

## Jim's Eureka Revelation

From observing speakers of many cultural backgrounds, I concluded that the spoken pause (ums, ahs, ers, ands, and-thats, OKs, you-knows [- you-know!]) even tongue-clicking) is such a universal foible, *ie*, a natural tendency, that it's futile to try to cure the habit.

But then, while listening to an Area contestant, a possibility hit me. She was making heavy use of pauses, mainly for emphasis (as we should) sometimes almost uncomfortably-long, yet without concern. Neither did she insert a single spoken-version. Later, on asking whether it was the case that she never used them, I was assured (almost in surprise) that she never did.

This kindled a belief that they can indeed be eradicated, not by attempting to suppress them, but by the positive approach of adopting and practising silent pauses between sentences.

If it's the discomfort of discontinuity which induces the silence-filling reflex, we just need to give ourselves many opportunities to get used to it. Try it; when you rehearse your next speech, deliberately separate each sentence with a pause (longer after key phrases).

Incorporate them (to lesser degree, of course) in your presentation. Keep at it, and monitor over time how the spoken pauses fare. You might be pleasantly surprised. I'll certainly be introducing club exercises on it whenever I get the chance, to expand the experiment.