

BEING AN INTERPRETER AT WORKSHOPS

Being an interpreter (doing oral translations) is interesting, funny, exciting, challenging, important, and a resource in any situation. An enormous number of people will benefit from your deciding to be an interpreter. You may help change people's lives by transmitting revolutionary ideas and thoughts, such as ours in RC.

Can anyone be an interpreter? Definitely. The only thing you need is to learn and command a second language. Once you have taken this profoundly enriching step, you need to take into account some guidelines when it is time to interpret at an RC workshop.

BE ABLE TO BE ACCURATE

First of all, you should interpret only when you are able to communicate the same things that the leader is communicating, without interfering with her or his thinking or attention. It makes no sense for the leader to have to deal with more issues than those that the job of leading already requires. She or he should not have to worry about what you are doing. We interpreters should protect the leader's process of thinking and communicating by doing an accurate job of transmitting exactly what she or he is creating in her or his mind, or at least the closest possible approximation of that. And the leader should be able to take a short breath, and have ready the next piece of information, while you are interpreting what she or he has just said.

TRAINING YOURSELF

So, you need to train yourself in order to be an interpreter. There are a lot of places and moments in which to do that:

- Within RC—in support groups, classes, meetings, sessions; at Area¹ or Regional² workshops in panels, in Wygelian groups,³ during mealtimes;

¹ An Area is a local RC Community.

² A Region is a subdivision of the International Re-evaluation Counseling Community, usually consisting of several Areas.

³ A Wygelian leaders' group is a group of leaders and potential leaders of a particular constituency in which each person takes a turn doing the following: (1) reporting on what he or she has been doing in the last period, with regard to the constituency, (2) saying what he or she thinks is the current situation facing the constituency, from his or her viewpoint, (3) sharing what he or she proposes to do as a leader in the next period, and (4) discharging on what is getting in the way of his or her leadership.

- Outside of RC—in every moment you wish: in front of the mirror; with your friends; between relatives; at the movies, interpreting in silence for yourself what the movie star is saying (I have done this a lot; it is very good training); at church (I did this often; I was forced to go to church when I was a child, and when I got bored I interpreted to myself for hours); listening to the radio in your car; interpreting for your dog or cat, in different languages (this is fun, because pets are the kind of audience that does not care about mistakes and always keeps on giving attention).

Doing this you will face your distress from the oppressive educational system. If you discharge all this while you are doing the training, you will become an effective interpreter and leaders will pick you to interpret. And you know how much you can learn by being close to them.

KEEP OTHER MATTERS FROM INTERFERING

Interpreting and reclaiming your language (culture, identity, space) are not the same thing and do not need to happen at the same time. As an interpreter, you interpret up-front at a workshop, standing close to the leader and trying to be a "clone" of her or him in terms of transmitting her or his thinking in the most accurate way you can. This is a time for you to put your full mind in the leader's, not on other needs you may feel while you are in front of a lot of people's attention. There are other spaces and times in which to reclaim your language, culture, heritage, identity. The best place I know of is in sessions, and in support groups and workshops for people who share identities or backgrounds. Prepare yourself to be ready to interpret everything without other matters interfering.

CORRECTING MISTAKES

We interpreters do and will make mistakes. This is not a problem if we are aware of them and correct them fast. Making one, two, or three mistakes in a twenty-minute interpreting turn is normal and okay, as long as we are not interrupting the workshop leader's thinking or reaching further than her or his boundary of restimulation. (The interpreting-team leader should check with the workshop leader about this at the end of every class.)

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If we are making ongoing mistakes, and the workshop leader's job and process of thinking and communicating are being obstructed or limited, this must be stopped and corrected. The information the leader is giving must reach everyone correctly, without doubts or confusions getting in the way. If you are making ongoing mistakes, you can end your turn of interpreting and have a minute to discharge in front of the workshop and after that in mini-sessions and sessions, and in support groups or meal tables for interpreters.

This is a normal daily issue in life: we make a mistake, we correct it. If we cannot go on without continuously making mistakes in our interpreting, we should stop there and have a mini-session. We should see this as a normal thing. Feeling that it is a big deal; or that someone could feel hurt if we correct her or him so "do not do it"; or that as an interpreter we should go on trying and trying, no matter what, until we get it right or finish our turn, is distress.

It is better to have no interpreting than to have a mess that confuses and restimulates the leader, the interpreter, and the listeners.

THE INTERPRETING-TEAM LEADER

Who is the right person to correct the mistakes? The leader of the interpreting team can be the right person to decide when to make a correction or change the interpreter. For the team-leader job, we usually choose a person who understands language oppression and liberation and has been working successfully on them.

If the leader of the interpreting team notices that the interpreter is saying different things than the leader, she or he can repeat correctly, in the next pause, what the leader has just said. She or he can also check to see if the interpreter is in the present and aware. If not, the team leader can give the interpreter a couple of minutes of discharge time in front of the group and then check whether she or he is ready to carry on interpreting. If not, there can be a change of interpreter. No problem at all. However, this depends on the leader. Some leaders cannot have these pauses without their thinking being interrupted, and this is something to avoid.

If the team leader does not understand the interpreting language, she or he can check with the people who are receiving the interpreting to see how things are going for them. This is usually done at meal tables.

I have been doing the interpreting-team-leader job for the last several years and have found it easy to notice when the leader-interpreter couple is in a harmonious, balanced, lubricated, and fluent "waltz of two minds" or is like a branch stuck in a wheel. In the latter case, I have reduced the time or ended the turn of the interpreter, given her or him attention, and gone on with another one.

LEADING IN A MULTI-LINGUAL ENVIRONMENT

Workshop leaders, too, should train themselves to be ready to lead in an interpreting environment. Multilingual environments are going to be the normal situation in our lives (they already are in a lot of countries), and having different languages in our workshops is going to be more and more usual as we grow up as Communities and RCers grow in numbers. In my Region, ninety-five percent of the workshops run with interpreting (and my country is a very little one).

If you are a leader without anyone in your Community who speaks another language (which is unusual nowadays; when you ask, "Which was your first language, or second?" or "What contact have you had with other languages?" almost everyone has had more than one language in her or his life), you can ask someone to repeat anything colloquial you have said, or just repeat after you exactly what you have said. Then you can watch yourself—you will find a big vein of stuff to work on that you didn't even think was there.

A RESPONSIBLE PROPOSAL

I think this is a responsible proposal for all of us. The world reality is not happening in one language, and we must take this into account if we do not want to oppress anyone.

These are some of the guidelines that are working well for workshops. People are feeling more and more included and confident, and this is a good thing. Your thinking could help here, too.

Thank you,

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