

Language Learning Barriers

(Handout)

- **Pronunciation difficulties**

Learners who are not confident with English pronunciation tend to avoid using some words or speaking at all. It is a subconscious defensive strategy aiming to avoid embarrassment or failure in communication.

- **Inability to recall words**

If the vocabulary is not systematically stored in long-term memory, it is not active. It means the learner can understand the word (at least in a written form), but is not able to use it in active communication (written or spoken).

- **Speaking is not reading aloud**

Learners tend to write the text in advance before they say something to make sure it will be correct. In presentation, they tend to read the slides instead of free commenting on them. BUT speaking is the process of expressing thoughts directly.

- **Avoid translating – think in English**

Translating ideas from mother tongue to English before saying or writing them is a bad habit. It restrains fluency and causes mistakes, incomprehensibility (e.g. in word order).

- **Keep trying & accept mistakes**

Every attempt counts and contributes to communicative competence building. Mistakes are an integral part of learning the language, they accompany the whole process (which can be life-long). It means it is not possible to avoid them or get rid of them. There is no point to be stressed, to be afraid of mistakes.

„What is international language? It is not English. It is BAD English.“

Michael Swan, Oxford University Press author

- **Listening strategy**

Learners often complain about having difficulties to understand spoken language. Very often it happens when they STOP listening at the first incomprehensible expression. Mindful listening brings better results.

- **Reading is the process of anticipating**

In real-life communication one would hardly read the text consisting solely of familiar vocabulary. Therefore reading skill is actually the capability to understand some part of the text and being able to guess the rest of the content. Ability to translate the text word by word is not the ability to read with comprehension. One doesn't need to understand every single word to get the overall meaning of the text.