



Left is Cox Center instructor Ann Auman with journalist Lisa Williams of the Cook Islands in the South Pacific.

## **Working with an Interpreter: A Guide for Teaching or Speaking Abroad**

**By Joseph Scanlon and Al Hester**

**Edited by Kristina White**

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## **Preface: The World's "Confounded" Languages**

At one time or another, most of us have been frustrated and annoyed at problems in communicating what we want to say--especially if we are trying to share our meaning with those who do not speak our own language. Humanity shares a common heritage in feelings, emotions, instincts and goals, but often these commonalities are obscured by the division of languages and cultures.

In the Bible's book of Genesis, we see that God is unhappy with the people of Babel, who lived in the days of one language and speech. They had the arrogance to build their tower to reach to the heavens, and to frustrate them, God said:

"Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

"So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth. . . ."

Often those of us who must communicate from one language to another feel that we have indeed paid a severe price for the shortcomings of the inhabitants of Babel. With the best intent in the world, we can't make ourselves understood.

Misinterpretations of speech or mistranslations much of the time are just a minor annoyance, easily rectified. But the effects can also be critical to the success of teaching, lecturing or doing business with those whose language you cannot use.

We are often dependent upon interpreters of the spoken word and translators of the written word to help us achieve meaning in situations outside our own nation or language.

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The Cox International Center has worked with approximately 3,000 journalists and other communicators from about three dozen nations in training and education projects. Professor Scanlon has performed training missions in dozens of countries as well. Early in his work and in my own work abroad, we realized that a major key to success of the project is in the transfer of

meaning. What seemed perfectly clear to us in our own perceptions was quite difficult, sometimes, for others to comprehend--especially if our thoughts had to be conveyed through an interpreter. We have seen many efforts by inexperienced speakers and teachers to impart their ideas. They often failed, because they did not have the ability to put themselves in their listeners' shoes. They could not comprehend that others did not automatically share their meaning. Sometimes they seemed to feel if they only shouted loudly enough, or repeated the English phrases, their audiences would have some great epiphany of understanding.

Too, bad! It doesn't work that way. Even with the best interpreters and with empathy on both sides, you are probably lucky if 90 per cent of your meaning gets through.

This small book is written to help you avoid some of the pitfalls we, and others, have faced. The suggestions it contains won't perform magic, but they should enable you to get more of your important points across to those who do not speak your language. Conversely, if this book makes you more conscious of the problems of interpreting, you may look more sympathetically on the "foreigner's efforts" to communicate with you. We beg your pardon if we are occasionally wide of the mark in our examples of the problems of interpreting.

Obviously our own understanding of other cultures, languages, geography and politics affects the way we approach this subject. We write this small book with humility. We hope you will find it helpful, and urge you to keep your sense of humor as you work abroad. Communication, though difficult, is possible cross-nationally and cross-culturally.

--Dr. Al Hester, Athens, Georgia, USA, October, 1996

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## **Introduction**

This is a first try. We hope the results will be useful to the thousands of persons who go abroad to share their knowledge and ideas with individuals having a different language and from a different culture.

The idea came from the senior author, Professor Scanlon, as he discussed problems of training projects and the work of interpreters with Dr. Hester, the Director of the Cox International Center. The idea was further developed during 10 days of seminars in Hungary in 1995, co-sponsored by the Cox Center and the Office of the Hungarian Presidency. Dr. Scanlon, Ms. Lee Cullum, Dr. Robert Carrell and Dr. Douglas Newsom were the instructors in these 1995 workshops and in three additional workshops in 1994 in Hungary. The material flows from observations during these seminars and in additional conversations and correspondence with Dr. Newsom. Dr. Hester has added his own observations from a wide experience of more than 25 years in international education.

We hope that those who find it useful will write and tell us why, and that those who find weaknesses will suggest improvements. Please let us have comments or any new examples or new ideas. We are sure with your help we can make this more useful.

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## **Starting Out**

You are in another country, speaking through an interpreter, trying to make each point short, simple and clear. Shortly after you start, some members of your audience begin to move their heads slowly from side to side. Soon, all those listening are doing the same thing. If you were talking to Americans, you might be correct in assuming that the people shaking their heads did not agree with you. If you were in some parts of Asia, that would not be valid. There, the slow back and forth, side to side, almost circular movement of the head means agreement. The Asian audience would be signalling it is with you, not against you.

When you are being translated, you are never sure what is getting through. You do not know if the translation is correct, if some nuances have led to slight confusion or if there has been a breakdown. Even if the translation is correct, you may have distorted your meaning by a gesture or, as the above anecdote indicates, you may find the non-verbal reaction confusing.

A Canadian professor, speaking in Hungary, showed a slide of devastation caused by a tornado. He said the slide showed a "trailer park." The interpreter did not understand. The Canadian tried "mobile home park." That didn't work either. He remembered the interpreter saying she studied English in Scotland where trailers are called caravans. He tried "caravan." No luck. Later, the

interpreter explained that in Hungary the word "caravan" means camels wending their way through the desert or--though the Hungarian word is different--gypsies. The first did not apply; the second had negative connotations. She was stumped. There are trailers or vans in Hungary, but none of them are in mobile home parks. The worst part is that while the speaker and interpreter tried to sort things out, the lecture ground to a halt. Since the two were talking English, the audience had no idea what was happening.

Even those who know the foreign language can get into trouble with variations, slang and idioms. Al Hester is Director of the Cox International Center at the University of Georgia. He speaks Spanish--but it's a Spanish learned mainly in Mexico. In Venezuela, he used a phrase perfectly acceptable in Mexico, meaning "to catch a bus." In Venezuela, it means to have sex with a bus. Fortunately, his audience was amused, not insulted.

Communicating through an interpreter is, in short, not easy. In fact, it's something of an acquired skill. This booklet shares our experience by suggesting ways you may be able to reduce the problems involved. It covers everything from what you can do before leaving home, to use of diagrams and overhead projections of slides or other materials, to gestures. Although it's designed for persons giving a workshop or training session, it should be useful to those giving a lecture or talk or to someone talking to potential foreign customers.

The senior author has worked in Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, England, France, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Nepal, Venezuela and the United States, sometimes with interpreters, sometimes without; but the idea came from a conversation with Dr. Al Hester in Godollo, Hungary, in 1995. That explains the many examples from Hungary. It is not better or worse than other countries--it just happens to be where we were when we first looked for examples. Why are countries like Australia, England and Ireland on the list? That's a reminder that problems of understanding can still occur even when persons seem to speak the same language. As Professor Higgins remarks in "My Fair Lady," in America they have not used English for years.

Here are the major topics covered in this book:

1. Briefing yourself
2. Briefing the interpreter
3. Simultaneous or delayed translation?
4. Care and feeding of the interpreter
5. Audio-visual aids
6. Idioms and phrases
7. Reading the audience
8. Non-verbal communication
9. Trying foreign phrases

## **Briefing Yourself**

In the United States or Canada or any English-speaking country, it's easy to get English-language material about almost any country. This is also true in many other countries. Get some of this

information in your own language and read it before you leave home. Once you start travelling, English-language material will be harder to come by.

Start with a map. It will show you where a country is and who are its neighbors. It's easier, for example, to understand Hungary's desire to be part of NATO when you see it's next to troubled Ukraine and near the war-torn area that was once Yugoslavia. A look at a map of Mexico will quickly show you why the Mexicans are always conscious of the "Colossus of the North," the United States, looming over their northern border. You will also have a better understanding of Australia once you've seen how many of its major cities are on the coast and how far apart they are. Maps also make it easier to grasp trading relationships and markets. Incidentally, don't look at distances and assume travel speeds are similar to those in a country with excellent high-speed roadways. The roads in most countries are much slower than in America. Average speeds are far less. In Ireland, for example, many roads are narrow: and even good roads go through towns. Motorists average less than 40 miles per hour. In Nigeria, just getting across the capital, Lagos, by car, can take hours of time because of congestion.

Also, take a look at topography: Much of Hungary is relatively flat, which makes it easy to move around. In Brazil, swamps, mountains and impenetrable forests separate some of the major cities. The teaching of geography is an often-neglected subject in many schools today. Many younger persons have little idea of the terrain and transport difficulties in foreign nations. Your own ignorance will be quickly noted with amusement--or impatience--if you don't know the easily obtainable geographic facts about a country where you will work.

Find a book about the country, making sure it has an accurate history section as well as material about current happenings. Most westerners have heard about the Hungarian revolution in 1956 but few know of an earlier attempt to create a democracy which failed in 1848. Probably fewer know that a neighboring country like Romania has a large ethnic Hungarian population or that Hungary, while largely Roman Catholic, has one of the world's more important Protestant centers, Debrecen. If you have trouble finding material, call or write an embassy. Embassies are delighted to send out reading material: they will usually mail something within 24 hours. If you have access to the World Wide Web on the Internet via your computer, you have an easily accessible gold mine of materials about various nations. Use one of the major "search engines" or directories of what you can find on WWW, and you will soon learn many things about strange countries. Appendix 2 gives some examples of WWW sites which may be of help. These are merely examples, as sites proliferate and change daily.

While you're reading, note any questions. Then find someone from that country or someone who has been there recently, and ask them for answers. Also, ask them if there are any "no-no's" ["No-no's," by the way, are also extremely aggravating, biting insects in the Marquesas Islands in the South Pacific], any taboos you should know. We were warned, for example, that some Hungarians consider themselves to be in Central, not Eastern, Europe. Don't assume because you live a long way from international centers like Washington or New York that you won't find someone to talk to: if you are from a university or live in a university town it's almost certain you will be able to find either a native or a recent traveller. Above all, don't hesitate to ask dumb questions. For example, you would probably assume most Hungarians have a telephone at home. Not so. In many communities, about 25 per cent of the population have phones. Many villages

have just one phone. There's a limited supply of telephone books and no city directory. Dr. Doug Newsom, who has worked a lot in Hungary, likes to talk about the value of telephone public opinion surveys, but she knew--from her inquiries--that there was little point in doing phone surveys in Hungary, as the results would not be representative of the entire population.

Once you reach your destination, ask your hosts what's going on, to give you a "briefing." Persuade them to sit down with you and watch a newscast. Even a review of the news headlines will give you a sense of current events. Your presentations will be much more effective if you can tie your points to topical examples--but be sure these are accurate. It will help your interpreter and your audience understand what you are saying and reassure your audience--because they will recognize some names you use--that you are being translated correctly. Foreign examples may be irrelevant to your audience: local examples make your experience applicable to your audience's concerns. (One tip: don't assume persons in one part of a country will know what is going on in other parts of their own country, however. You may visit far more of a country in one trip than some of your audience will in a lifetime.) Conversely, don't make the mistake of thinking that your audience is provincial and lacking in sophistication. Many Arabs, for example, know Europe almost as well as their own countries, since they often vacation in Europe.

Try a few well-chosen visits in the foreign country where you are carrying out workshops or visiting on business. If you are going to talk about hospitals, visit one or several. If your interest is in jails, do the same. If it's radio and television, go to see some stations in operation. If you are selling steel or china, ask to visit a smelter or a pottery. The senior author's daughter handles fisheries for the Canadian government in Japan. She arranged to visit fishermen and fish plants, so she would understand how the Japanese fishery works. Seeing something is far better than hearing about it. It also helps eliminate assumptions. It's easy, for example, to assume that because Hungary's phone system is less developed than North American systems, Hungary must be behind in everything. Not so. Hungary's cars are relics of its former ties with the Soviet Union; but its fire trucks are up-to-date, modern equipment from Austria and Finland, equipped with aerial ladders from the United Kingdom and chemical suits from Sweden. Hungary's firefighters are also extremely well trained.

Visits can also help you learn what technical terms are common to both languages. One type of foam used in fire fighting is "A triple F"--"Aqueous Film Forming Foam." The interpreter in a workshop in Hungary was not familiar with this. However, when firefighters saw "A-F-F-F" written down, they immediately said the Hungarian equivalent. From then on, the interpreter felt comfortable using that term. In fact, both sides felt more comfortable after that because they knew they shared a common jargon.

Language seemed less of a barrier. Professionals often know the same words because many technical words have an English or Latin origin, or the English word has been adapted untranslated into the other language. They can understand something of what another professional is saying. But they may have difficulty understanding an interpreter unless the interpreter shares that technical knowledge.

Dr. Hester was discussing basic journalistic writing techniques in a workshop in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and had been talking for perhaps 15 minutes, when one of the Saudis present, said,

"please excuse me. I know English, and your remarks with the journalistic terms are not being translated properly."

Surprisingly, the interpreter was the first to admit that he was unfamiliar with the journalism terms and gladly relinquished interpreting duties to the Saudi journalist who had stopped the proceedings.

Visits to sites in a foreign nation also allow for less formal contacts--making further dialogue easier. During a visit to a fire department, the senior author was offered some alcohol to drink. He asked for a glass of water to go with it. Asked why he wanted the water, he pointed to the alcohol and said, "to put out the fire." That apparently translated very well, and the humour helped the communication process.

If you are going some place you have been before, be sure to check to see what has changed. A lot can happen in a short time. For example, in 1994, Hungary had a system of federally appointed persons responsible for police, fire departments and emergency planning. They were called state secretaries and their powers were similar to those of a prefect in France. But during the last few years, Hungary has been gradually increasing the power of local government, so the post of state secretary has been abolished. In our workshops in 1995, we didn't know that; so we used the term, "state secretary." If that had been the only problem, someone would have said, "Oh, that post has been abolished." Unfortunately, there is another post also called state secretary which is equivalent to an under-secretary in the United States. When we used the term state secretary the interpreter translated the word but both she and the audience assumed we meant the equivalent of an under-secretary. Naturally, that left everyone confused. Sometimes working through an interpreter is like walking on eggs--it is so fraught with possible error!

For Americans going abroad, an excellent help in avoiding problems is Do's and Taboos, compiled by the Parker Pen company and edited by Roger Axtell. It's available from Travel Books & Language Centre, Inc., 4931 Cordell Ave., Bethesda, Maryland 20814. Good as it is, its 1993 edition illustrates the problems which can be caused by change. It says that one of the safest conversational topics in England is animals. It states that in Hungary you should avoid politics and religion. Both may have been good advice in 1993: neither is valid today. In England, animal rights protests over shipment of sheep across the Channel have caused a furor among activists, farmers and police, as has the so-called "mad-cow disease." Mention animals and you can start a furious debate. In Hungary, there are now free and open elections and political discussion and debate is lively and normal. Religion, too, is also no longer off-limits: one town has three new churches. Many Hungarians are seeking spiritual and religious renewal.

This means you need to update yourself continually about changing attitudes and safe topics of conversation. When a Canadian diplomat first went to Moscow, he had to be very careful about talking to ordinary citizens. There was one exception--hockey. Canada and the former Soviet Union had a long rivalry in hockey. The diplomat could easily get a conversation going by saying he was a Canadian and then mentioning the brilliant Russian goalie, Tretiak, or Canada's most celebrated team, the Montreal Canadians. Tretiak is no longer active and the Canadians are not doing so well, but hockey is still a good topic of conversation in Moscow. Today however, many of the old taboos are largely gone. People will talk about almost anything.



## **Briefing Your Interpreter**

Plan ahead by taking the time to help your interpreter. First, if it is possible, send the organizers abroad material you have published on the topics you will be covering and ask them to give it to the interpreters. It helps interpreters get a sense of your subject and some of the words you will use. If they can find something on that subject in their own language, they can do some reading. As they read, they will become more comfortable with the general topic area and they can look up awkward words in the dictionary and--if they're still confused--prepare some questions for you when you arrive.

Second, on arrival, talk to your interpreter. Discuss your topic and how you intend to present it. This will help your interpreter feel comfortable with you and the way you talk, and give you a sense of the interpreter's grasp of English. This is especially important if you are using technical terms: the most fluent linguists have trouble with technical language. During a trial in Canada, a Dutch witness was having trouble speaking English. The son of the Netherlands ambassador was in court and he volunteered to translate. He was a flop. The witness was an auto mechanic and his testimony concerned the workings of an engine. The son of the ambassador knew little about cars: he knew neither the Dutch words being used nor their English equivalent.

A chat with your interpreter may clear up another problem. All of us speak with what--to others--is an accent. If an interpreter is accustomed to a British accent, it will be very useful for her or him to hear you speak and to get used to your way of talking. The senior author lectures every summer at the University of South Carolina in the United States. It takes him about a day to get accustomed to the Southern accents. Unquestionably, those he's talking to have the same feeling about the way he talks. Even regional variations can be confusing. To a Canadian it sounds funny to hear someone say, "a quarter of eight." Canadians say, "a quarter to eight." Eh? (The author makes a point of giving an interpreter key points the day before a talk. That gives the interpreter time to look things up or at least read them over and have a chance to ask about anything unfamiliar.) Your diction, the pace and cadence of your English, is also unfamiliar to your interpreter, and the more exposure he or she has to it, the less likely there will be trouble later on.

Help your interpreter in other ways. At the very least, provide a list of topics you will cover. Better still, hand the interpreter--before you start--a copy of your overhead projection examples or a list of technical terms you intend to use. You don't like to go into training sessions unprepared. Why assume the interpreter feels any differently?

## **Simultaneous or Delayed Translation**

Simultaneous translation may seem like the easiest way to work though an interpreter. Your interpreter is in a booth out of sight, translating as you speak. Your audience wears earphones and hears its own language. You cover a lot of material because translation causes few delays. (The interpreters usually change every 10 to 15 minutes: the audience will hear a new voice but no break in translation: the only problems occur if the sound system fails.)

It sounds good--but there are disadvantages.

First, the interpreters can't talk to you. If a meaning isn't clear, they do the best they can.

Second, if they are unsure of something, they will wait for you to put it in context, then start translating. What the audience hears is what you said several sentences ago. If you notice a non-verbal reaction--whether heads are nodding or there is laughter--you won't be sure what provoked it. Experienced speakers watch for non-verbal cues to see how their remarks are received. Simultaneous translation makes that difficult. During a session in French Canada, this speaker was using simultaneous translation. Suddenly, the audience roared with laughter. The topic was handling of mass casualties, hardly something to cause amusement. The speaker asked a person in the front row, "What's so funny?" The man replied, "I don't know. I was listening to you in English." He asked the person beside him. Then he started laughing, too. He explained:

"The interpreter said, 'This man talks much too fast. I can't understand what he is saying!'"

Third, if there are problems with the sound system you won't be aware something has gone wrong until you see persons playing around with their receivers, perhaps asking someone to assist them. Some experienced speakers wear an ear piece so they can hear what is happening. This also allows them to pause when a particularly complex point is being translated. They start again when the interpreter stops.

Fourth, simultaneous interpretation creates another problem. If some of your audience understand English, they will listen without earphones. If they miss something, they will quickly don the earphones and--because the interpretation is slightly behind--hear what they missed. When they take the earphones off again, they will have missed part of what you said. The result is most persons give up trying to listen in English. That is frustrating to anyone who wants to try.

We prefer delayed interpretation. It may appear tedious and slow, but it increases the chance of effective communication. It allows those who wish to listen in English to do so. Since they hear you, then the translation, they will hear your points twice; and can check whether they heard correctly. They will notice if the interpreter's version disagrees with their own understanding and ask questions if they're confused. When there is delayed interpretation, the interpreter sits beside you. You say a few words or a few sentences, then she or he translates. If the interpreter fails to grasp a word or phrase, he or she can ask you to explain. This sharply reduces the chance of a mis-translation. In Israel, the senior author asked a police sergeant to interpret a talk on emergency management. Some material was beyond her English. Two professors shouted out the correct Hebrew when she ran into difficulties. If you are traveling on business, you may want to have someone with you who understands the language who can warn you if the interpreter makes an error, or if it appears something is misunderstood. Most interpreters, by the way, use some discretion: if you say something unintentionally insulting, they won't translate it. That may be helpful, but it means you won't know what was said. After a session, ask your interpreter if there were any problems or anything they felt was better left not translated. (Don't do this in an accusing tone: indicate you appreciate their thoughtfulness, you are trying to learn what to say and what not to say.)

Because you stop and wait for your words to be translated, you can watch the audience when the interpreter is speaking. That means you can pick up non-verbal reactions. You can watch and see

how the audience reacts to what you have said because you know approximately what the interpreter is saying. Of course, this does not work both ways. If you use gestures, the audience won't know where they belong because you will have stopped using them before they hear the translation. This may, however, be better than when you use so-called simultaneous translation. There, because the interpreters are behind you at varying intervals, your gestures may be entirely inappropriate to what your audience is hearing. There is an apocryphal story about the speaker who said to someone how much the audience appeared to enjoy jokes--they had laughed very hard at each of his stories. The person who had been in the audience replied, "Oh, the interpreter would say, 'The speaker has just told a joke. Please laugh now.'"

Because delayed interpretation requires that you stop every few sentences, your delivery slows and--in our experience--becomes more organized. Instead of rambling on, you think about each point. Using delayed translation means you cover less ground in the same amount of time. Given all the problems of a different culture, that is an advantage. Anything which slows you down may be an asset. Americans rush too much, anyway. But in planning your presentations, remember that delayed interpreting will take about twice as long.

It's crucial to speak in short bursts--the best translation often occurs when you speak in phrases, rather than in complete sentences. The basic rule of delayed translation is: the longer the material to be translated, the more will be lost in the process. It's also crucial to use simple language: it's difficult enough for an interpreter to translate what you are saying without being forced to simplify it. Don't be alarmed that it takes time for you and an interpreter to learn to work smoothly together. Working with an interpreter is like playing doubles in tennis, team teaching or being on a task force: it takes time to build a smooth relationship. That's why we prefer to stick with the same interpreter if we are doing a series of seminars.

Each interpreter also has her or his own preference about what duration of material is best. Most like to work with phrases. But some prefer a sentence or two. If only very short phrases are interpreted, the presentation is very choppy and can throw the speaker off his or her pace.

### **Care and Feeding of Your Interpreter**

Interpreting is an exhausting task. The interpreter must listen in one language, change the words into another language, then deliver them in that second language. If he or she is translating simultaneously, he or she must do that while still listening.

The one advantage of simultaneous translation is that the translators work when you do. If you stop, they stop. If you take a break, they take a break. That's not true for delayed translation. There, you say a few words or sentences, then pause while they are being translated. During that pause, you can think what you're going to say next, check your notes, sip some water, watch the audience. The interpreter gets no similar break. He or she must first listen to you, then translate, then tune in to you again. He or she will be much more tired than you are.

Remember that, and insist on regular breaks--at the very least, once an hour--and these breaks should be real breaks, not five minutes, but 15 to 20 minutes. Otherwise, your interpreter will be exhausted. More important, make sure your interpreter gets a break. At most presentations,

someone will come up and talk to you during the break. You ask the interpreter for help. Instead of being a time for relaxation, the break becomes more work. (When simultaneous translation is used, the interpreters are usually out of sight and can slip away during a break.) The problems of interpretation don't stop at the end of the working day. Congenial hosts will want to show you around or take you out to a meal. The interpreter will be asked to come along--and translate. Down time for you is work time for the interpreter.

It is understandable that your hosts want to talk to you, ask questions, share experiences and also that you have a lot to ask them. You must make sure this is done in a way that does not exhaust your interpreter. One solution may be cutting the formal part of a working day. Starting a half-hour later and ending a half-hour earlier will give your interpreter more time to relax. Second, make certain a time is set aside for questions, perhaps even a time for brief, one-on-one chats. Third, suggest that someone else do the interpreting outside the formal presentation period.

None of this will stop all problems. In one lecture, the speaker told an anecdote about Freud. The interpreter didn't catch what she said. She tried again, this time using both of Freud's names. Still unclear. That led to an explanation of who Sigmund Freud was and what he did. By that time, the point was lost. When this sort of thing happens, you'll be tempted to get annoyed at your interpreter--after all, everyone knows Freud! Resist the temptation--you live or die by the skills of the interpreter. (The problem may have been that Freud's name is pronounced differently in another language and simply wasn't recognized.)

### **Audio-Visual Aids**

Audio visual aids are an asset in any presentation, but using them in a foreign country requires special thought.

American equipment may not be compatible with equipment elsewhere. European videotapes and those of some other countries use a different format from the ones in the United States. That means these tape machines will not play American tapes, unless the VCRs are multi-format. You'll have to get your tapes re-dubbed to meet European standards or have an American machine available. Multi-format video tape players, however, are becoming more common. These will accept all formats of video. Check to see if a multi-format machine is available. The American format, also used in some other parts of the world is NTSC or one of its various versions. Other parts of the globe not using NTSC use either the PAL or SECAM formats.

At some sites, the problems may be poorer equipment. You can find slide projectors with the familiar round carousel slide holder everywhere in the United States or Canada. In many other countries, the loading device is a long, straight device like a cookie box. Unless you are familiar with such a device, you may discover you can't use your slides. If possible, ask for a technician to assist. If that is not possible, don't over-rely on such aids.

Equipment failures are not uncommon and may be difficult to solve. During one lecture, an overhead projector exploded, sending sparks flying in all directions. There was no spare projection lamp available. At another site, a speaker plugged in his computer printer only to see and smell smoke and hear a loud bang. He knew the power system was different. He did not

know that the device attached to his plug was not a converter. Even terminology can get confusing: what Americans called overhead projectors are called "view foils" in British English.

A word about power supplies: It is absolutely essential for you to know what the local electric voltage and cycling is. If your equipment cannot convert, either automatically or manually to different voltages, you can't use it. In some cases, step-down or step-up transformers must be used. Equipment using heavier wattage may not work well on electric converters designed for lighter duty. Don't depend upon your own knowledge! Consult someone thoroughly familiar with power supplies BEFORE you make an audio-visual or computer presentation.

In many countries, electric outages or "brown-outs" are very common. Residents of these countries take these in stride, but a blackout can really cause problems for the foreign lecturer. Once in Venezuela, Dr. Hester had prepared a lecture in Spanish, planning to read it in the language of his hosts. Everything was going fine--until the electricity went off, leaving everyone in the dark. He had to speak in Spanish extemporaneously, a much harder job than reading from a prepared text.

English-language overhead slides or opaque illustrations may be more of distraction than a help. Imagine an American audience trying to read overheads in Arabic or Hebrew. Many persons assume they can solve this problem by reading the material so the interpreter can translate it. This can be confusing. Often the audience is unsure when something is being read from an overhead and when the speaker is simply talking. Incidentally, it's very difficult to translate anything word for word. One speaker likes to quote John Milton's Areopagita, "Who ever knew truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?" That's impossible to translate effectively. That's why most interpreters don't translate precisely what you are saying but adapt it to a meaningful form in their own language.

In our view, overheads are much more useful if they are translated into the language of your audience. You can do this two ways.

First, you can letter or number each point. You can refer to them by letter or number without anyone having to translate. This will help your audience follow your points and ensure that if there are misunderstandings their notes will reflect your key points.

Second--and better--have your main points prepared in two languages with the language of your audience in large type, and the English version in small type underneath. This will let you and your audience follow what is being discussed.

There can be problems in preparing such material if there are written diacritical marks involved, but the extra effort of putting the accent marks in is worth it. Sometimes the meaning is unclear without the proper accent marks. You can do this yourself if you bring along a computer and printer with an adapter and converter that allows use of local power--as long as you have someone to help you translate. Usually, an interpreter won't mind translating key words for an overhead: it will save him or her a lot of grief during a lecture.

Incidentally, be careful with diagrams. You can confuse people. Americans or Europeans frequently use the map style called the Mercator projection which places the United Kingdom at the center of the world. (It's tied to the meridian of Greenwich, England.) Such a map can lead to laughter in China where maps show China at the center. It might be better to use a globe.

## **Idioms and Phrases**

Some things are very difficult to get across in another language. These include phrases drawn from sport, literary allusions and metaphors, humor or cartoons. It includes names of persons not known to many outside the United States; and phrases that are catch-words in one language but not another.

When Americans want an estimate, they ask for a "ballpark figure." That's baseball jargon. It might possibly be understood in Cuba or Taiwan or much of Central America, but it would be meaningless in most of Europe, Africa or Asia. In Japan, however, many baseball fans not only know baseball terms, they would recognize allusionsto such things as Cal Ripken Jr.'s passing of Lou Gehrig's mark for consecutive games played. Some sports metaphors work because of similarities between different games. A term like "down to the last batter" is meaningful in England, the West Indies, India, Pakistan, South Africa and Australia because the term also applies to cricket. Other baseball terms might not be understood. Beware. Do not assume familiarity with many specialized terms on the part of your audiences.

Every country has its own idiom. On Irish roads, what we call "soft shoulders," they call "soft margins." There are Canada-U.S. variations. Once the author asked someone what local he had reached--he meant what Americans call a telephone extension: the person he was talking to informed him she did not work for a union. She heard "local" [a phrase for a local branch of a trade union] in quite a different way.

Literary allusions vary in acceptability. A reference to Lucy Maude Montgomery's book *Anne of Green Gables*, would be completely comprehensible to a Canadian audience or to women in Japan (where stories about the red-headed orphan from Prince Edward Island are known to every female child), but might leave the audience confused in Austria, Germany or Israel. Many Americans know the story because it has run on PBS Television. Some phrases don't translate well. A "bed of roses" comes out as a "bed of soft pillows." Watch phrases from American popular culture. Even if an interpreter could translate Yogi Berra's quip, "it ain't over 'til it's over" or "it ain't over until the fat lady sings," it would have little meaning.

Another thing to watch is names. At this was being written, the O. J. Simpson murder trial was dominating American television and being forced on the world through CNN. British television was doing twice daily "O. J." summaries of the trial of the famous American athlete. As a result, references to Simpson were understood. (The same had not been true a year earlier.) However, a reference to Christopher Reeves, the actor who played Superman, would have fallen flat with many audiences, although he was undergoing surgery and was in the news in the United States. See if you can identify these people: Laura Secord, Louis Riel, Joe Smallwood, Paul Henderson, Rene Levesque. They are famous Canadians, names well known next door to the United States. Our guess is that most U.S. residents would know none of them. Just so you know:

- Laura Secord drove a cow through American lines to warn the British that the Americans were going to attack: a chain of candy stores is named after her;
- Louis Riel led the Metis (persons of mixed blood) rebellion in Canada's west, and was hanged for his revolt;
- Joe Smallwood was the leader in Newfoundland who fought for and won the vote which made Newfoundland Canada's tenth province;
- Paul Henderson is a hockey player who scored the key goals when Canadian professionals defeated the Soviet Union in the first truly world top-level hockey series. Henderson was, in effect, the Magic Johnson (a top U.S. athlete) on the first hockey dream team;
- Rene Levesque was the first person to lead a separatist government to victory in Quebec.

Television has made many American notables world famous, but it's risky to refer to names or terms, although we egotistically often think that American culture is everywhere. The senior author had trouble with references made to: "Perry Mason" and "Watergate," although most audiences had heard of former U.S. President Richard Nixon. The term, "impeachment," however, was much too complicated. A mention of U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy and "McCarthyism" led to a long-winded attempt to explain something difficult even for Americans to understand. The idea of McCarthyism, which refers to the late senator's attempts to smear many persons as communists, although they were not, was put across when the speaker referred to examples of McCarthyism in what was once Communist Europe. The concept could be understood: the American label could not. Once you start, you find yourself in quicksand: explanations make things worse. The work of the American consumer advocate, Ralph Nader, for example, can only be understood in the context of major corporations and consumer protest. It's not just his name, but the whole idea which is hard to explain in a country which has had little democracy and little private enterprise.

Using historic references can also be a dead loss. Surveys show that even British students do not know the meaning of the "Battle of Britain" or the "holocaust." In any case, your audience may not know the same history. Americans think of the War of 1812 as ending with the Battle of New Orleans--a battle which actually took place after the war was over. Canadians recall a battle at sea between the Shannon and the Chesapeake, with the Shannon capturing its U.S. rival and towing its prize into Halifax harbor. (The body of the Chesapeake's captain was returned to the United States for burial.)

[As an aside, we might note here that even the term "American" must be used with care. To some persons, Canadians are also Americans, as they inhabit North America. Latin Americans fret that they are just as much "Americans" as inhabitants of the United States. And Mexicans note that they inhabit the "United States," too--the United States of Mexico. If you work in foreign countries, you need to know these nuances. Your ignorance will generally be forgiven, but nevertheless it is irritating to your hosts.]

To get around problems with unfamiliar specific names or terms, use generalizations. A reference to the movie, "Star Wars," may not get across; but a mention of something as science fiction may be clear. Or if you refer to "Star Wars," indicate it was a science-fiction movie made in the United States. In the same way, a reference to the U.S. "Parliament" may be more

meaningful than a reference to the U.S. House of Representatives, though not strictly accurate. By making such subtle adjustments yourself, you can reduce the strain on your interpreter.

Beware of words with two meanings in English, especially when one is technical. One speaker used the term "recall," referring to the system in the United States that allows an elected person to be forced to submit to a new election. The interpreter assumed, "recall," meant an alternative to "remember." The phrase "salute the flag" also caused confusion. Americans salute their flag. Others don't. In neighboring Canada, no one, except red-coated Mounties in uniform does that.

Once Dr. Hester heard someone use the English word "euthanasia" as he addressed a foreign audience through an interpreter. This synonym for "mercy-killing" to end pain was translated as "youth in Asia," leaving a very puzzled audience.

Homonyms can be especially difficult--was it "died" or "dyed," "controller" or "comptroller," "leased" or "least"? Words that have caused us trouble:

- Convention--which can mean a custom or the place where a candidate is chosen;
- Lie--was it to tell an untruth or to lie down;
- Charge--are we talking about a military event or a price to be paid for something?
- Hose--are we talking "panties" undergarments or fighting fires?

Many interpreters are taught by persons who learned their English in the United Kingdom. They may have special problems with terms that have different meanings in other English-speaking countries. Take a word like "junket" which can mean dessert or a free trip. An interpreter is likely to hear it in the British context, which is a dessert. The mayor of a town told us he had been a "trainer"--that was the way the translation reached us--and, later, that one of his athletes had been an Olympic gold medalist. It dawned on us he had been a coach, not a trainer. The interpreter had translated the word, but missed the subtle difference. Even the word "coach" presents difficulties. In soccer, the coach's functions are performed by someone called a manager. The good news for those of us from the United States is that the widespread use of American television, especially CNN, makes it likely such problems will decline in the future. American, not British English, is the most common language.

When it comes to technical terms, try to follow these rules: First, explain it to the interpreter before you use it. Second, explain it when you first use it. Third, use it several times in succession, illustrating it. Fourth, ask your audience if they understand the term--perhaps they have an example? By then, you will be wondering if there wasn't a better way to make your point. That's why an advance tour is such a good idea--when you can point to something and ask what it's called, and you and your interpreter will learn the technical words you need to know.

When you're chatting with friends or associates at home you probably make all sorts of errors in language. Quite likely, you are also vague. No one notices. Those you deal with regularly are accustomed to the way you talk and they fill in the gaps. They need fewer cues, because they are familiar with the context. Speaking through an interpreter is very different. There is no common context, no shared background to make your meaning clear. In addition, your interpreter may speak more correct English than you do. If you make mistakes he or she will probably assume



you meant what you said--and interpret what you said, not what you meant. If, for example, you say, "infer," when you mean, "imply," those who know you won't notice. They probably aren't that precise either. An interpreter, however, will use the word you used--and that may make a big difference.

Often, in any language, meaning is implied. If, for example, we're sitting at the dinner table and we ask, "Where's the ketchup?" everyone knows we really mean, "Pass the ketchup." Of course, if we get up and start for the kitchen and ask the same question, then we really do want to know where the ketchup is. ["Ketchup," by the way, is only one of several spellings for this tomato-based condiment.] In a formal presentation, that sort of context is missing. We have to be very precise in what we say and very specific. Roger Axtell has some good examples in "American Jargon and Baffling Idioms," in *Do's and Taboos Around the World*. Finally, remember that inflection does not come across in translation. An interpreter may not understand or know how to translate sarcasm or irony. What will come out may be just a literal translation of your words.

## **Humor**

It's better not to try to tell anecdotes or jokes. Humor often depends on subtle shadings of language. It can be very hard to translate: if part way through you run into a translation problem, the anecdote drags on endlessly. By the time you have explained it, no joke is very funny. Most of us aren't good at telling stories anyway. Here's one of the few that worked for the senior author:

My cousin was the mayor of a Canadian city.

*(Pause for translation.)*

During the winter--when it was cold--he went to Florida in the southern United States--where it is warm.

*(Pause for translation.)*

He received a phone call saying it looked as if there would be flooding in his Canadian city.

*(Pause for translation.)*

He said it did not sound serious to him.

*(Pause for translation.)*

So he did not return home.

*(Pause for translation.)*

He was wrong--his city was flooded.

*(Pause for translation.)*

He wasn't re-elected.

*(Laughter)*

That worked for several reasons. First, the ideas are clear and the sentences are short. Second, and more important, the speaker and interpreter had been working together for several days and had become comfortable with each other's style. It's worth noticing how the anecdote was delivered in very, very short bursts: it almost seemed as if the interpreter was telling the story. Third, the story was most appropriate for the audience--a group of mayors all worried about the next election. Fourth, the anecdote does not depend on subtle shades of meaning.

Puns don't translate. Neither does humor tied to language. Words which seem funny in English often have very ordinary meanings in another language. The words for entrance and exit on the German super highways or autobahns are, "einfahrt" and "ausfahrt." That may seem funny in English, but the humor would be lost to a German. It would be the same with the Gaelic name for a river in Ireland: it's called the "Oily River," a name which sounds strange in English. It's worth noticing that in an anecdote like the one quoted above everything is spelled out--such things as the fact Winnipeg is cold in winter and Florida is warm at that time.

### **"Reading" Your Audience**

Try to learn about your audience. At the very least, ask for a list of who's coming and what they do, if this is possible to obtain in advance. Get someone to point out to you who is present. If you're giving a seminar, go around the room asking persons about themselves--including why they have come. This will get your audience talking--and it will get them accustomed to waiting for the interpreter to tell you what they said. If it's a larger group, perhaps you can get a feel for your audience by asking them to raise their hands in response to a few general questions. (Asking your audience what it expects may be very revealing. We were leaving a seminar when Bob Carrell noticed a placard outside. "What does that say," he asked. It turned out to be the topic of the seminar and it wasn't the same as the topic we thought we were discussing.)

Always allow time for questions and comments. Questions are often the best clue to whether you have been successful in getting your message across. But don't let all the questioning go one way. Ask questions. Ask, for example, how they deal with certain problems. Even if you hear a term that seems familiar, ask about it. In Hungary, many persons work for a state-sponsored agency, but they call themselves journalists. Obviously the term "journalist" has a different meaning than in the United States. When persons introduced themselves as journalists, we asked, "What do you do?" The answers were quite revealing. If you have trouble with this idea, ask a few persons what they think of when you say the word "dog." Even among close friends and colleagues the word creates very different thoughts.

If you are doubtful if a term will be understood, don't be afraid to ask your interpreter and your audience. If they haven't heard of something, they won't mind telling you. In Hungary, we asked the audience if they recognized a number of names. They didn't know who Jean Chretien was--

he's Canada's prime minister--but they did recognize most major sports figures, male and female. Pele, the Brazilian soccer player, is still a household name everywhere. If you do ask, do it in a polite not condescending way. Say something like, "the word 'interface' is widely used in the United States. I am not sure if you use it?" (If they say "yes," add, "Here is how we use it. Do you use it the same way?")

Sometimes, you feel inhibited by interpretation. You think things you do at home--like a rapid-fire exchange with your audience--can not be done using an interpreter. There is no reason you can't involve your audience in give-and-take, as long as you warn your interpreter and prepare your audience. First, tell everyone they must keep their comments short. Second, stop them if they become long-winded so your interpreter can translate. Explain that everyone else in the room may get a point, but you must understand what is being said. Remember your audience may do what you say because you are in charge. It may not understand the needs of your interpreter.

### **Non-Verbal Communication**

Perhaps the most hazardous area is non-verbal communication. We started with the example from India where shaking the head is a positive rather than a negative gesture. There are many others.

The "V" sign made famous a sign for victory by Winston Churchill has a sex-related meaning in some countries. The thumbs-up sign--used by hitch-hikers in North America--is replaced by the thumbs-down sign--not a negative but a request for a ride-in some parts of Europe.

Quotes are symbolised differently in various languages. In English, quote marks are put before and after the material quoted. In Hungary they go above and below. One of us put her arms up, fingers extended, to illustrate a quote, then realized that does not make sense in Hungarian.

The Parker Pen Company once sent advertising material to Mexico proclaiming the advantages of an ink called SuperQuink. It was advertised as the ink that was proper for every social occasion. As Roger Axtell reports in *Do's and Taboos Around the World*, the advertising in English ended with the phrase, "To avoid embarrassment in your social correspondence, be sure to use Parker SuperQuink." It sounds innocuous but when the ads were reproduced in Spanish for the Mexican market, they were translated as, "para evitar embarazo," an idiom which suggested that Parker SuperQuink would help avoid pregnancy. Quick to learn from experience, Parker became a pioneer in warning Americans and others about the difficulties of operating in other societies. Some humorous examples of mis-translations from foreign language speakers into English are given in Appendix 1 to show you that it's not only English speakers who stumble into hilarious phrases.

Colors can also be symbols. When Margaret Thatcher visited Poland before the fall of the Iron Curtain she wore green. She had learned that green was the color of hope in Poland, and that was the message she wished to convey. When one of our colleagues went to a party organized by Irish Roman Catholics, she wore an orange dress. That was not the correct message: Orange is the color of William of Orange, the Protestant King who defeated the Roman Catholics at the

Battle of the Boyne. It's a good idea to at least ask about colors and dress and other symbols to avoid unintentional slights.

### **Trying Foreign Phrases**

Years ago when the Quebec government made its case for improved support from the Canadian government, it used the word, "demander," which, in French, means to ask. Unfortunately, it was translated in the English version of the document as, "demand." Most English reporters of that era had limited French and read only the translation. The result was that a politely worded set of requests for discussion ended up as a harsh demands for immediate action. A similar row started recently when a Senator called a separatist woman a cow. The word sounds very negative when translated to English but it is much less pejorative in French--the closest meaning is lazy.

Many persons who speak English are reluctant to try words or phrases in another language. After all, they reason, other persons are better at my language than I am at their language. Why take a chance? Perhaps there's also a fear that stumbling will cause laughter. Novice efforts at a new language can cause amusement, but they will be very much appreciated.

One day in Quebec City, the senior author lost his way to a railway station. He asked an elderly man the way to the "gair"--at least that's the way it came out. The man looked bewildered. After he imitated the sound of an engine puffing and some train whistles, the man's face brightened. He said you want the "gar. "Guerre," pronounced "gare," is the French word for war. "Gare" pronounced "gar" is the word for station. The author ran into similar problems in Venezuela, while having dinner with a colleague, Henry Quarantelli of the University of Delaware. When it became clear the waiter did not understand English, the author used his limited Spanish. Everything came as ordered, first cantaloupe, then steak and potatoes, finally, salad. Half way through the second course, the author realized that instead of asking for a melon, he had said, "Yo soy un melon"--which is not, "I would like a melon," but, "I am a melon." The waiter had been polite enough to ignore the gaffe. (He should have said, "Quiero un melon, por favor.")

These stories make great anecdotes, although they make you feel silly at the time. Don't let that make you afraid to try. Attempts to use a few polite phrases such as the equivalents of "please" and "thank you," "good-bye" or something like that, are very much appreciated. A little effort will reap a lot of goodwill.

Reporters still joke about another blunder when the late U.S. President John F. Kennedy tried to proclaim at the Berlin wall that he was a Berliner. What he actually said was, "Ich bin ein Berliner," which can also translate as, "I am a jellied doughnut," a popular delicacy in Berlin. That doesn't alter the fact his remarks were understood and very much appreciated.

Once, the Canadian ambassador in Finland decided to make a short speech in Finnish. He worked very hard at mastering the words needed (Finnish is very difficult). Finns understood how much work was involved and thoroughly appreciated his efforts. It wasn't what he said that counted but the fact he had worked so hard to say it.

There is another payoff for learning a few words. When you are listening to your interpreter, you will start to catch a few words--and, sometimes, realize that something has gone wrong with the translation. You may find it useful to create your own simple dictionary listing key terms and their pronunciations.

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## **Appendix**

### **Examples of Web Sites about Various Countries**

If you have access to the World Wide Web on Internet, you can get great amounts of information about the culture, geography, economics, politics and current events of a given nation. You do a key-word search of the various Web sites or databases reachable through Internet. In order to carry out the searches, you must utilize what are known as "search engines" which are really programs made available for finding out information quickly on almost any topic.

For instance, you may type in the name of the country to see the great variety of information about it. Or you may do a more advanced search, using several words to limit the kinds of information you receive. The various search engines have differing rules about how to combine words to make searching more efficient. Some search engines will place the most likely sources about your search term at the head of the list of available Web sites or other types of information on Internet. This may be important, as even for small nations, there may be thousands of references found on various Web sites.

By the way, there are several Web home pages dealing with problems of translation and interpreting.

It is also possible to find many electronic editions of foreign newspapers and magazines on the Web. These may be most helpful in alerting you to current information you may need for your work overseas. There are Web sites which contain current reports of news agencies and specialized publications involving specific nations. There are also databases available on the Web or through commercial on-line information providers such as CompuServe or America On-line which can be searched for information about specific countries. This information is obtained from thousands of newspapers, books, magazine articles and other formats and made available to you at a price.

Many of the Web sites include photographs from various nations, or even audio or video files to help you learn about these countries. Numerous embassies and tourism ministries have excellent information sites on the Web.

Through the use of a program called Real Audio on the Web, it is possible to hear hundreds of radio stations from all over the world, as they send their digitized signals over the Internet. Some of these stations have English-language programs as well broadcasts in their own language. In order to hear these broadcasts you will need to download the Real Audio software from the Real Audio home page.

There are also thousands of Web sites devoted to the art, music and dance of various nations or cultures. You will be able to see examples of painting in vivid color on your computer screen, if your computer is equipped properly. You can also hear music from these sites if you have the proper software to hear these audio files.

Recently, video and animation is being added to Web sites to give you an even more vivid experience on such sites.

Here are some examples of Web sites devoted to specific nations. Site addresses frequently change. If you can't find the site using the addresses below, try searching with just the name of the nation you want:

Albania:

<http://www.albanianet.com/>

Brazil:

[http://www.worldrover.com/country/brazil\\_main.html](http://www.worldrover.com/country/brazil_main.html)

Cook Islands:

<http://www.ck/>

Denmark:

<http://www.um.dk/english/danmark/danmarksbog/kap5/5.asp>

Ethiopia:

<http://www.africanet.com/africanet/country/ethiopia/home.htm>

France--France Today. Journal of French Travel & Culture:

[http://www.france.com/medias/France\\_Today.html](http://www.france.com/medias/France_Today.html)

Guatemala:

<http://www.guatemalaweb.com/>

Hungary--WWW Resources for Hungary:

<http://www.ssees.ac.uk/hungary.htm>

Iceland:

<http://www.iceland.org/>

Japan--Focus on Japan:

<http://metrotel.co.uk/travlog/japan.html>

Kenya:

<http://www.emulateme.com/kenya.htm>

Latvia--Economy. Overview:

[http://www.arluma.com/latvia/lv\\_economy.htm](http://www.arluma.com/latvia/lv_economy.htm)

Madagascar:

<http://www.anthrotech.com/madagascar/>

Nicaragua:

<http://www.nicaragua.com>

Oman:

[http://www.arab.net/oman/govt/on\\_govtintro.html](http://www.arab.net/oman/govt/on_govtintro.html)

Papua New Guinea:

<http://www.tbc.gov.bc.ca/cwgames/country/Papua/papua.html>

Qatar:

[http://www.arab.net/qatar/tour/qr\\_ummsalal.html](http://www.arab.net/qatar/tour/qr_ummsalal.html)

Rwanda:

<http://www.emulateme.com/rwanda.htm>

Slovenia:

<http://www.ijs.si/slo/country/visiting/being-there.html>

Tonga:

<http://www.tongatapu.net.to/>

Uzbekistan:

[http://www.loneplanet.com/destinations/central\\_asia/uzbekistan/](http://www.loneplanet.com/destinations/central_asia/uzbekistan/)

Vanuatu--Trade and Commerce:

<http://www.vanuatutourism.com/>

Wales:

<http://www.cpoint.co.uk/tw/regions/r12.html>

Xijiang (China):

<http://www.gz.cninfo.net/gzonline/otsc/inve4.htm>

Yugoslavia:

<http://www.gov.yu/>

Zambia:

<http://www.zambia.co.zm/>

## About the Authors

The senior author, **Joseph Scanlon**, is professor and director of the Emergency Communications Research Unit at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. He received his bachelor's degree from Carleton and his master's degree from Queen's University. He also has a Diploma in Public Administration.

He worked as a journalist in Toronto, Washington and Ottawa for Canada's largest newspaper, the Toronto Daily Star, and for CBC TV News. He also spent a year as executive assistant to the late Hon. Judy LaMarsh, Minister of National Health and Welfare. In 1965 he joined the faculty of the Carleton School of Journalism, serving as director from 1966 to 1973.

In 1970 he founded the Emergency Communications Research Unit and began studying human behavior in crisis and disaster. Since then, he has studied first-hand scores of emergency crises, contributed to more than 20 books in the field of emergency management, and lectured in countries including Hungary, Israel, England, Ireland, France, Germany, Australia and the United States. He is the president of the Research Committee on Disasters, International Sociological Assn.

The junior author is **Al (Albert Lee) Hester**, who is director of the James M. Cox, Jr., Center for International Mass Communication Training and Research at the University of Georgia, a position he has held for the past six years. He is a professor of journalism and has been teaching at Georgia for 24 years. He received his bachelor's degree from Southern Methodist University, and his master's and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

His specialty is international mass communication, and he has lectured and led training workshops for journalists and other communicators from more than three dozen countries. He is the author or editor of numerous books on international mass communication themes and is also a widely published magazine free-lancer. Prior to directing the Cox Center, Dr. Hester was for eight years head of the Journalism Department of the Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. His professional media experience includes thirteen years as reporter, assistant city editor and city editor of The Dallas (TX) Times Herald.