

Language Learning Problems Advice

Choose one of the problems below (it doesn't matter if it is a problem you don't really have) and ask your partner for advice:

Speaking

1. "I pause too long before I speak"
2. "By the time I think of what to say, the conversation topic has changed"
3. "I don't have any opportunities to speak outside the classroom"
4. "I can talk about most topics, but I don't know what to say in social situations like welcoming people or dealing with complaints"
5. "I get stuck when I am speaking because I can't remember a word or don't know how to say things in English"

Vocabulary

6. "I try to learn vocabulary, but I have always forgotten it by the next time I hear or read that word"
7. "All the idioms I learnt at school and from the radio are old fashioned and no one ever really uses them nowadays"
8. "The vocabulary I learn from watching/ reading ... is totally useless in the rest of my life"

Listening

9. "When I listen to native speakers, I would understand if it was written down but I still can't understand them speak"
10. "I have problems understanding a/ an ... accent"
11. "I can't understand BBC radio at all"
12. "When I watch a TV programme in English, I just read the subtitles and so don't really learn anything"

Accuracy

13. "I understand the grammar and can do written exercises, but still make lots of mistakes when I speak"
14. "Most people I communicate with are also non-native English speakers, so I pick up their mistakes"
15. "I keep making the same mistakes"

Writing

16. "I can never remember how to start and end emails"
17. "I don't know when I can start using someone's first name and other informal language when I am emailing them"

Reading

18. "I read too slowly"
19. "I have problems finding the place in the text where the answer is"
20. "Newspapers and English novels are too difficult for me"
21. "I read quite a lot in English but it doesn't seem to be helping improve my level"
22. "I usually give up before I reach the end of a book or magazine"

Look at the advice below and link each one to one of the problems above.

- A) If I were you, I'd read a whole page before going back and using a dictionary
- B) If I had that problem, I'd read about the topic in English before listening to the programme
- C) In my experience, keeping a vocabulary list and ticking off words you know works really well
- D) I wouldn't worry about it. The most important thing is to read something that you find interesting.
- E) How about borrowing a graded reader from the British Council lending library?
- F) Have you thought about looking for some films from that country?
- G) You should probably fill the thinking time with phrases like "Let me see" and "Hmm, that's an interesting question"
- H) My suggestion is to choose one grammar point to work on and concentrate on not making mistakes with just that one thing when you are writing and speaking
- I) I recommend buying an Intermediate level dictionary and ignoring all words that aren't in it.
- J) It's best to memorize sentence starters like "In my opinion" and "If you ask me" and use one even before you have decided what to say
- K) I would suggest forming a study group to practice free conversation in English
- L) If I was in your place, I'd read BBC news instead
- M) If it was me, I'd buy the DVD and watch it with English subtitles
- N) Why don't you try learning some slang instead?
- O) You could try taping a piece of paper over the bottom of your TV screen
- P) Reading the whole text quickly once through before I look at the questions always works for me
- Q) My advice would be to read about the story in your own language first
- R) One idea is to try and predict what is in the text before you read it

Discuss whether each suggestion above is a good one or not.

Underline the useful language for giving advice above.

Do the same, but with your other problems with using and learning English, for example on the same topics as above.

Ask the whole class and your teacher about any things you really want advice about.