Silence the French Voice!

Many French people have the same problem when speaking English. They want to find the perfect translation to their French thoughts. Of course this is not the best strategy to adopt when speaking a foreign language, for many reasons.

First of all, you will be too hesitant. You have been taught, at school that there is a right and a wrong way to say something in English, and that you will have failed if you chose the wrong way, so you often find yourselves at an imaginary crossroads, blocked and petrified, not knowing which way to go, which word to choose.

Furthermore, your thoughts in French rely on a much wider vocabulary. Clearly you need to use more simple sentence structures and words when you are not using your native language.

In addition, as you have probably noticed by now, it's impossible to translate directly. Idiomatic usage of French and English are different so there will be certain things you can say in French that you simply can't translate directly into English. In fact the whole way we express our ideas is very different.

In English we tend to use a series of short sentences and linking words to compare and contrast our ideas or indeed to proceed with a sequence of ideas. We then conclude. Not only will you be easier to understand if you refrain from translating, but you will also sound more idiomatic.

Finally, in an international context, where people are all deriving a different meaning from what you say, and coming from a different cultural background, you need to simplify. You need to clarify. You need to leave as little margin for misunderstanding as possible.

So, how are you going to stop translating? It's much easier than you think. It's about focus. If you focus on something else, and stop listening to the French voice in your head, you can silence those French words and concentrate on ideas.

FOCUS ON STRUCTURE - Here are some simple steps to follow.

1. Decide what you want to say in answer to a question, or as a presentation or explanation of an idea.

2. Decide how you want to structure your answer. (Problem, solution, conclusion, Beginning, middle end, Background, update conclusion…. Etc.)

3. Decide on the linking words which go with your chosen structure.

4. Focus on the structure and keep your sentences short.

5. Clearly illustrate the end of a sentence and the beginning of the next one, with a pause, with the rising and falling pitch of your voice.

There could be a **variety of structures** and to each the **linking words**, which correspond. Here are some examples:

Sequence - beginning middle end

First of all

Secondly

Furthermore

In conclusion

Cause and effect - The fact - consequence - conclusion

The fact is that...

This means that...

Therefore...

So, to sum up

Problem - solution - Objectives

It seems that

Essentially

One way of dealing with this is...

We would aim to

Basically this means that

Introduce - explain - conclude

The issue is....

This is essential/ important because...

Therefore...

Introduce idea - Give examples- make proposal

The question we have to deal with is

For example

What I would like to suggest is

Introduction, for, against, conclusion...

Regarding the question of...

On the one hand

On the other hand

In conclusion

Reference – question – answer

As we have just said...

The question is...

My suggestion is

Introduce give several points and conclude

In order to explain...

I'd like to talk about three points

First of all

Secondly

Finally

In conclusion

Here are some other tips…. GOLDEN RULES!

I. The word '***and***' is your enemy – don't be tempted to put it between sentences and end up with one long sentence!

II. Ummmmm errrrrrrr, ahhhhh – these sounds should not be voiced. It's better to **stay silent between sentences** and let people think about what you are saying.

III. Remember that it's OK to use really **simple sentences** – subject verb object, especially when you are using linking words and idiomatic expressions which make what you are saying easier to understand.

IV. To make yourself clearer and more interesting to listen to – use ***stress*** – emphasise key information by saying certain words more slowly or louder than other less important words.

V. **Pitch** – your voice goes up (rising pitch) at the beginning and down (falling pitch) at the end of sentences and also sometimes goes up and down on an important word or expression to emphasise it further.

Now let's try out the technique
Practice with the following questions:

Activity One – Explain a problem you had at work and a solution you found.

Activity Two – Now again choose the appropriate structure to answer this question: How will you implement international strategy in the next six months?

Activity Three – Introduce an idea for motivating your teams in France .

Activity Four – Outline the current economic environment in France and explain the impact on your work. Use a sequential structure.

Activity Five – Choose a structure to explain why you chose this job.

Activity Six – Outline your plans for the immediate future in your work.