School Outreach Stories

Visit to Kurfürst-Salentin-Gymnasium

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In May 2015 I visited the Kurfürst-Salentin-Gymnasium in Andernach, Germany to speak to 12th grade students about careers in translation.

The teacher in charge invited me for the first time to Career Day in 2014, at short notice - probably because one of his presenters had cancelled. As the time and day fit my schedule and as I had been waiting for such an opportunity, I immediately accepted.

This year, 12 students enrolled for my presentation, 6 more than the year before. Needless to say, I was happy about the increase - especially as the school has a classical language and science focus.

I was directed to a science room where I was able to connect my laptop to a whiteboard. I used Sarah Garriot's PowerPoint presentation “Translation – A Global Career” from the School Outreach website, which I had adapted for my talk. My slides were all in English, at first due to lack of time to translate them into German (my first presentation in 2012 was in English). Now I deliberately keep them in English, as I noticed that the students seem to like it, maybe they find that a true (first) challenge, maybe a little exotic, maybe both.

As usual, the BDÜ, the German equivalent of the ATA, had sent me a package with publications, pens, notepads, etc. that I used to inform the students about the advantages of a student membership in the professional association and about the training options for translators and interpreters in Germany.

This year’s students were very interested. Translation bloopers work well to get them thinking about translation: what is wrong and what could be the reasons why it came out wrong. Bloopers are also perfect to expand on the skills a translator needs. The “What society, my friends, my parents think I do”-slides are good to talk about the reputation of translators and interpreters and to develop a realistic picture. I try to involve the students as much as possible while we cover the entire ground of our business.

My impression is that the students like to hear from people who are actually doing what they are talking about. They want to know what is it like, what is the thrill and what is the downside of our job. It makes a far greater impression on them than if a career counselor or parent talks to them.

My goal for future school visits is to try out interpreting exercises with the students and to experiment with some of the many interesting exercises some of my fellow translators and interpreters use in their presentations.

Oh, and one last word (especially for those who are nervous about public speaking!): this story may sound as if talking to students is as easy as pie for me, but it is not! I am usually nervous, so I practice my presentation ahead of time and present it aloud a couple of times until it feels right.