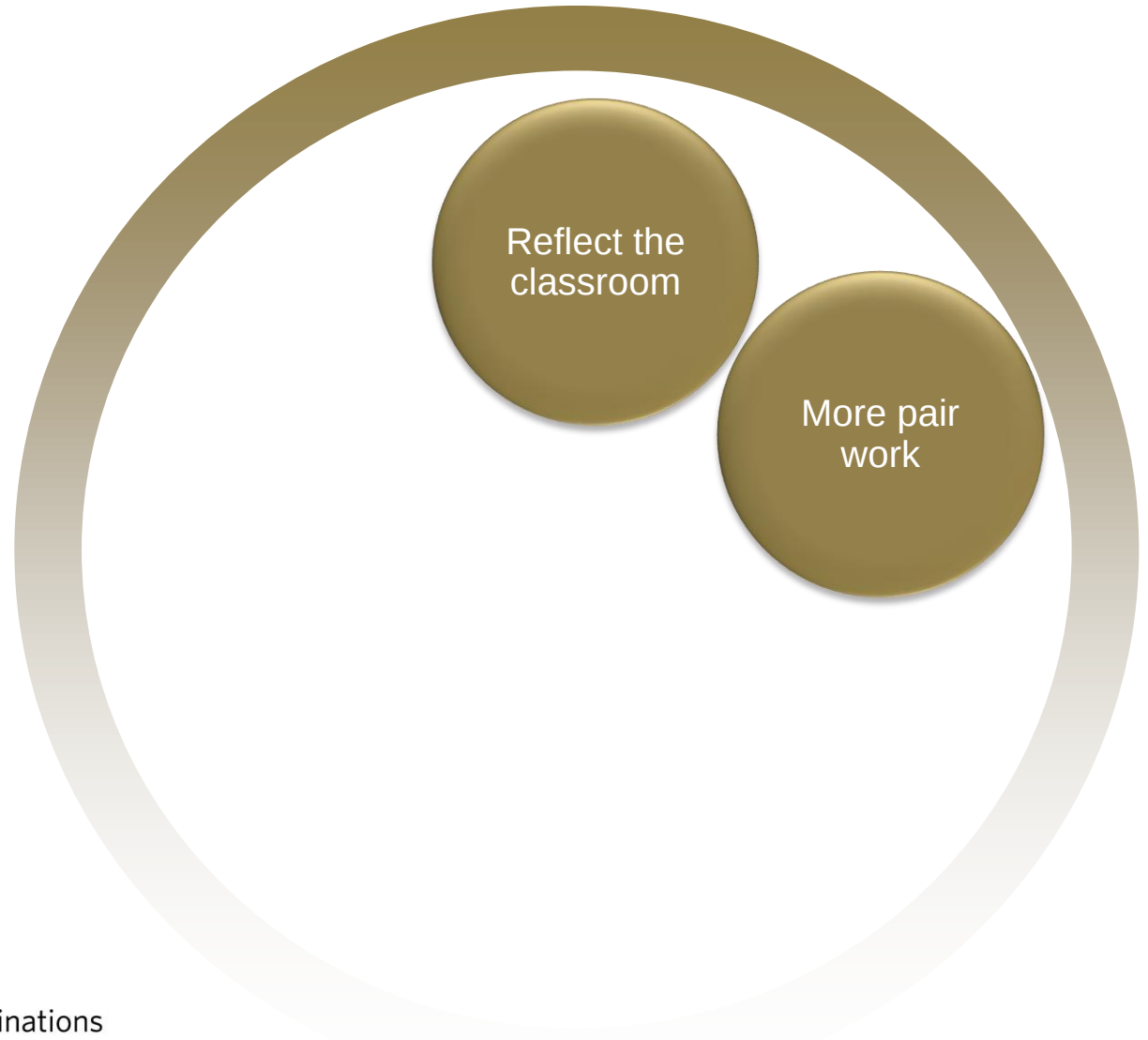


Positive effects of paired tests



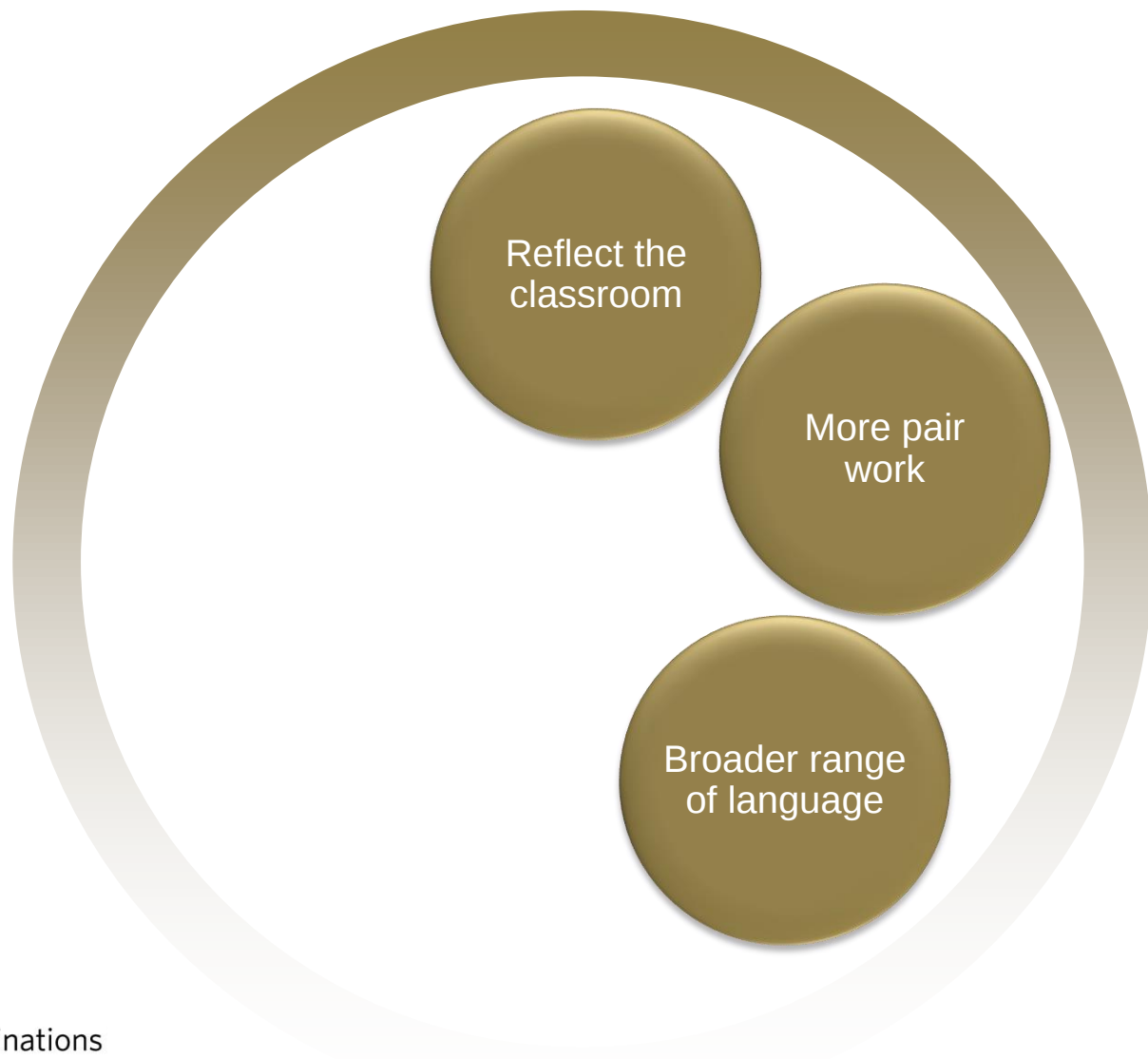


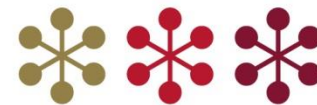
Positive effects of paired tests



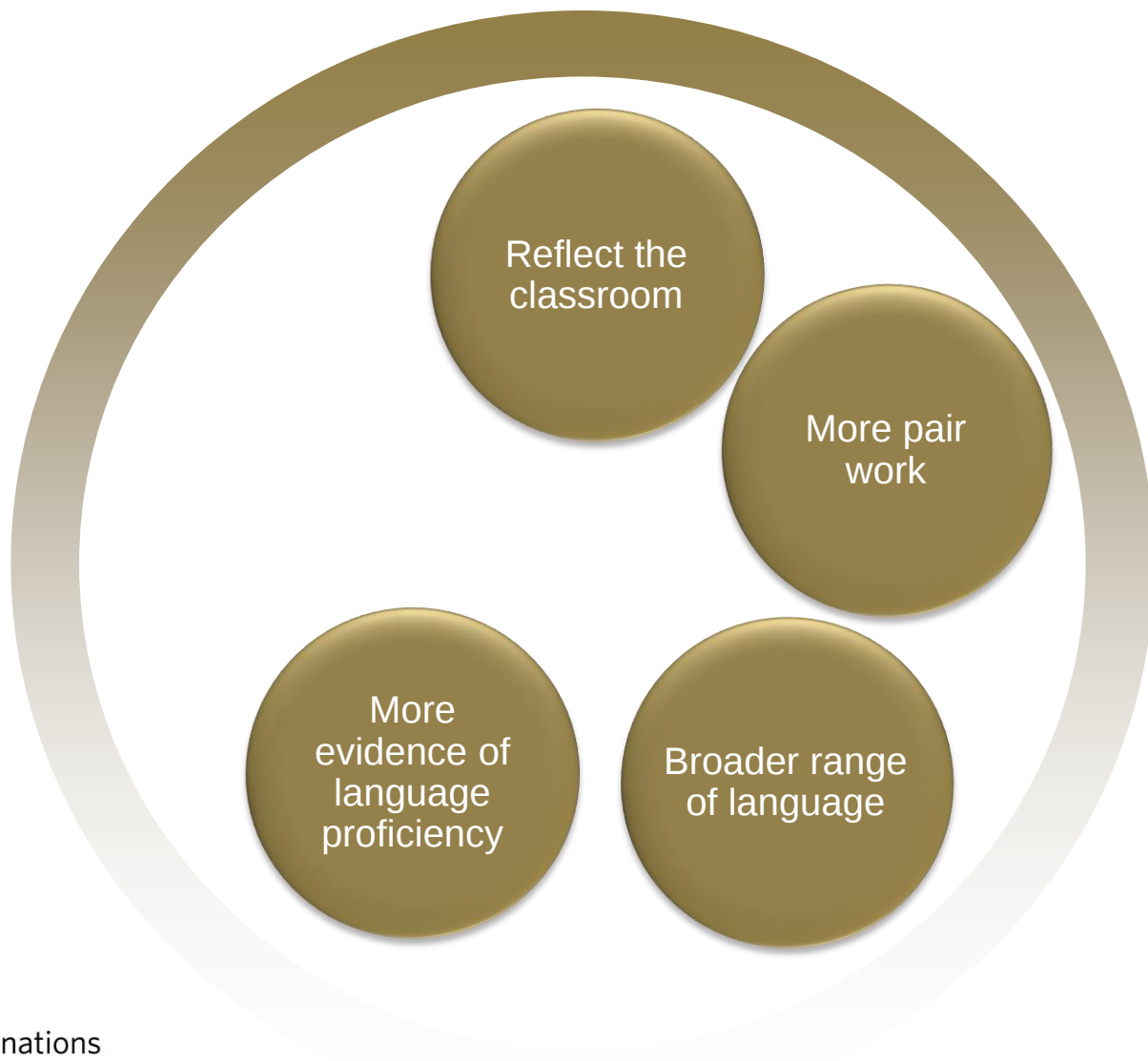


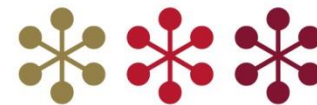
Positive effects of paired tests



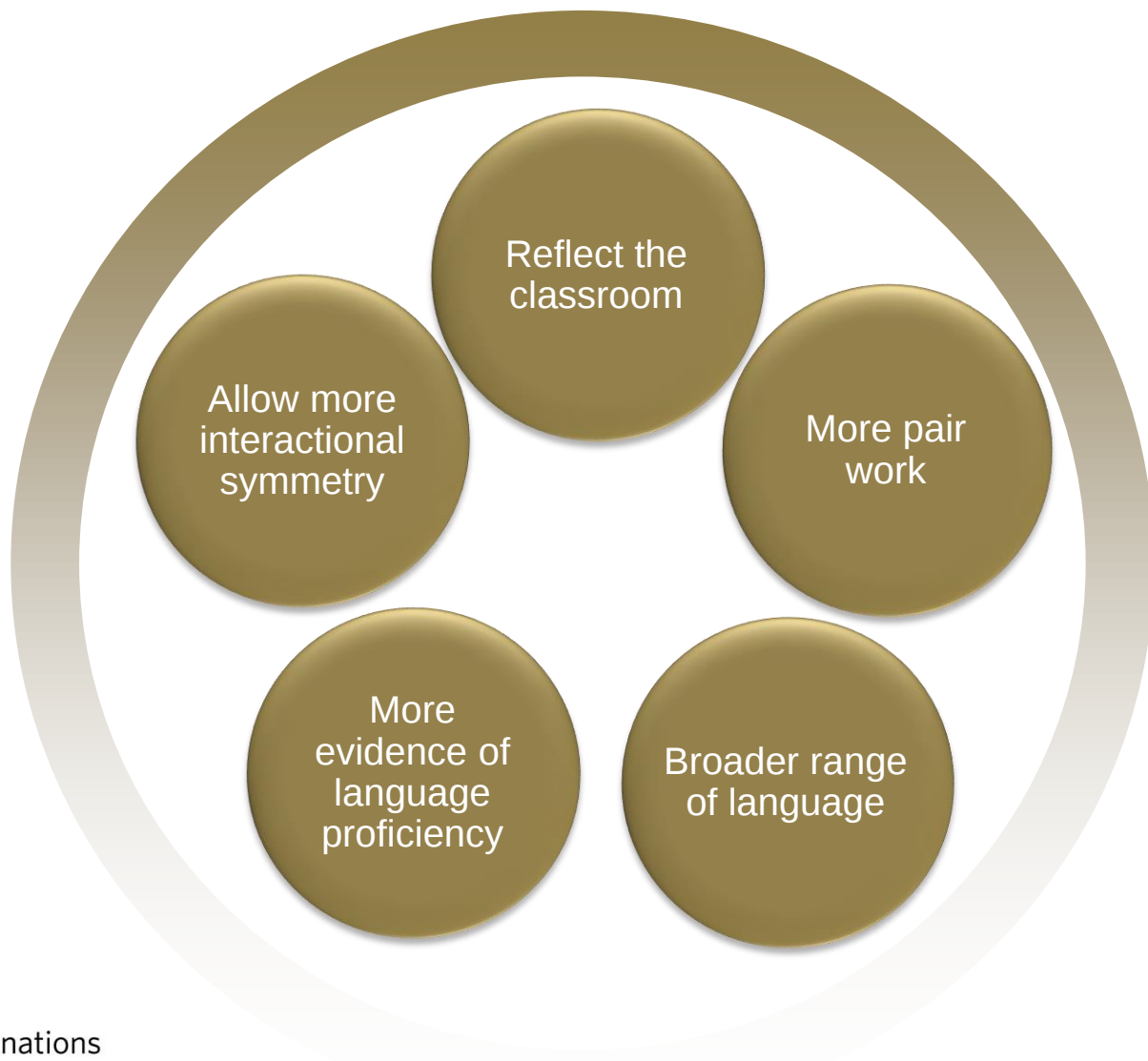


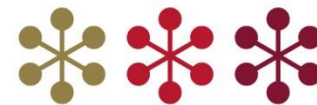
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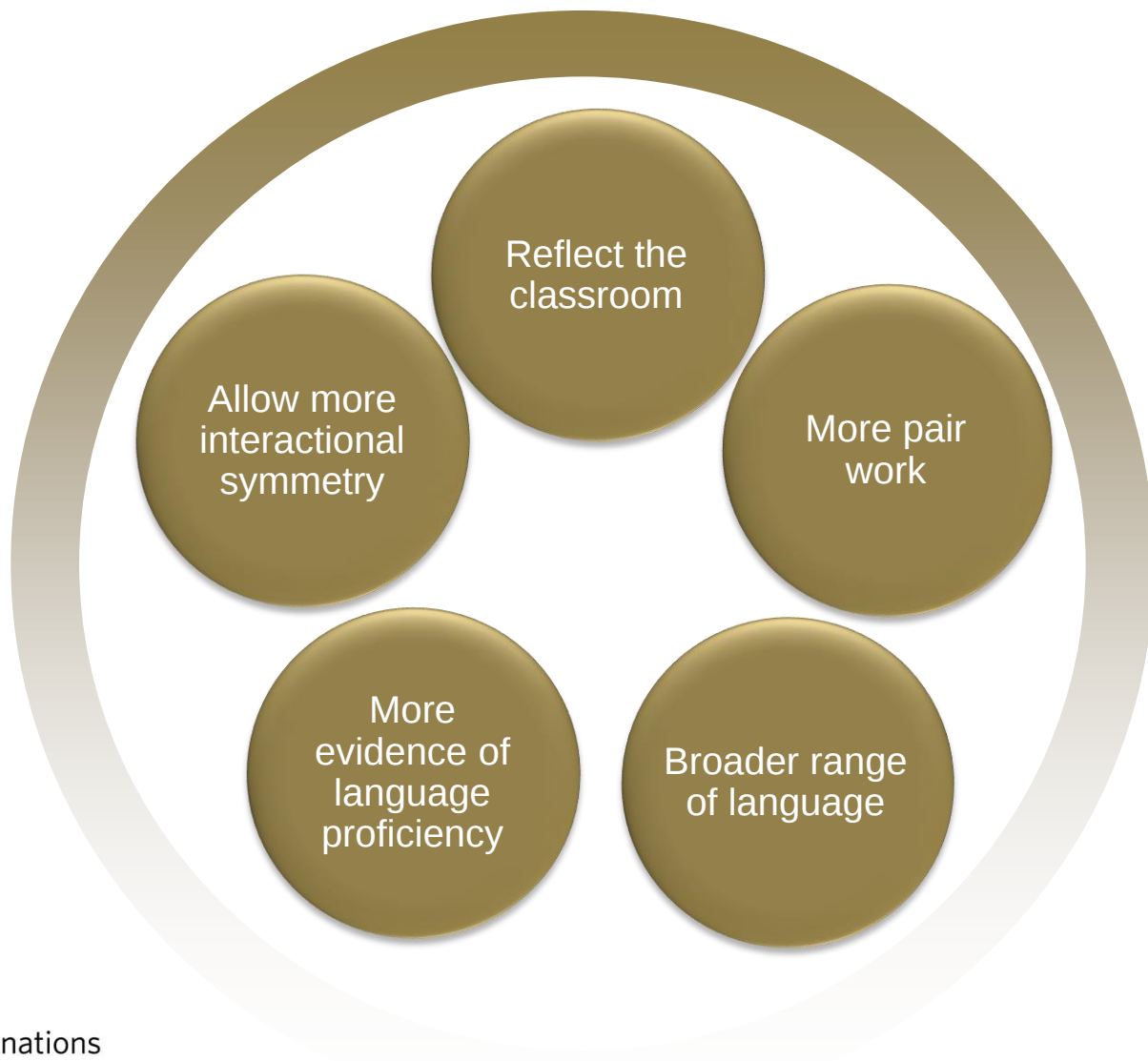


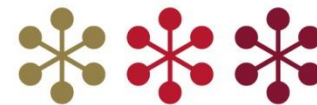
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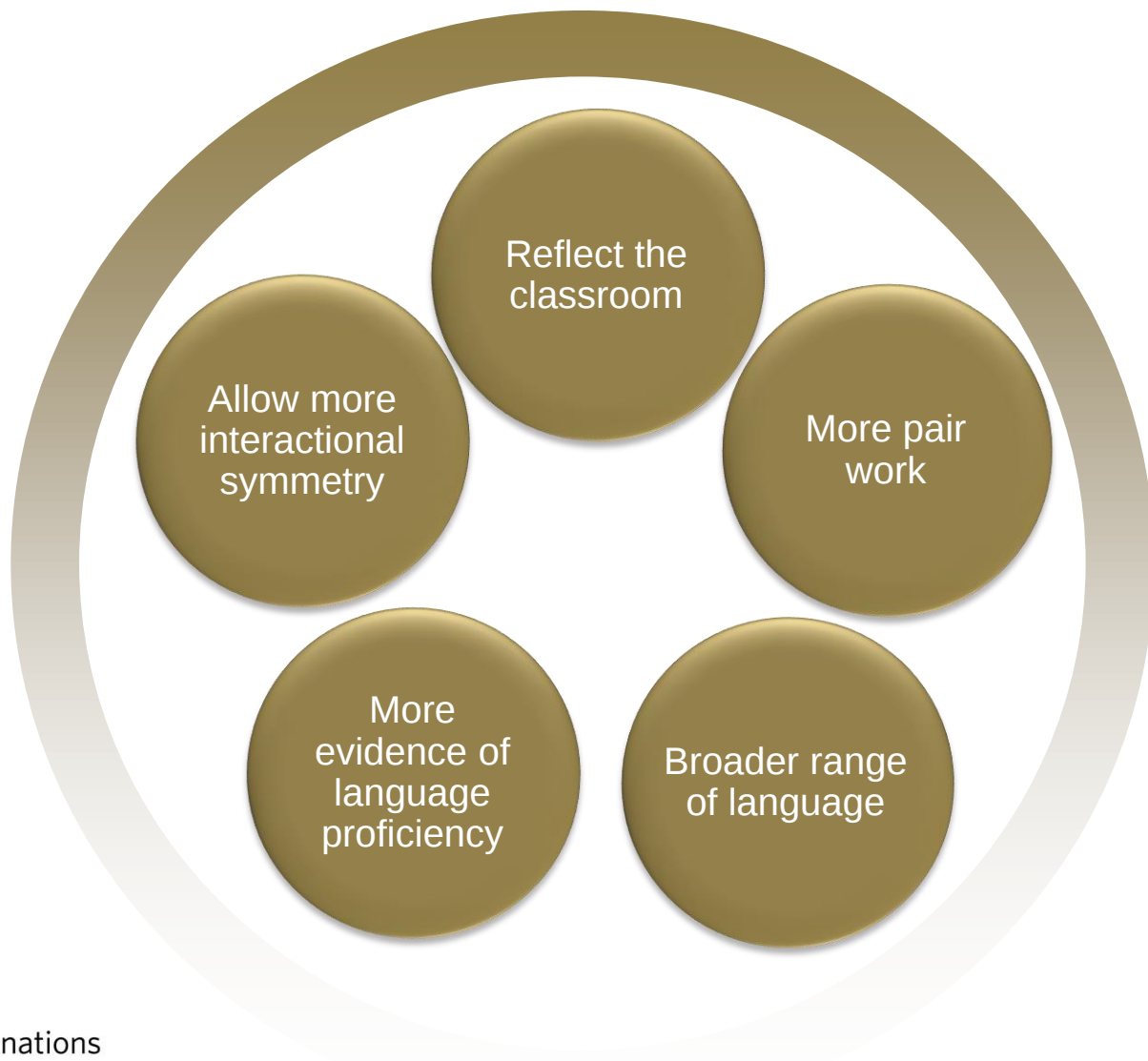
Potential issues

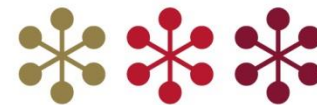




Potential issues

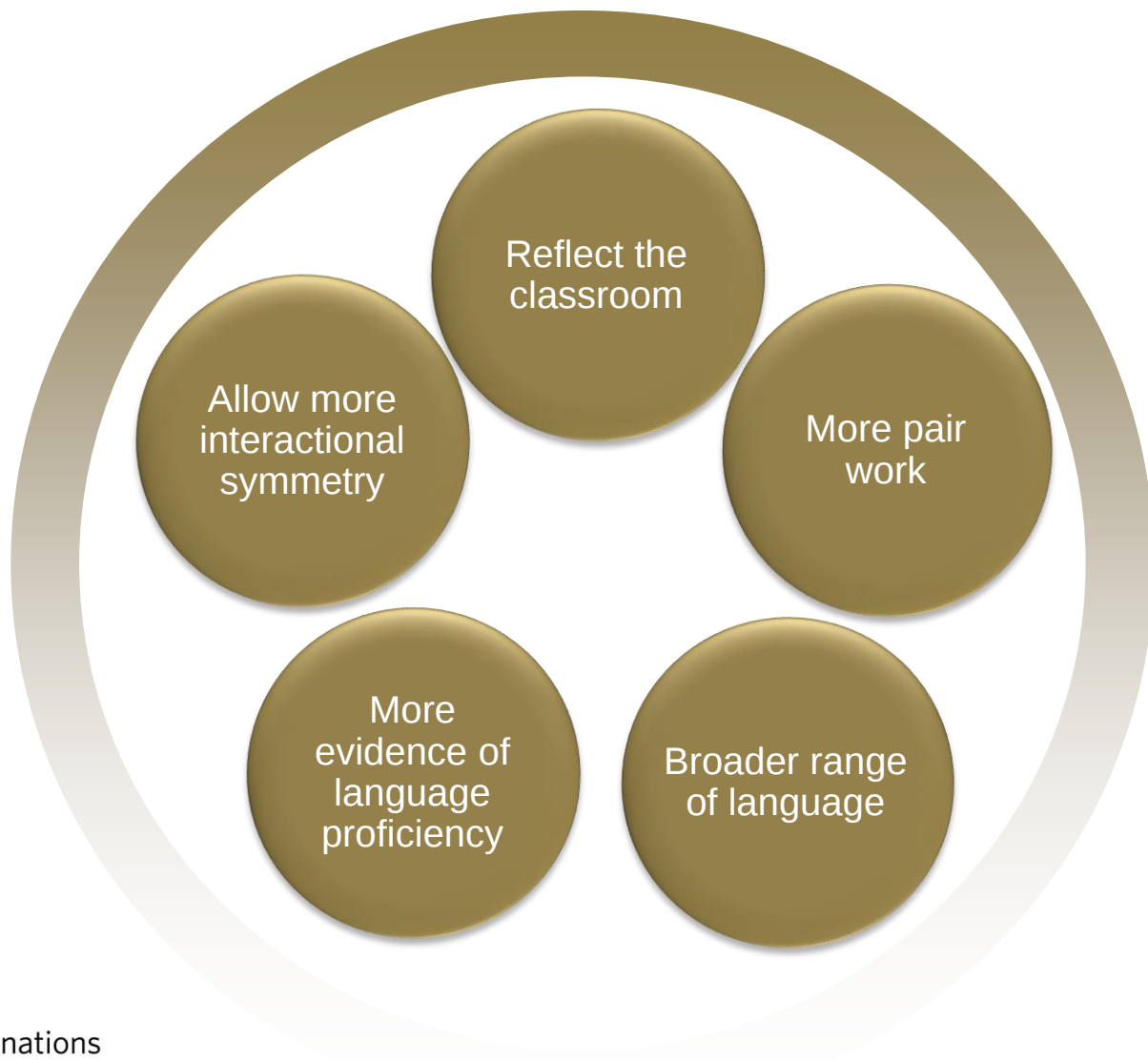
- Complexity and uncontrolled variables





Potential issues

- Complexity and uncontrolled variables
- Individual scores based on joint construction





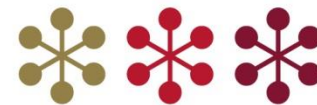
Is this a fair test?

What insights does the available
research provide?



True or false? In a paired format ...

1. The test taker has more turns
2. The test taker has more opportunities for initiating topics
3. There is more collaborative development of topics
4. There is more examiner talk
5. The effect of background variables is higher
6. There is more variety of speech functions



True or false? In a paired format ...

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2. The test taker has more opportunities for initiating topics

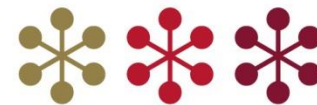
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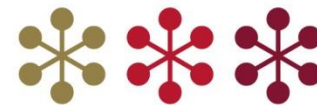
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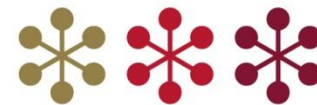
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True



Interaction in paired formats

- more **complex** cognitive and strategic processes



Interaction in paired formats

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- which elicit a **richer range** of language



Interaction in paired formats

- more **complex** cognitive and strategic processes



- which elicit a **richer range** of language



- which allows for **better inferences** to be made about a candidate's proficiency in **wider real-life contexts**



Effect of background variables

‘Interlocutor effect’ (O’Sullivan, 2002)

The effect of background variables on performance from other candidates and examiners

- proficiency level
- personality
- acquaintanceship
- cultural background
- age
- gender
- status, etc.

Note: both in individual and paired tests



How influential are these variables?

- Effect on discourse?
- Effect on scores?



Effect of background variables

proficiency level

personality

acquaintanceship

**Contradictory
findings**

**No direct,
predictable
impact**



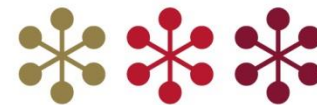
Effect of background variables

proficiency level

some influence on conversation, but
impact is small

personality

acquaintanceship



Effect of background variables

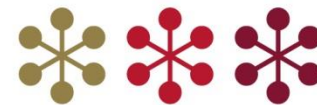
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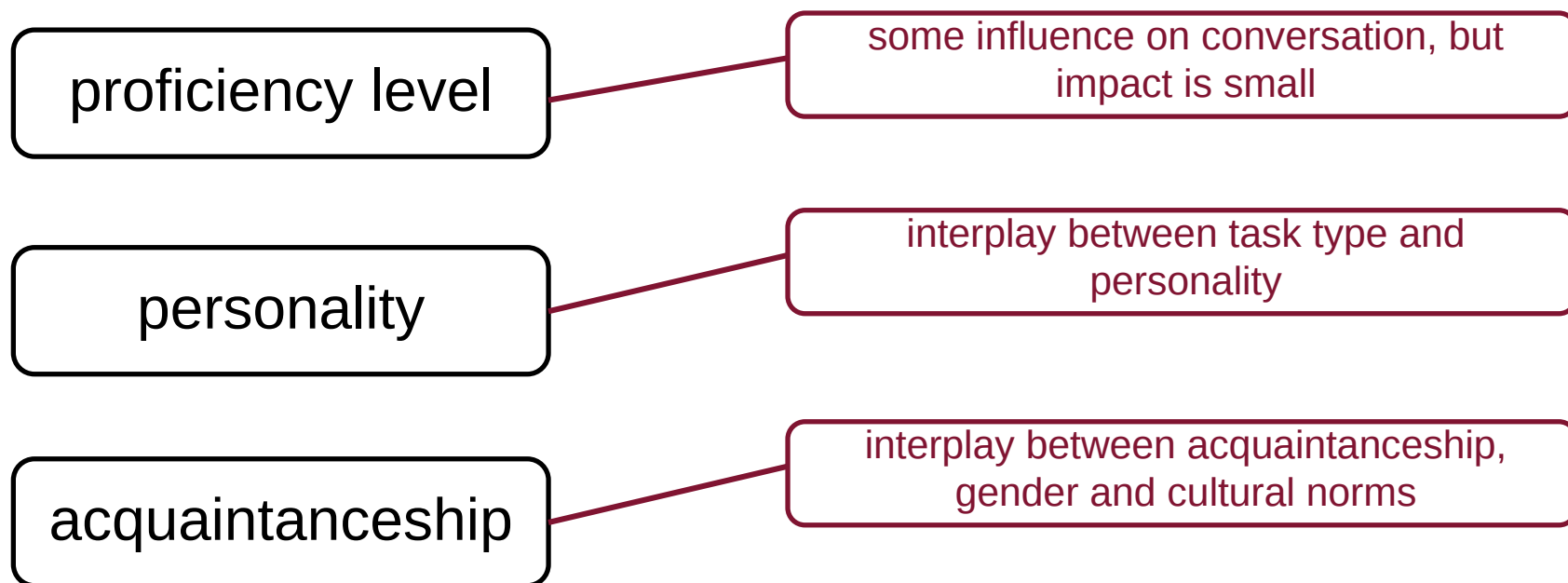
personality

interplay between task type and
personality

acquaintanceship



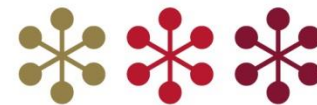
Effect of background variables





What should we do about it?

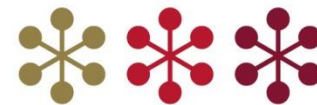
Variability related to different characteristics of conversational partners is all ‘that happens in the real world. And so they are things that we should be interested in testing.’ (Swain, cited in Fox, 2004)



What should we do about it?

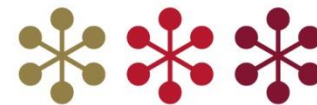
➡ Paired speaking tests present
'challenges, but mostly opportunities'

(Brooks, 2008)



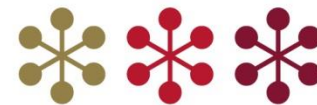
The Cambridge approach

- a range of task types, only one of which is paired:
 - benefit from paired format
 - control possible limitations



The Cambridge approach

- a range of task types, only one of which is paired:
 - benefit from paired format
 - control possible limitations
- use of analytical and global criteria and scales



The Cambridge approach

- a range of task types, only one of which is paired:
 - benefit from paired format
 - control possible limitations
- use of analytical and global criteria and scales
- training and monitoring of examiners



Which of these Cambridge ESOL tests do not use a paired format?

- Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)
- Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)
- Cambridge English: First (FCE)
- Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)
- Cambridge English: Key (KET)
- Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)
- IELTS
- Cambridge English: Business Certificates (BEC)

Why not?



Which of these Cambridge ESOL tests do not use a paired format?

- Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)
- Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)
- Cambridge English: First (FCE)
- Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)
- Cambridge English: Key (KET)
- **Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)**
- **IELTS**
- Cambridge English: Business Certificates (BEC)



Finally ...

- is the test **fit-for-purpose**?
- is this test **fair**?
- does it have positive **impact**?



What does this mean for classrooms?



What does this mean for classrooms?

- students need to be supported with appropriate materials



What does this mean for classrooms?

- students need to be supported with appropriate materials
- suitable classroom practice to develop collaborative skills



What is meant by “collaborative skills”?

Collaborative
skills



What is meant by 'collaborative skills'?

Topic development

Collaborative
skills



What is meant by 'collaborative skills'?

Topic development

Turn-taking

Collaborative
skills



What is meant by 'collaborative skills'?

Topic development

Turn-taking

Collaborative
skills

Interactive listening and
listener support



What is meant by 'collaborative skills'?

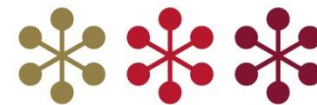
Topic development

Turn-taking

Collaborative
skills

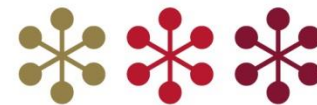
Speaker nomination

Interactive listening and
listener support



Cambridge English: First Speaking Part 3 (collaborative task)

- B2 level
- decision-making task based on a series of pictures
- candidates talk together for about 3 minutes

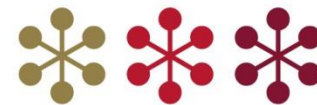


Cambridge English: First Speaking Part 3 (collaborative task)

I'd like you to imagine that a local café wants to attract more people. Here are some of the suggestions they're considering.

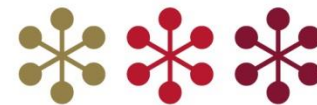
First, talk to each other about **how successful these suggestions might be.**

Then decide **which two would attract most people.**



Examples of collaborative skills and areas for improvement

Ana	Giallo



Collaborative skills – extract 1

Ana Yeah...*this one seems to be good, the terrace, but maybe if you have a good weather...*

Giallo Yes, *I don't know here in Cambridge...*

Ana Yeah, it's difficult [both laugh]

Gialloand then if you.... have just opened a café or a bar
maybe it's not a good idea to ...put some place ... , sorry,
some tables outside. I think it's better to concentrate on
music or...other ideas....

Ana Yeah, yeah



Collaborative skills – extract 2

Ana *Yeah, yeah What do you think about football matches?*

Giallo *Depends on the target... of the public that you are interested in. I mean if you are interested in ...*

Ana *Sports?*

Giallo *Yeah, if you are interested in attracting men it's more than good, it's a perfect idea but I don't know. You can tell! I mean would you go in a café with a football match?*

Ana: *Yeah, me not but most of the people I think... maybe it's a good idea.*



Collaborative skills – extract 3

Ana *But I think that the one that would attract... the most people, I think, is the place where you can watch TV... I mean football matches or sports **because** lots of people are interested in that...*

Giallo *Mmm*

Ana *and maybe the coffee free is also important*

Giallo *Yes...*

Ana *Young people has not a lot of money, yeah*

Giallo *Yeah, I don't know about television. I think when you begin, maybe it's better to put like some comfortable sofas **because** it's...an example of your café.*



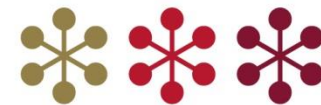
Examples of collaborative skills

Ana	Giallo	Both
agrees with Giallo	initiates discussion	turn-take well
asks Giallo questions	invites Ana to speak	don't interrupt each other
develops the topic by giving reasons for her decisions	moves discussion forward	listen and respond to what their partner says



Developing collaborative skills

Areas to improve on	How can your students improve?
• Turn taking • Initiating discussion • Giving views and opinions • Listening actively	



Developing collaborative skills

Areas to improve on	How can your students improve?
•Turn taking •Initiating discussion •Giving views and opinions	•Analyse clips •Record your students •Practise useful language •Raise awareness of skills and language needed



2. What do you think Giallo and Ana could do to improve their performance in this part of the test? Note down some other language you think they could have used to do the following:

<i>Language to:</i>	<i>My examples</i>
turn-take	_____
initiate discussion	_____
ask for and give opinions	_____
conclude/ summarise	_____



<i>Opinions/Views/Ideas</i>	What do you think about ...? It seems to me that ... I think ... What do you think? From what I know ... In my opinion ... As far as I'm concerned... Personally speaking ... Could I just add that ... Don't you think ...? I've heard ... I'm sure ...
-----------------------------	---



■ Task Three

1. Look at the topic areas below. Think of two questions to ask your partner in each area.

- sports
- leisure interests
- work and study
- family
- travel and holidays
- entertainment
- experiences
- daily life
- jobs/studies/education
- the area where they live
- likes and dislikes
- future plans

You can write your questions in the box below if you like.

<i>Topic area</i>	<i>My questions</i>
	1. _____ _____ 2. _____ _____
	1. _____ _____

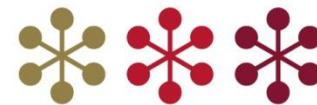
2. Then practise in pairs or small groups, taking turns to ask your partner(s) your questions, and answer their questions.

A: Initiating discussions

B: Giving views and opinions

C: Developing topics

D: Collaborative turn-taking



Summary of today's webinar

- overview of different speaking test formats
- exploration of paired speaking tests in terms of research and practice
- implications for the classroom
- resources available



Further information

Learning-oriented Assessment
14th & 16th January 2013

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