



# Breaking down attitudinal barriers in the fortress of academia: learning from a UDL project to engage students with academic reading



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# The fortress of academia

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‘HEIs continued to replicate [the] status quo, and whether unwittingly or purposefully, erected barriers that blocked participation from individuals or groups who differed from those traditional students who excelled with predictable, inflexible, “one-size-fits-all” curriculum and instruction’.

Bracken & Novak, eds. (2019), p.1



# Is the fortress changing?

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Pokorny & Warren (2016, pp.1-2) also discuss how global challenges and reforms to HE are challenging the idea of the fortress, e.g. marketisation, consumerisation, league tables, widening participation agendas, etc.

These issues require a greater focus on how students learn, not just what knowledge is held in the fortress.



# Reading as a barrier

Educational background and expectations, learning differences (e.g. dyslexia), and time-poverty all impact on a student's ability and willingness to read



A technological solution to the environmental barriers:

adding accessibility tools to our Resource Lists (online reading list) system to enable multi-modal reading



Spread - speed read the web

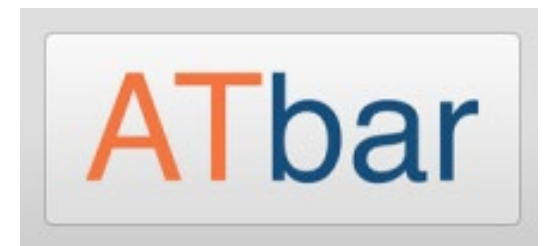
Offered by: [speed.launchrock.com](https://speed.launchrock.com)

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A photograph of a red double door with ornate black metalwork, set in a stone archway. The door is closed and has a small keyhole. The surrounding wall is made of rough-hewn stone. The floor in front of the door is paved with square tiles.


# Revealing attitudinal barriers

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*“There are problems with the tools”*

*“I need to be a super user”*

*“Where’s your evidence?”*



Emotional / contextual  
barriers and vulnerability

*“The spoken word is a  
different set of skills  
to following a novel being  
read aloud - is there any  
research on this?”*

## Emotional barriers #2

Ashwin et al (2016, pp.55-56) argue that emotional or personal barriers can impede reflective teaching practice.

We need to recognise that reflection is both an emotional and an intellectual exercise.





# Battering rams and bombs...

Our initial research caused  
some disturbance to the  
fortress, but Covid has lit a  
fuse underneath it with 'the  
digital pivot' (Salmon, 2020)



A photograph of a stone archway leading to a cobblestone path and a stone wall. The archway is made of rough-hewn stone blocks. The path is paved with irregular cobblestones. In the distance, there is a low stone wall and a small stone structure. The sky is bright and clear.

# Bringing down attitudinal barriers

Fried (2016) argues that the missing element for embracing change is courage. This is only found when people become willing to make a journey.

Covid has supplied this missing courage.

# What next?

1. Continuing pedagogical change that focuses on reading
2. Developing a trusting, supportive community of practice (Ashwin et al, 2016)
3. Embracing the digital



Any questions?

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