

Stop Translating in Your Head Before You Speak

More practice. Same idea, applied.

THE CORE IDEA

Fluent speakers do not translate. They retrieve. The goal is to build a direct link between thought and English, without the middle step.

A2 — Building Confidence

At this level, the translation delay is strongest. The fix is not grammar. It is repetition of direct naming. Say things in English the moment you think them. Start with objects and feelings.

Questions to think about

1. Right now, look around you. Can you name five things in English without going through your language first?
2. When you feel something, do you think it in English or your own language first?
3. What is the first English word that comes when you think of where you are right now?
4. Say what you want to do this evening in English. Just the first sentence. Do not prepare it.

Key phrases to use

'I think... (first word first, let the rest follow)'

'What I mean is...'

'The word I want is...'

'Let me try again in English: ...'

'In English I would say... instead of translating...'

B1 — Intermediate Practice

At this level, the delay is shorter but still noticeable. The goal is to start speaking before the full sentence is ready. The first word breaks the translation loop.

Questions to think about

1. How long is your translation delay right now? One second? Two? In what situations is it longest?
2. What happens when you say the first English word without knowing the full sentence yet?
3. Are there feelings or ideas that you can only express in your own language? What is the closest English version?
4. Say something complicated about your day in English right now. Do not plan it. Just go.

Key phrases to use

'What I'm trying to say is...'

'I don't have the exact word, but something like...'

'The idea I'm going for is...'

'In my language we say... but in English the closest is...'

'Let me say the meaning, not the translation: ...'

B2 — Advanced Application

At this level, translation is rare but still shows up under pressure: emotions, speed, complex ideas. The goal is to shrink that gap to almost nothing by thinking in English, not about English.

Questions to think about

1. Notice the last time you translated instead of retrieved. What triggered it? Topic, emotion, speed?
2. Can you have a conversation in your head fully in English? Try for thirty seconds now.
3. What is an idea you often have that you have never fully expressed in English? Try to say it now.
4. When you speak English for an hour, does the translation delay shrink? What changes?

Key phrases to use

'My first instinct in English is...'

'I used to translate this, but now I just say...'

'The English way to think about this is...'

'When I'm under pressure, I still reach for... but I'm working on...'

'Thirty seconds of English-only thinking: here goes...'

SELF-CHECK QUESTIONS

- What is the translation delay and why does it slow you down?
- What does it mean to retrieve instead of translate?
- What is the name-things-directly exercise and what does it build?
- Why is starting with the first word more effective than preparing the full sentence?
- What will you practise the next time you notice yourself translating first?

TODAY'S SMALL ACTION

Look at five objects near you right now. Say each one in English without thinking of your language first. That is the habit.