

2013 November Toronto Talk

Title and Short Summary

“You are only as good as your interpreter, so please...”

— **Dramas and Struggles of a Japanese-English Interpreter**

She spoke so fast, like a machine-gun or a bullet train, with jokes, puns and word plays everywhere. “Torontokara kaettekita bakaridesukara, mada mega toron-to shiteimasu (I’ve just come back from Toronto, so my eyes are *toron-to* [sleepy and Bleary]). Each time she cracks a word-play of a joke, the Japanese audience laughs. She is perhaps what people would call a “great speaker,” so entertaining. But wait a minute! Is she really a good speaker? She may pass as a speaker —well, at least as an entertainer — in a homogeneous setting of all-Japanese audience, but what if the audience is mixed and some people are listening through an interpreter?

Similarly, “I’m a New Yorker, and New Yorkers tend to speak very fast,” so the man said proudly. I say to him as politely as possible, “Yes, but you are not in New York. So please speak slower than usual. That way, some people may be able to follow your talk in English directly, which would be much better than listening through an interpreter.”

One doesn’t have to be entertaining to be a good communicator. One doesn’t have to prove that his mind works (and speaks) very fast. Communication takes place when you really have something you want to say, and say it with your own words, even falteringly at times. Say it in earnest with sincerity and care.
