

***So You Want To Be An Interpreter? 4<sup>th</sup> edition***

***Study Guide: Chapter 1***

***Transcript***

1. **Affect:** *This portion of the study guide does not have sound.*

2. **Comments on Communication:** *This portion of the study guide includes captions.*

**3. English Euphemisms:**

**SPEAKER #1**

I always think it's funny that we say, we want to go to the washroom when we may or may not wash. But it's one everybody seems to know and we all use it and we know what we mean. On the same vein, I think when people say they want to relieve themselves we all know what it means but again, we could say, relieved of what? Anxiety? I find in our culture too that when someone dies we say they passed away and I often think, where did they pass away to? But we all know what it means and we all use those words but I don't think we often think what we are actually saying.

4. **Examples of Powerless Language:** *This portion of the study guide includes captions.*

**5. Linguistic Register:**

***PERSONAL COMFORT WITH CONTINUUM OF REGISTERS***

Uh, well, basically, um, there is a continuum of registers all the way from formal, frozen or formal registers. Frozen being something like the Lord's Prayer, you know, formal would be something like, uh, a presentation, where the person is standing on stage, um, all the way down to something that's really intimate or very, um, uh, very intimate where the people are, like a husband and wife who would communicate with each other. They have a lot of shared history and background. Um, it affects me hugely, hugely. I've found over the years that I'm not really comfortable going from English to ASL on a platform or in a formal presentation. I'm much better when it's more consultative, when it's more back and forth, when it's more like a one-on-one or a small group where people can ask questions and be involved. I'm much better, I'm much better at that than I am at something that is more formal. Um, going from ASL to English, I feel more comfortable in a formal setting, working into my first language. Uh, if it's something that's very intimate, um, I mean, I, just, even in my, uh, you know, my family, my niece and her husband are both Deaf and sometimes I eavesdrop in their conversations and I think, I have no idea what they're talking about. But it's all, you know, it's almost as though it's code just like, any, any two people in an intimate relationship. They can finish each other's sentences and they don't need to provide a lot of the information, so, um, a couple of situations where intimate register may, um, be problematic is in, like, um, family therapy where the husband and wife are both Deaf and the therapist is hearing and doesn't understand sign language. And they may be, uh, you know, kibitzing back and forth and I have at times, especially if I have asked the therapist beforehand how they want me to handle it but I'd say, you know, they're talking right now about when the dishwasher broke. I'm missing something, I'm not exactly sure and then the therapist can, you know, but it depends on the situation, depends on the people involved, depends who wants it handled how, and, um, but, but, register absolutely, you know, it, register plays into, um, what I predict an assignment will be like whether I'll even accept the work or not, basically.

***LEVELS OF FORMALITY***

When I think of register, I think of different levels of formality and, you know, all human beings

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around the world, um, can vary, the, the degree, of the formality with which they communicate by choosing different vocabulary and by using different conversational styles. Um, so, I think of the common definition or breakdown into 5 registers from intimate to informal to consultative then formal and then, supposedly most formal of all is frozen but I think frozen register is a little bit of an anomaly because it, sort of, it appears in informal contexts or any level of formality you get your bits of frozen text coming at you. So, I don't know that it's a register all unto itself but, uh, an interpreter needs to tune in to how formal is this, when you're working and you want to, you want to match the register of the message that you're interpreting. And so, as interpreters, we need to be always trying to stretch our range because usually when we, when we start to develop interpreting skills we're comfortable in <clears throat> one or two registers and not all of them and it takes time to stretch yourself and, um, be more versatile.

***REGISTER IN HIGH SCHOOL SETTINGS***

Register to me is, uh, casual language to formal language and it greatly influences my work as an interpreter because of, if working in the high school setting I can be interpreting for a teacher whose language is going to be a little more formal and in the next breath I'll be interpreting for somebody's whose fourteen, and I have to look fourteen or if it's the Deaf student, I have to sound fourteen. And sometimes the answer from the Deaf student is just 'huh' – like it's not yes, it's not no, it's just a grunt. And they want that because that's fourteen and, you know, you have to be able to really play on that whole continuum of like formal down, you know, down to more casual.

**6. Powerful/Powerless Language:**

**SPEAKER #1**

Well, I don't know, I know 'up talk', 'up speak', 'up talk' I think it is, um, when you say something at the end of the sentence, your voice goes up. It comes across as rather powerless. Um, I think using the word 'sorry' which is, which is a word that I use constantly, um, when I need to ask for clarification, I say 'sorry', um, I apologize to tables, I apologize to a number of things. I think that, that I've really had to work at letting go of that word and trying to come across as just I'm not sorry, I just need ask for clarification, so say what it is that I mean. Um, I think it can come across as a lot more powerful. Um, I think sounding, um, when you're unsure of what it is that you're going to be interpreting and speaking rather quiet, that in itself comes across as very powerless, I think and it could be exactly what is being said but you've just given the persona of that Deaf person as very meek and powerless. Um, so, I think coming across, if they are, that's wonderful, but if they're not, if they're very powerful, very self-confident Deaf person, they need to have the voice come across that way to indicate that. So, I think those are some things. I think word choices are, it really depends, if you've been raised and conditioned to speak in a powerless way, then when you are interpreting you need to be aware of that and be reflective to realize that some of the word choices I have may be rather powerless. Um, maybe very powerful and what we need to do is have a balance between the two to make sure we are getting the same message across. Um, I think there are probably some powerful and powerless signs in ASL that are used too. So, how, and I don't think a lot of people may realize that because, well, we just need to be able to identify and examine it so then we know when we need to be powerful, we are, and when the message is powerless that that is coming across.

**SPEAKER #2**

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An example of powerful and powerless language. When I think of powerless language, I think of the way that I used to speak most of the time. There was a situation where Teresa Smith of Seattle, Washington approached me after I had been presiding over a meeting and said to me 'Jan, you know, you're doing a really good job but stop apologizing for yourself' and I had no idea what she was talking about. And, as I probed for her meaning, she said, well, every other time you open your mouth you say "Well, I, I might not know what I'm talking about but I think blah, blah, blah.." or "Well, in my opinion this is perhaps..." or "Well, that's my idea, I mean, I don't know what other's of you might think..". She said you totally negate the validity and credibility of whatever it is you're saying because you keep apologizing for what you're saying. I'd never ever thought about that and so I'm always, will always be, um, indebted to Teresa for the courage that it took and for the, the, the fact that she cared enough to even say anything to me, uh, to bring that to my attention. So, I am always looking at my language and encouraging interpreters to look at their language in terms of, am I truly matching the degree of power or powerless in the utterances that are coming across. The place where I see interpreters fail to do that most often is when they are going from sign to spoken English and they, themselves, are doubting whether or not they understood what was going on. The Deaf person is signing, and confident, and strong and I'm hearing, kind of a tentative interpretation that sort of is watered down. Wrong, you've not conveyed the intent, or the goal, or the personality of the original message and it's because of who you are as the interpreter. So, if somebody's being tentative and timid and uncertain, I have to match that but if they're not I have to be able to match the assertiveness. There's sometime's things that we use like English fillers – umm.., I..umm.., she..ummm.., well yesterday umm..I umm..went to the umm..umm..store..and umm..she umm..I umm... You hear those fillers and the corrections, the false starts, that's another example of powerless form of language. So, that's how it affects us as interpreters in the active interpretation, in our everyday lives, how we advocate for ourselves, we will be successful if we approach people with respectful, assertive, powerful language and we will not get what we need if we go in apologizing - "Well, I'm just the interpreter, you know, and it would really kind of help me if you could let me sit up here, close to where you.." – Forget it, you've already lost the battle because your demeanor and your language shows, that, there's, you don't even respect yourself so why should they listen to your request.

**7. The Impact of Context Communication:**

***ADAPT COMMUNICATION TO THE AUDIENCE***

***SPEAKER #1***

Yeah, I change the way I speak to somebody depending on who they are. When I speak with my nieces or nephews I try to listen to how they speak, using words that they would understand. Someone who is older, I might speak slower, if they're hearing impaired, like my grandmothers, I have to really enunciate, think and speak slower. If I notice someone who is, maybe, feeling upset, tone of voice would be a bit different, slower voice, or slower words, lower voice. I think that, yeah, you use different communication methods.

***SPEAKER #2***

*This portion of the study guide includes captions.*

***THE INFLUENCE OF WHO AND WHERE***

Well, I know when my parents were alive and, if I was, if they phoned, my husband could tell

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immediately who I was talking to because I suddenly got a, got a Scottish accent which I did not have in my daily life with other people. And, uh, he could also hear it if I got mad about something. He said it came out quite strongly if I was upset. Umm, so I did try to um, do away with that <laughing> and, I think when you're at home, you're more relaxed, you know. When you're at work, you try to be more professional and you know, although the college is a really nice place to work and I don't feel uptight when I'm here there is a certain difference in people's expectations, you know. Um, and, you know, half the time at home I don't have to finish the sentence, my husband already knows what I'm going to say. So, there's things like that, you know.

***WHEN LIPREADING, CONTEXT IS CRUCIAL***

Well, if I'm in a classroom of people who don't speak English or if I'm traveling by myself and totally dependent on lip reading, the context, you are very, very focused on the people you are talking to, totally. You don't look anywhere else and I find that is helpful to people learning English too because they have to do the same – they have to watch and focus. If I'm in another group of people and I know that I won't hear them anyhow, because they are hearing people, I just sit there and I watch everybody, everybody, and I learn a lot that way but I can't take part in the speech. So, I'm relaxed in one way, more relaxed if then if I'm not trying to communicate. Um, in church, if, ok, in church, Deaf church, I know the topic is going to have something to do with God, the Bible, something like that so I'm geared. But if someone else starts telling a story or tells a joke, I'm lost. In the hearing church, it's exactly the same because I can't hear there either. So, I'm watching and if they are talking about God or Bible, fine, I have a clue but if they start talking about this person, that person, or a story, or a joke, I don't know what they are saying. It's very, very boring – extremely boring. And I haven't yet solved this problem with church, it's very boring, to be honest, because I can't hear what is going on.

***INTERPRETER'S PRESENCE CHANGE COMMUNICATION DYNAMIC: Signed the Deaf speaker***

***SWITCHING TO CHILDREN'S REGISTER: Signed the Deaf speaker.***

***PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXTS***

Uh, the context of communication, I think, is really complex. There is just the simple physical environment within which communication takes place and, so, that will have an effect on the communication whether the room is comfortable, or crowded, or hot or cold or, just purely physical surroundings are part of the context. Um, then there's also the psychological context – how everybody in the room is feeling, how they are feeling towards each other, sometimes I think that's referred to as relational context. So, there, I've heard it said that when you have 2 people in the room you actually have, in theory, at least 6 because, you have, if it's you and me, one person who's there is who I think I am, another person there is who you think you are, but then there's also who I think you are, who you think I am, and then we can even go further than that and the other people in the room are who I think you think I am and who you think I think you are. So, context I think it's got so many layer to it, I think it's really fascinating. And, then, the messages we choose to compose are, they come out of all of that. So, it's, um, it's the same messages plucked out of context are put into a different context, um, will have different meaning, may not be understood at all because, um, all that stuff will be different.

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