

Student-Centered Speaking Activities to Increase Fluency and Accuracy

This webinar focuses on activities that participants can use in teaching speaking in multi-level classes with students of all ages.

- During this presentation, participants will receive step-by-step instructions for each activity so they are prepared to use them with confidence in their classes.
- Each speaking activity includes options for teaching different types of students. With some modification, each activity can be reused multiple times during a language course.



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She recently edited *New Ways in Teaching Speaking*, Second Edition, a book with over 100 new activities.

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Let's begin
with your
ideas!





Think about your class during an average week.

What percentage of class time is spent on
extended speaking activities,
in which students **focus on communicating ideas**
more than correct grammar?

Today's Goals

1. Define terms related to student-centered speaking instruction.
2. Examine step-by-step instructions for student-centered speaking activities to increase fluency and accuracy.
3. Consider options for teaching these activities to different types of students.

Teacher-Centered

- ❖ strongly focuses on the teacher and the teacher's ideas
- ❖ more traditional style

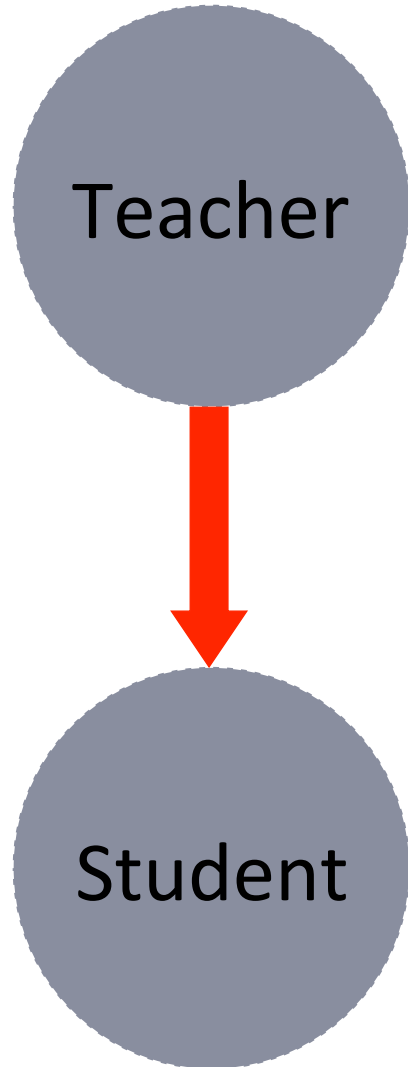


Student-Centered

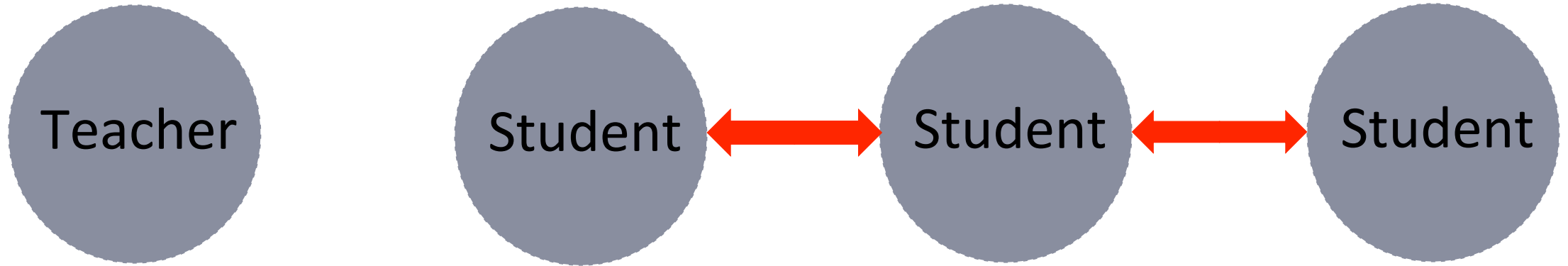
- ❖ focuses on learner participation
- ❖ more active involvement



Teacher-Centered



Student-Centered





What are some benefits of student-centered learning?

“

The Teacher's Role in the Student-Centered Classroom

“[Teachers] will ... be much more around the classroom than in front of it. There is no sense in any of the literature that I read that this is a diminished, less essential role.”



How would you define
fluency in speaking?

Language teachers have professional definitions of
“fluency” in a language.



“

“**Fluency** ... is the capacity to speak fluidly, confidently, and at a rate consistent with the norms of the relevant native speech community.”

“

“**Fluency** ... includes ... the ability to speak with a good but not necessarily perfect command of intonation, vocabulary, and grammar.”

“

“Accuracy ... refers to the ability to speak properly – that is, selecting the correct words and expressions to convey the intended meaning, as well as using the grammatical patterns of English.”



Which sentence is more fluent and
which is more accurate?

1. I ... am very ... happy ... to be ... here.
2. I happy, very happy, here.

Fluency or accuracy?
Which is more important?

Fluency



Accuracy

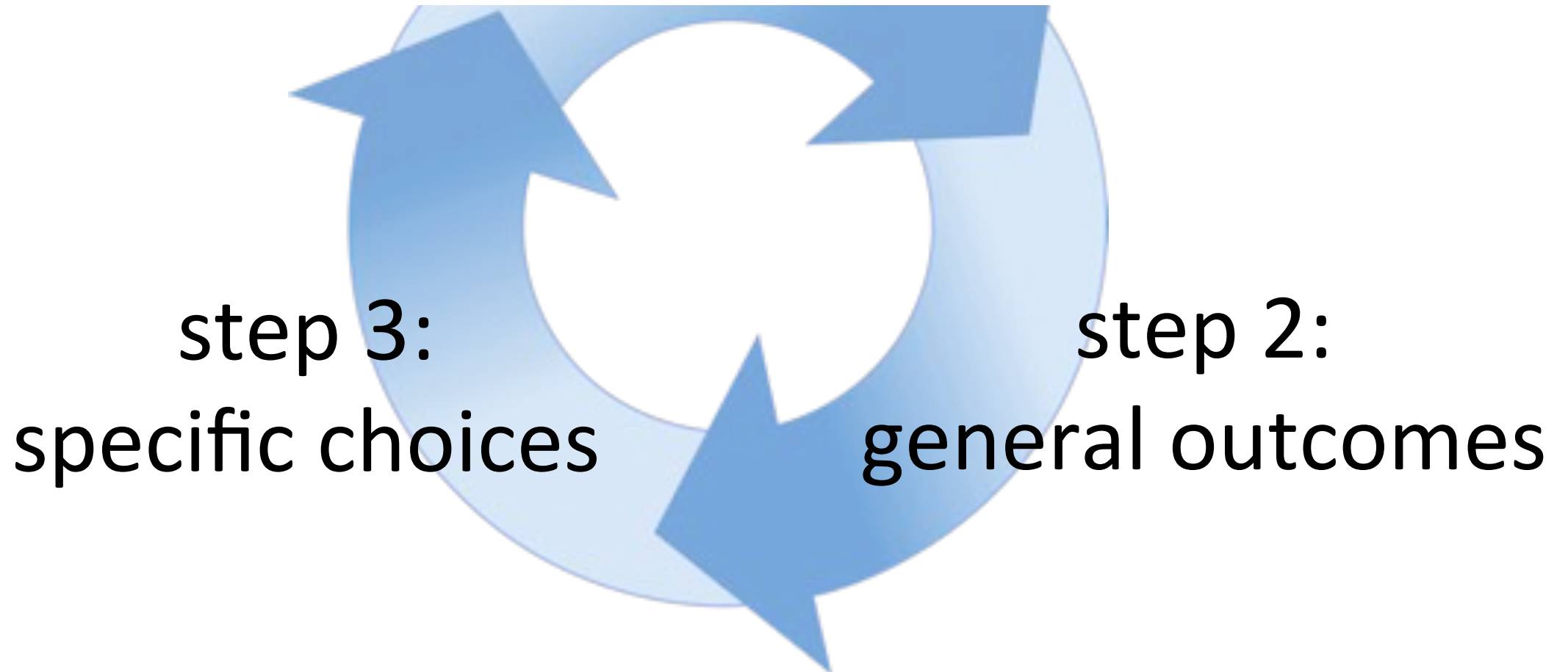


The most proficient speakers
speak with fluency and accuracy.



Planning: The Process

step 1: reflection



Planning: Activity and Location



Challenge: Classroom Space





How do you manage situations
where classroom space is not
easy to use for speaking activities?

Planning: Topics

- ❖ interesting
- ❖ authentic, connected to real life
- ❖ sensitive to your students



Planning: Question Types

- ❖ close-ended
- ❖ open-ended

Examples

Do you have a favorite holiday?

What is your favorite holiday?



Planning: Question Types



Examples

❖ close-ended

Do you have a favorite holiday?

❖ open-ended

What is your favorite holiday? Why?



What is an example of an open-ended question that
your students would like to answer?

Student-Centered Speaking Activities

- ❖ step-by-step instructions
- ❖ options for teaching multi-level classes and different types of students
- ❖ repetition of the activity possible with some revision



How do your students react to activities involving movement?

Activity: Communication Lines

for students of all ages

- ❖ stand in lines
- ❖ can move from
 - ❖ “asking questions” to “answering questions”
 - ❖ from “answering questions” to “asking questions”



Materials for the Teacher to Use

Timer



Questions



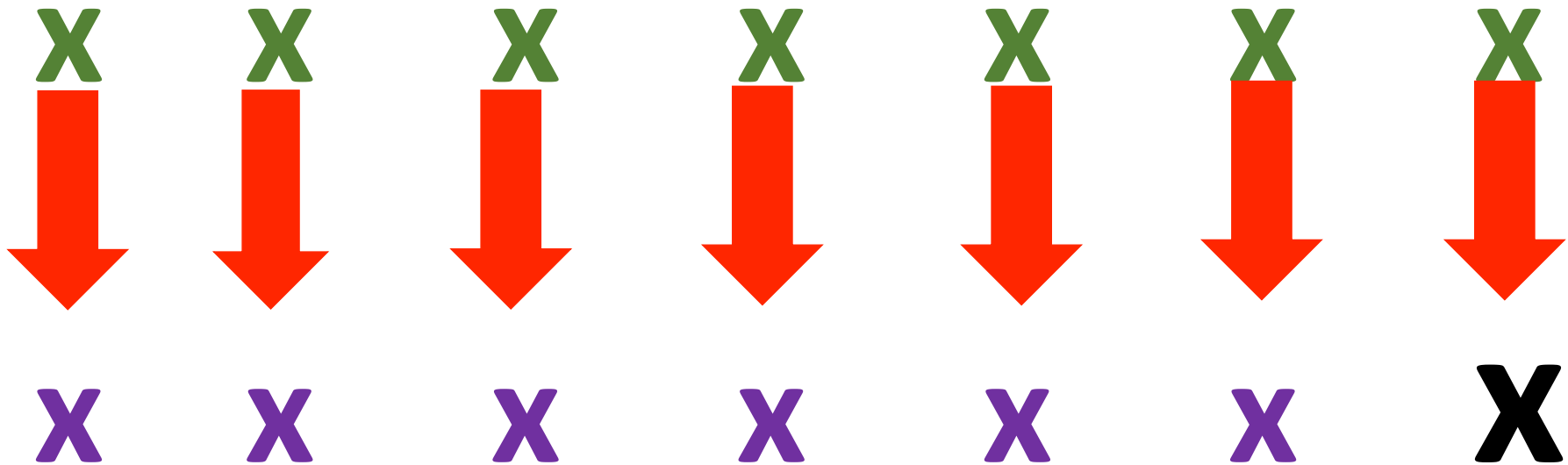
Steps to Organize the Line

1. Divide the class into two groups.
2. Tell students to stand across from each other, forming pairs.
 - ❖ They need to be close enough to hear each other across the line.
 - ❖ They should create some space between themselves and the people on their left and right, so they can hear their partner.

Communication Line – Step 1

Line 1: Asks Question

Teacher



Line 2: Answers Question

Directions to the Class

Announce:

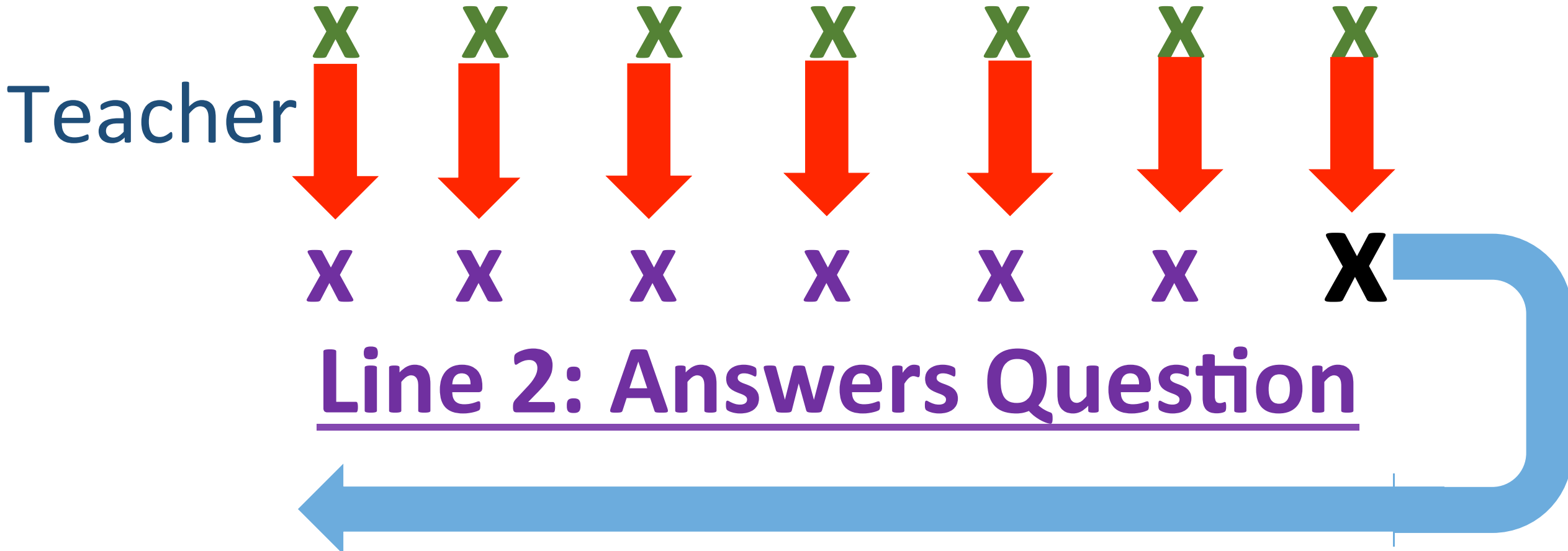
“Time is up! It’s time to change partners.

Students in Line 1, stay where you are.

Students in Line 2, take a step to your right.”

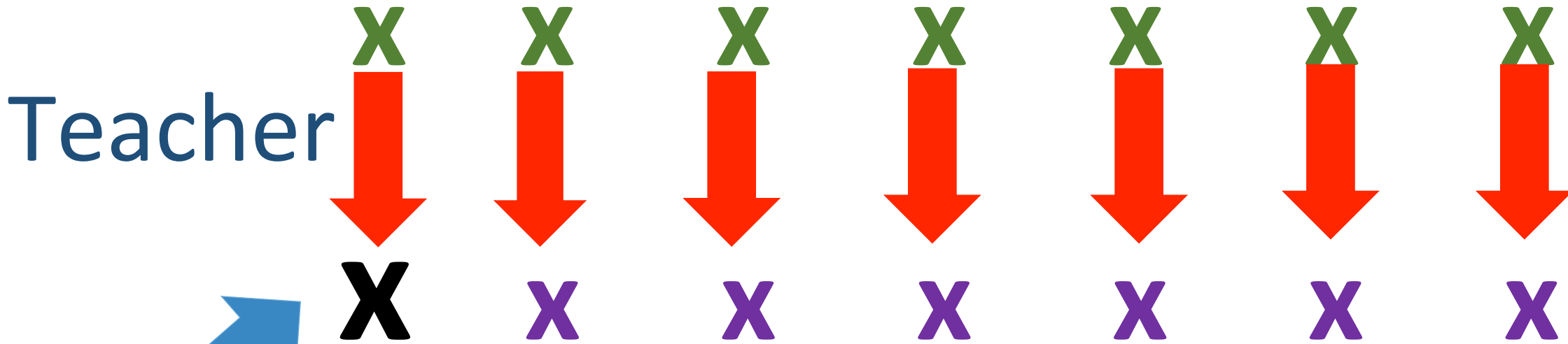
Communication Line – Step 2

Line 1: Asks Question



Communication Line – Step 3

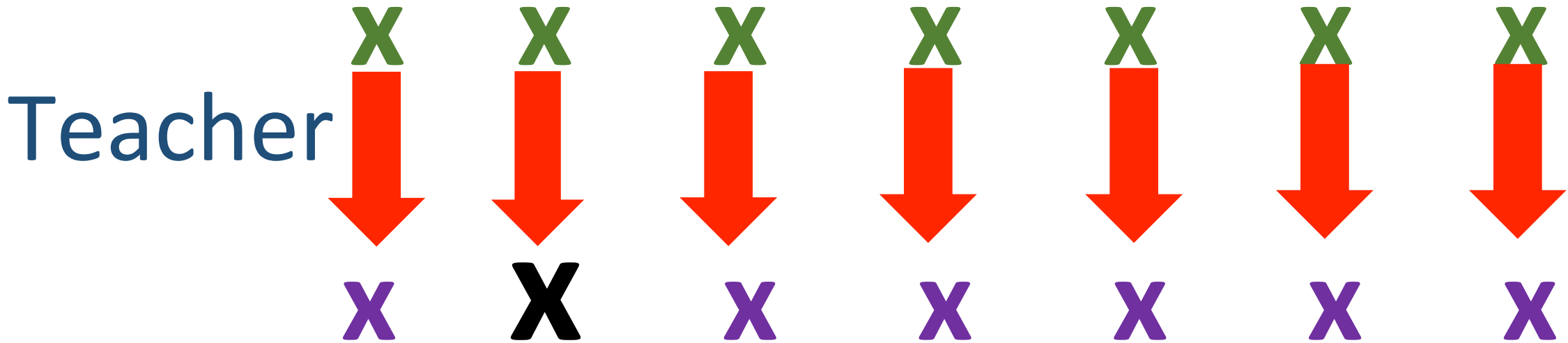
Line 1: Asks Question



Line 2: Answers Question

Communication Line – Step 4

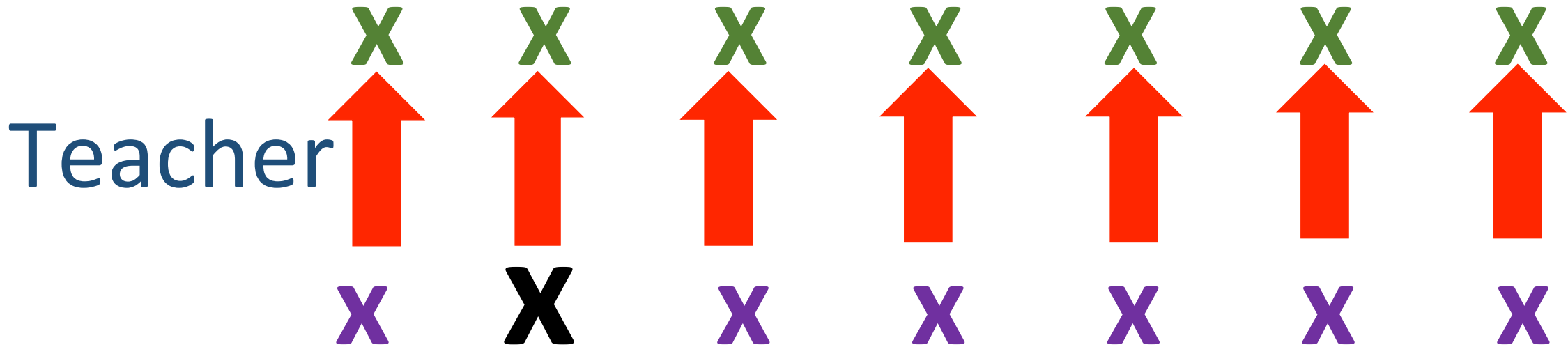
Line 1: Asks Question



Line 2: Answers Question

Communication Line – Step 5

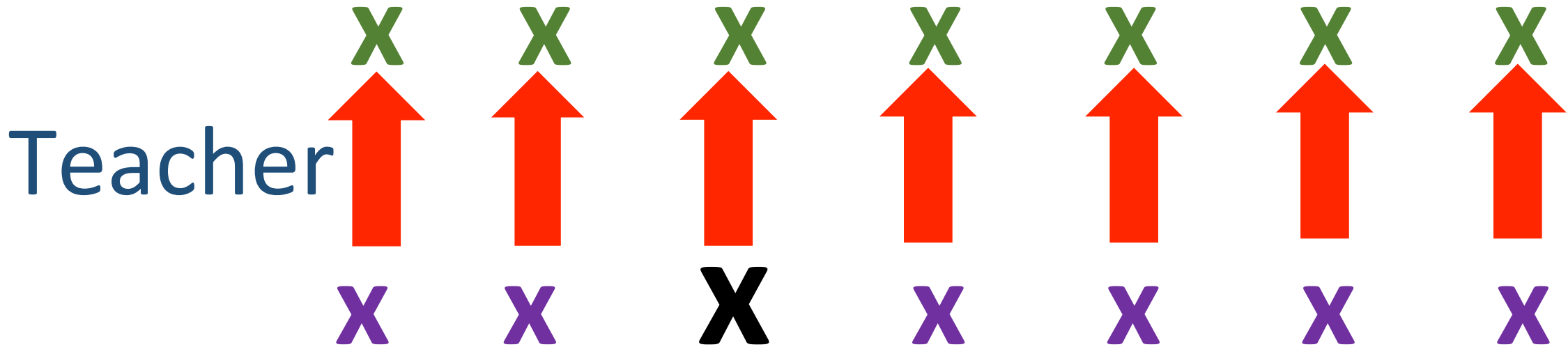
Line 1: Answers Questions



Line 2: Asks Question

Communication Line – Step 6

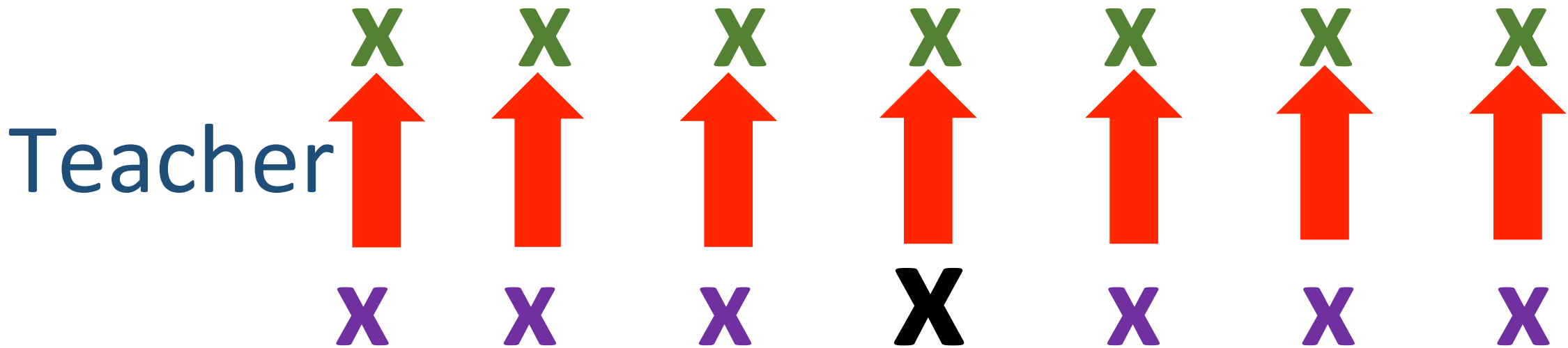
Line 1: Answers Questions



Line 2: Asks Question

Communication Line – Step 7

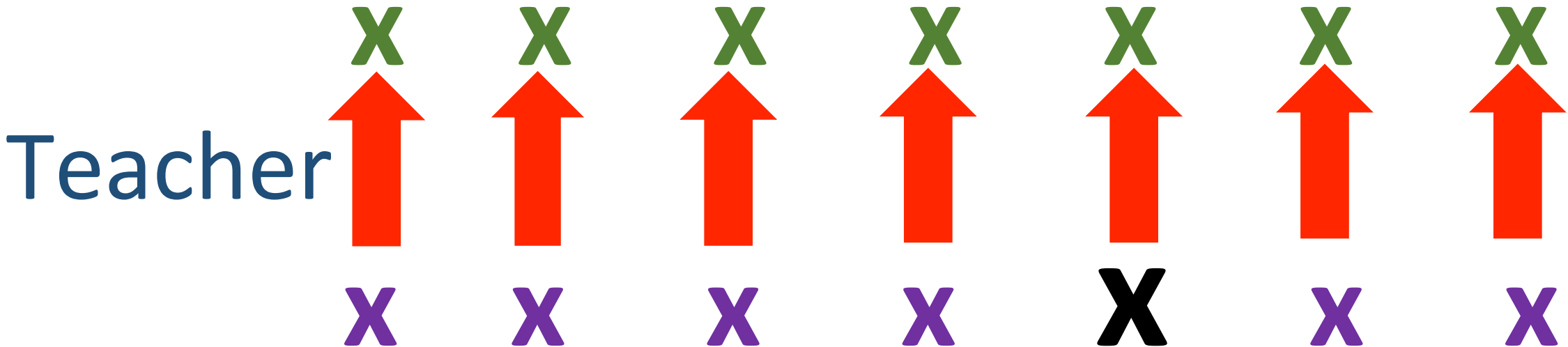
Line 1: Answers Questions



Line 2: Asks Question

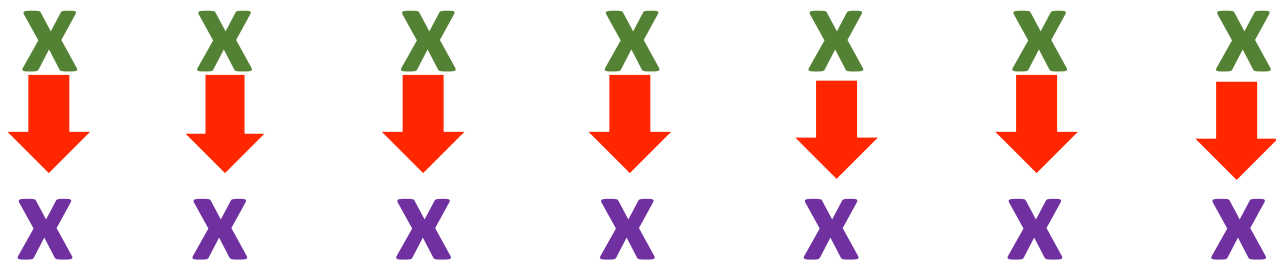
Communication Line – Step 8

Line 1: Answers Questions

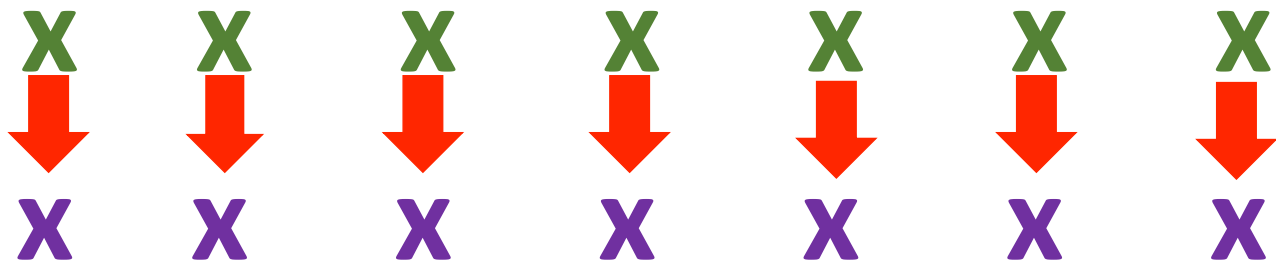
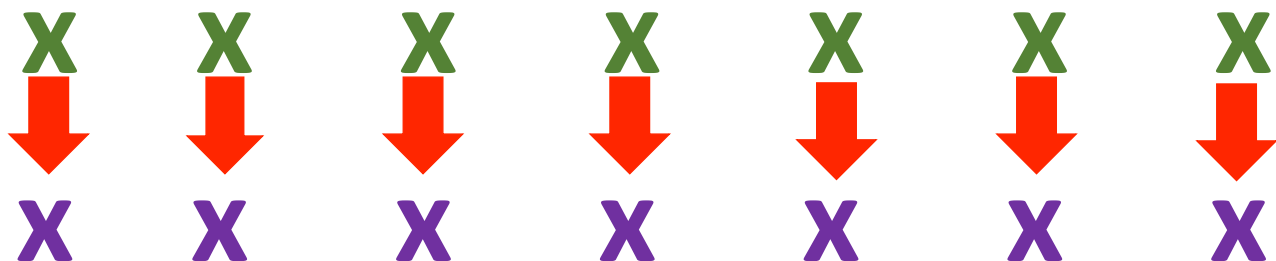


Line 2: Asks Question

Arrangement for Larger Classes



Teacher





What are some benefits of using
Communication Lines with your students?

Fluency



Accuracy

Fluency

Accuracy 

Sentence Frame - Steps

1. Write a sentence on the board and ask the class to complete it.
2. Direct students to say the words on the board as they are written. Fill in the blanks with a correct choice.

Sentence Frame: Examples

My favorite person is _____ because _____.

My favorite person is my best friend because he is fun.

My favorite person is my aunt because she is interesting.

Sentence Frame: Error Correction

This activity

- ❖ focuses on accuracy
- ❖ is completed at a slower pace, giving some time to think

The teacher provides error correction that is appropriate for the students' level of English.

Activity: Impromptu Speaking

Impromptu speaking is

- ❖ unplanned or relatively unplanned speaking
- ❖ sudden, with little or no preparation





Why is impromptu speaking a positive addition to the
EFL classroom?
How can students benefit?

Materials for Each Group

Timer



Questions



Example Question Card for Students at Different Proficiency Levels

1. How does a good English teacher talk to students?
2. What are the characteristics of a good English teacher?
3. To what extent do you agree that a good English teacher should be extroverted/outgoing? Why?

* Note #1 is easier than #2 and #3.

Speaker

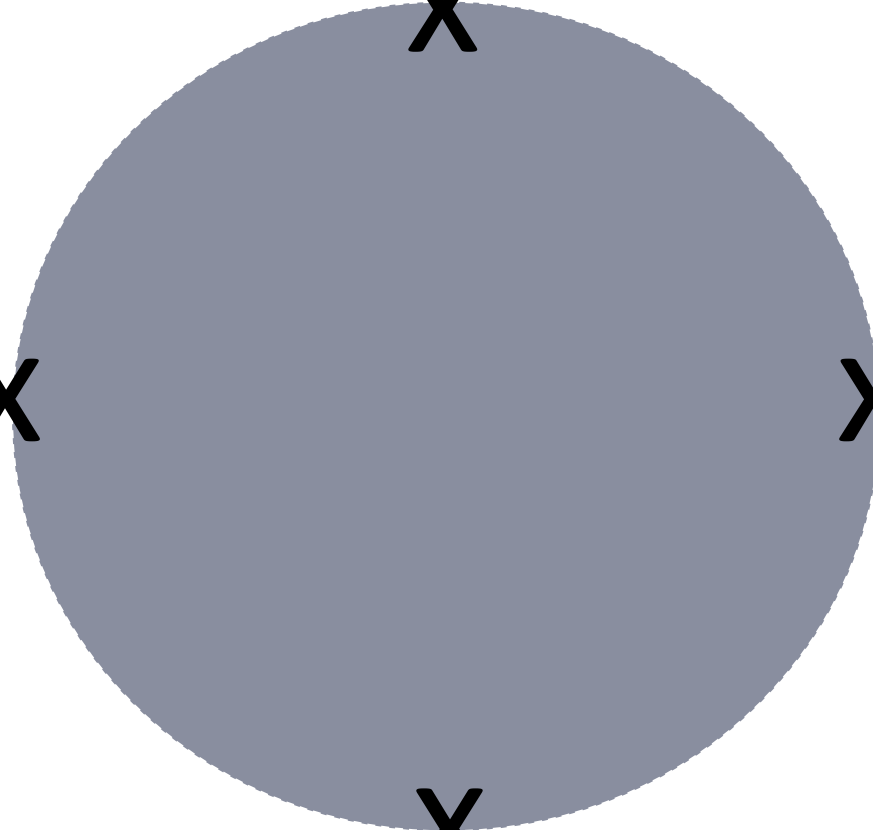
X

Listener #2 X

X Timer

X

Listener #1



Steps – Part 1

1. The **speaker** reads the question from the question card.
2. The **timer** says, “You have one minute to prepare, starting now,” and starts the clock.

The **speaker** can write notes and use them when speaking.

3. After one minute, the **timer** says, “Prep time has ended. Please begin speaking.”

Steps – Part 2

4. The **timer** starts the clock again.
5. The **speaker** speaks for one and a half to two minutes.
6. The **listeners and timer** listen carefully to the speaker. They can take notes and use body language to show their interest.
7. After two minutes, even if the speaker is still talking, the **timer** says, “That is two minutes. Thank you.”

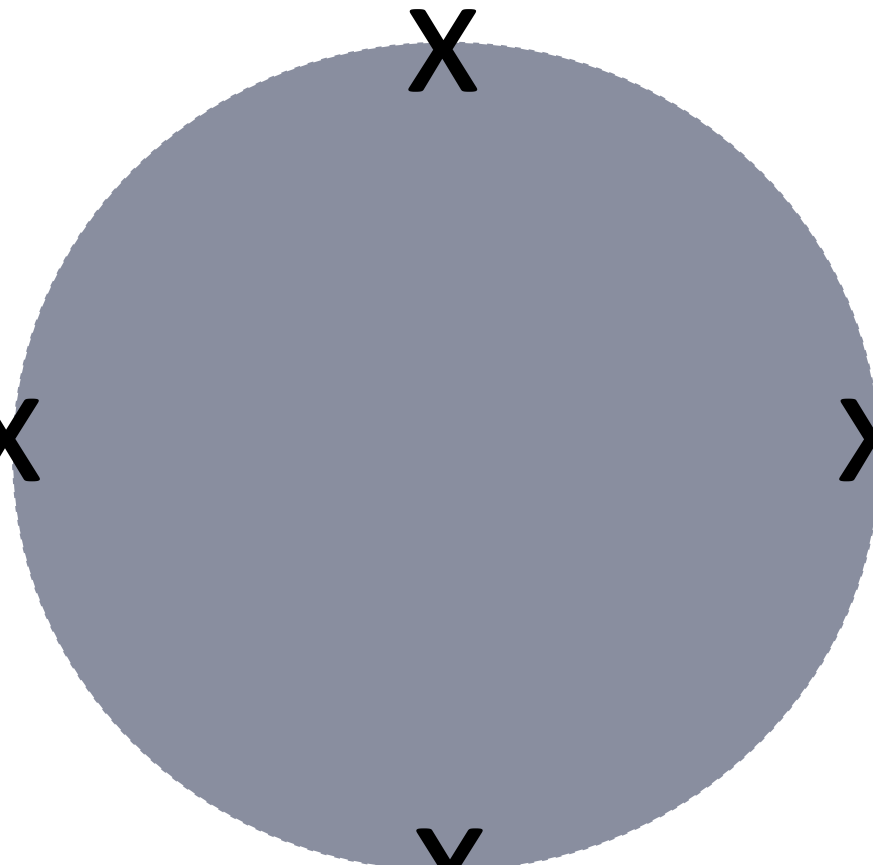
Options for Feedback

The **listeners and timer** can:

1. Only listen; do not provide feedback.
2. Make only positive comments about what they heard and saw, such as posture and body language.
3. Give constructive criticism, giving one strength and one area to improve.
 - Feedback is limited to about 30 seconds.
 - The speaker can ask questions about the feedback.

Speaker

X



Listener #2

X

X Timer

Listener #1

X

Less Intrusive Options for Listening

Standing



Kneeling



Less Intrusive Options for Listening

- ❖ Carry paper and pen for writing your notes.
- ❖ Move behind the students. (Students continue talking.)
- ❖ Stand or kneel behind the students to listen without interfering in their speaking activity.
- ❖ Write mistakes that you'd like to teach in a future class.
- ❖ **Do not** tell the class names of students who made mistakes.

Fluency



Accuracy

Fluency

Accuracy 

Analysis through Transcription



Analysis through Transcription – Part 1

1. The teacher explains the activity to the students:

- Choose a 30- to 45-second section of your speaking that was difficult or where were unsure of your speaking accuracy.
- Write or type everything you hear.
- Make a copy of that writing.
- Using the copy, correct any mistakes. Do not change the content. Just fix the mistakes.
- Underline, circle, and/or highlight the mistakes and corrections. Submit it to the teacher for review.

Analysis through Transcription – Part 2

2. The teacher reads through the transcription carefully, checking that mistakes were corrected. If the teacher finds an uncorrected mistake, the teacher circles the mistake and writes the correction.
3. The teacher returns the papers to the students and asks: “Look for mistakes that I circled and corrected. These are mistakes that you missed. Think about why you missed them.”

Excellent presentations
require both fluency and accuracy.





Activity:

“Elevator Pitch” Presentation

short and persuasive

Planning Considerations

- ❖ more proficient students (intermediate-advanced)
- ❖ older students (middle school-adults)
- ❖ repetition possible with new topics

“

“An **elevator pitch** is a short speech that successfully delivers a sales pitch in the time it takes for an elevator to travel from the first floor to the top floor of a building.”

Materials

Timer



Assignment



Steps – Part 1

1. Tell the class that they will present an elevator pitch.
2. Provide background, including the definition and explanation of an elevator pitch.
3. Watch some videos in class and discuss them. Stress that the speaking should not be too fast.

Note: To find videos, search online for “elevator pitch competitions.”

Steps – Part 2

4. Discuss the assignment guidelines. Include:
 - ❖ presentation length (2-3.5 minutes, depending on your students)
 - ❖ a general topic
 - ❖ a rubric/form for grading that they can use as a guide
5. Give students time to prepare, at least a few days.

Steps – Part 3

6. Consider an in-class peer review session. Each student presents to a small group of peers and receives feedback from them.
7. At the next class after the in-class peer review, students present. The teacher times each elevator pitch presentation and makes grading notes.

Option: film the presentations

Example Topics

1. Sell a product, such as a car or a set of luggage.
2. Sell a service, such as a house cleaning service.
3. Use a general topic that allows for some student choice:

“If I had a million dollars, I’d buy . . .”

Example Topics – Variation/Recycling the Activity

- Keep the length of the elevator pitch.
- Expand the topic to any persuasive topic, such as the reasons why a certain neighborhood is the best.

The elevator speech activity can include gamification, such as a class vote on the most fluent or the most accurate speech.



Fluency



Accuracy

Fluency

Accuracy 

Additional Resources for High Beginning to Advanced Students



Entrepreneurship and Student Motivation

In our English as a second language (ESL) Communications class, small teams of students speak enthusiastically to their peers about the companies, products, and services they created. When it comes time for students to continue to the next group, they are so focused on presenting the results of their projects that nobody moves. Later, the students fill out surveys that describe their total engagement, and their responses illustrate why the unit was a success. Almost every student liked the topic of entrepreneurship and envisioned using the information in the future. Every student stated that his or her English skills improved as a result of working on the three-week project that inspired them to think and communicate like businesspeople.

As we planned the unit on entrepreneurship and discussed the class objectives, we kept a focus on student involvement. The discussion evolved and eventually centered on a major question: "How can we meet our department's curricular objectives through an engaging project-based

learning experience connected to our course's textbook?" That question inspired the development of this unit and led to the positive results at the end. To describe how those results were achieved, this article outlines the entrepreneurship unit in detail.

Motivation through authentic materials and project-based learning

Instructors in all disciplines understand the importance of student engagement and motivation to academic success. The idea of a classroom full of unmotivated (and therefore often unenthusiastic) students strikes fear into the heart of the best instructor. Motivation is a key element in language learning, as has been well established in the literature (Fidaoui, Bahous, and Bacha 2010; Gilmore 2011). Researchers distinguish between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation, the former stemming from a learner's internal desire to learn a language for its own sake, and the latter indicating a desire to learn in order to reach an external goal (e.g., a better job). Learners of English as a

Check out this
English Teaching Forum
article on the Ning
for a presentation-based
activity that focuses on
speaking fluency and
accuracy.



Of the activities described today, which one do you think would be the most popular with your students and why?

- ❖ Communication Lines
- ❖ Impromptu Speaking
- ❖ “Elevator Pitch” Presentations

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Thank you!

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Reflection and Discussion Questions

1. Which activity or activities from today's session could you adopt or adapt to promote speaking proficiency in your classes?
2. Does your instruction tend to focus more on speaking fluency or accuracy? Why? Should you adjust your current balance between fluency and accuracy?
3. What topics or speaking prompts would encourage your students to produce extended, creative speech?
4. How might you incorporate aspects of accuracy into fluency-oriented activities? That is, how could you provide feedback related to accuracy without interrupting students during fluency practice?



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