

Romanian-American Mission

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TIPS for SPEAKING THROUGH AN INTERPRETER

Speaking through an interpreter can be challenging for both of you. Following a few basic principles can also make it a very rewarding experience:

- Keep in mind that your message will take double time to be delivered when speaking through an interpreter. If asked to preach a 40 minutes sermon, your message will actually be 20 minutes long.
- Talk to the interpreter before your presentation to make sure he or she understands your points. Go over verses you plan to use, your main points, and especially your illustrations. Avoid jokes whenever possible; what amuses you may shock or outrage someone in another culture. When you are finished, ask your translator briefly to repeat what he or she thinks you said.
- Avoid slang.
- Avoid expressions like “throwing out the baby with the bathwater,” or “where the rubber meets the road.”
- Avoid contractions like can’t, won’t, they’re.
- Keep your eyes on your audience, not your interpreter.
- If the interpreter does not understand, do NOT simply talk louder.
- Ask your interpreter to try mimic your intonation, emotion, and even body language, if possible.
- Speak in complete short phrases or ideas. Do not say only one or two words at a time. In other languages ideas are expressed differently, and the interpreter needs to know the idea, not only the words.
- Avoid references to American contemporary culture. Your audience is unlikely to be familiar with the latest TV sitcom, blockbuster movie, sports event, or personality, or top-ten CD. Focus on Christ and the Gospel and practical application to daily life.
- Finally, be sure to thank and encourage your interpreter for all of his or her efforts on your behalf.