

Comment by Ms. Beate von der Osten, Head of Language Service, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Tôkyô

This summer, the Institute of Japanese Studies of Heidelberg University had invited me to teach a weekend seminar on “Interpreting in the Diplomatic Service“ as part of their newly installed trilingual interpreting programme (Japanese-German-English) leading to a masters degree. The class provided me with the opportunity to take an in-depth look at the course structure and the level of the students – and both truly made indeed a very deep impression on me.

The materials I had covered in the weekend seminar included - amongst others – Japanese and German dinner speeches and lectures and were put into practice in the two interpreting modes of simultaneous and consecutive. In difficulty, they ranged from easy to advanced.

As already stated above, I was deeply impressed by the quality of the students’ work. Considering that the members of the class had not even completed their first year of study, they already possessed very good note-taking skills and were for the most part able to deliver the content in the target language at a level ranging from very good to outstanding – both as to what the appropriate linguistic level as well as the presentational side of the delivery is concerned.

The excellent skills the students displayed even after that short time of study left me without a doubt that by the time they graduate they will for the most part be more than able to work as trustworthy professional interpreters at any setting - ranging from in-house interpreting to international conferences.

All students were extremely eager to learn as much as possible, to practice their skills as frequently as they could, and were more than prepared to work very hard towards their final goal.

However, in order to achieve great progress within the given time-frame, it also needs skilled, knowledgeable, experienced and motivating teachers. And here again I was utterly impressed by the skills and dedication of the regular teaching team, working well beyond the required hours in order to match the students’ almost unstoppable desire to learn.

In conclusion, although I only spent a weekend at the University of Heidelberg, I was clearly surprised by the high degree of accomplishment the teachers had enabled the students to reach and the hard-working spirit and talent of the class members. Thus I would be very happy for this course to become firmly established and equipped with sufficient funds to carry on the great work. Also in times to come Germany and Japan certainly need truly professional and highly-skilled interpreters to contribute their very valuable share as bridging links between our two countries.

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