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Speaking through Interpreters

It's hard enough, and sometimes frightening, to speak in public in one's own language. To do that in a foreign language complicates it even more, also if you are pretty good at that language. Speaking in your own language but through an interpreter into an incomprehensible foreign language is an entirely different matter and definitely not easier. Here are a few recommendations to think about:

1. **Choose if possible a professional** rather than taking a chance with an amateur. It may seem simple to interpret as soon as you are reasonably knowledgeable with two languages, but interpreting is a profession that requires education and experience.
2. **Get to know your interpreter.** The one who best knows the foreign language is likely to be a native. If so, the interpreter is from a culture that is different from yours. Therefore, it is important to consider cultural differences, not only towards your audience, but also towards your interpreter.
3. **Prepare the interpreter as well as you prepare your own delivery.** You should write down your whole presentation and give the manuscript to the interpreter in advance. The two of you should practice the presentation in advance. During practice you decide on pace and length of sentences. Of course you may diverge from the manuscript. The important thing is that the interpreter has understood the message. (S)he also gets an idea about the vocabulary and the shades of meaning that you wish to convey. In addition, you will learn about his/her competence and adapt yourself to it. Furthermore, the interpreter will be able to practice reflecting the atmosphere that you wish to create with your audience.
4. **Double the time frame or cut out half the contents** of your presentation. The interpreter has to repeat everything and there will be many more pauses.
5. **Always face the audience and not the interpreter!** Once you start presenting, you must keep eye contact with the audience and not with the interpreter. If you can act as if the interpreter is not present on stage, and vice versa, then the cooperation is successful, with a smooth flow and mutual dedication.
6. **Speak clearly, calmly and simply. Make pauses and articulate!** Give the interpreter, and the audience with him, a chance to hang on. Don't use untranslatable clichés and metaphors.
7. **Don't interrupt the interpreter** unless it seems obvious that (s)he is involved in some ego-tripped discussion with the audience, or if you feel sure that the interpretation is not right because it lasts far too short or far too long.
8. **Develop a sign language with the interpreter** for repeating, pauses etc.

Good preparations lead to good coordination and success for both parties. In connection with interpreted presentations, the number of incidents and mishaps almost always increase. Preparations are therefore most important to break that nerve force.

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