

Your Words In My Mouth | My Voice On Your Tongue

Ghislaine Leung, 2017

A transcriptive exercise in speaking and writing in its most material and lived form.
Time: 40 minutes plus 20 minutes discussion and compilation.

Method

Split into pairs. Find a comfortable space for you both to be in. Choose who will be writer and speaker for the first 20 minutes, each pair will then interchange their positions for the next 20 minutes.

Speaker

Get comfortable where you are, sit down or lie down. You may find it helpful to close your eyes. This exercise in reading is not about generating content as much as tuning into what is already present in the materials around you; your surroundings, how your body feels, your thoughts at that moment in time, the sounds you hear around you. Think of it as a fluid transcription of your present, if you run out of one thread try to shift into another thread immediately but take your time, try not to leave space for prejudging each word but let them come to you by concentrating on precision, simply say exactly how and what is right now. Continue for 20 minutes, taking rests as needed before switching positions.

This is both a easier and harder task than you might think. If you feel unable to do it try speaking about that, how you feel unable, describe the block, what it feels like. If you feel unable to do that stop for a little while and then try to speak that. If you cannot then stop, switch positions and then try the speaker position again after having been in the writer position.

Example: "I hear the traffic passing outside and it also sounds like blood, it is traffic because I know the sound of the cars against the road but it does not sound like individual cars but just one long stopping and starting blood noise. The air is cold in my throat and at my right side where the window glass radiates the exterior. Today I noticed the way his jumper hung around his arms and neck. Not so much beautifully, less precise than that, it hung, that was it. My under knee where it crosses my other leg is indented by knee, it is almost pain, not pain, an indent of my bone to my flesh."

Writer

Find a comfortable position to write in. Write using the thing you write with the most daily, this is likely your phone or tablet, a computer, or perhaps a notebook and pen. You

may find it helpful to face away from your partner so that you can concentrate on the sound of their voice. This exercise in writing is not about describing narrative as much as tuning into a voice, transcribing the language you hear verbatim, exactly as it comes out. Think of it like musical notation, make sure you write down every word and silence, including the repetitions, ers, ums and any sounds of shifting around. If there is a silence then break the line and continue breaking the line for each breath you take until the speaker begins to talk again. Continue for 20 minutes, taking rests as needed, then save your writing as "Your first Name followed by Your Partners first Name" (if you would prefer to remain anonymous please just use another name or initial) and then switching positions.

This is both a easier and harder task than you might think. If you lose your place or cannot write fast enough, just continue from the speech you can hear now, do not pause to cover old ground. If you cannot spell something or it auto corrects don't worry about it. If you cannot write what the partner says, write the sounds down instead, or write the rhythm; down, soft, louder, harder. If you cannot then stop and switch positions and then try the writer position again after having been in the speaker position.

Example: "

I

I hear the traffic passing outside and

it also sounds like blood,

it is traffic because I know the sound of the cars against the road but it does not sound like individual cars but just one long stopping and starting blood noise.

The air is cold in my

throat and

and, at my right side where the window

the glass

it

radiates

exterior

Today I noticed the way his jumper hung around his arms and neck.

Not so much beautifully,

less precise than that, it hung, that was it.

*My under knee where it crosses my other leg is indented by knee,
it is almost pain, not pain,*

an indent of my bone to my flesh.”

Discussion and Compilation

After each pair has taken turns to be in the position of writer and speaker for 20 minutes stop and rest for a little while and tune back to speed. You should now each have a piece of writing you have generated. Try not to read the writing back now but let it be without any edits or amendments. Send your writing to the host as “Your first Name followed by Your Partners first Name” (if you would prefer to remain anonymous please just use another name or initial). You can now to get back into a larger group for the last 20 minutes to discuss the exercise.