Professional ethics in interpreter training

Professional ethics are addressed in most interpreter training courses I am aware of, but, as mentioned below, the treatment it is given is perhaps not always fully thought through, systematic or sufficiently detailed. That is why I felt it useful to put together some ideas on the subject for training purposes. As someone who is a professional interpreter and neither a full-time trainer nor a theoretician, my comments are based purely on experience as an interpreter and as a witness of training courses, and are thus empirical in nature. I suspect I shall make no contribution to the theory of translation studies and perhaps not say anything particularly original, but hope that these comments will be useful for trainers reflecting on how to deal with professional ethics in their courses. Lastly in introduction, I stress that my experience as an interpreter is within the institutions of the European Union, and so my comments will no doubt appear biased towards that particular context, for which I crave the indulgence of readers working in a different context. At the same time, these comments cannot be understood to represent the views of the interpreting service of the European Commission (SCIC), the European Commission itself, nor indeed of the European Union or any institution or body thereof. They are merely my own personal views.

Why are professional ethics important?

It is difficult to overstate the importance of inculcating into students the right understanding of professional ethics and their acceptance.
Ethics are particularly important, I believe, inter alia for the following reason. To some extent interpretation is a profession at risk. It is all too easy for delegates in meetings and politicians who may have to decide on budgets for interpretation in international organisations to criticise interpreters. Interpreters can never be sure that the profession has a stable medium to long term future ahead of it. It is therefore important that our clients be as satisfied as possible and that the good repute of the profession be protected. That good repute depends on two basic factors: the quality of our work and high standards of professional ethics. As students move towards becoming our colleagues and part of the interpreting *corps*, it is therefore indispensable that they be not just good interpreters, but that they are led to meet high ethical standards.

What do we mean by "professional ethics"?

There is an ambiguity about the word "ethics" in English, and before dealing with the basic ideas of professional ethics it is necessary to clarify what is being referred to here.
In its general acceptation one takes "ethics" as referring to the problem of applying moral tenets in a specific situation. There are therefore, for example, issues relating to ethics in medicine. On the one hand it is the duty of a doctor to give a patient the best possible chance of recovery. On the other hand when a patient is terminally ill and in great suffering, a doctor has the duty to reduce that suffering as much as possible. When these two duties are in conflict, how does the doctor behave? These are amongst the most important questions facing human beings. As such, they deserve to be discussed with students insofar as they impinge on their future professional activities. We want our students to be enlightened citizens who are capable of taking into account ethical issues and making careful and well-informed decisions in their future life. Genuine and very tough ethical issues may arise for interpreters, particularly in public service interpreting, in hospitals, in asylum procedures, or in court

interpreting. They are likely to arise for those interpreters working in war zones, and here one must pay tribute to the tremendous work done by Professor Barbara Moser-Mercer in this connection.
Further, there is now a move towards taking ethical issues on board more in the training of conference interpreters, the specific profession we are concerned with here. For example, one can quote from the abstract of Clare Donovan's article in the special issue of *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* devoted to ethics and the curriculum[1].

"In marked contrast to research on court and community interpreting, in which ethics has long been addressed, research on conference interpreting has tended to focus on cognitive aspects of the interpreting process. In addition, ethical issues have not usually been addressed explicitly in the classroom. Recently, however, a shift in emphasis in both research and training can be observed, with closer attention being paid to the role of the conference interpreter within a complex communicative situation. Many training programmes now incorporate explicit modules on ethics. Thus, in many ways conference interpreting has seen a shift towards considerations previously more typical of community and court interpreting" (page 109).

In this context, there is no doubt much useful work being done in reflecting on what aspects of ethics to include in conference interpreter training and what pedagogical tools can be developed to that end. Here, one could refer to the special issue of *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* mentioned above and in particular the introductory article of Mona Baker and Carol Meier[2]
However, I wish to address the notion of ethics from a much more modest angle. "Ethics" in English is also used in the collocation "professional ethics", which is much closer to a code of conduct with prescriptive rules, rather than to a philosophical treatment of applying moral values in practice in situations which are difficult to resolve. Without in any way belittling the work on ethics which I have just referred to, and for which I have every respect, I believe that for the purposes of preparation of students for professional life they need above all a proper understanding of professional ethics.
To explain a little this more restrictive approach to the notion of ethics, I should quote from Baker and Maier's paper, which cites the following ethical dilemma of a translator.
"I was hired to do the voice-over for a French version of the annual video report of a high-profile religious organisation. The video opposes gay marriage, a view untenable to me. During the recording session, I noticed various language errors. Nobody there but I spoke French, and I considered letting these errors go: my guilt-free sabotage. Ultimately I made the corrections. As a married gay man, I felt ethically compromised even taking the job. Did I betray my tribe by correcting the copy?" (page 5).
This is recommended in Baker and Maier's paper as an ethical dilemma which it is "particularly valuable to debate" in the classroom (article in reference, page 5).
This seems to imply that conference interpreters should be encouraged to debate the ethical desirability of deliberately providing interpretation which the interpreter knows is inaccurate on the grounds that the interpreter disapproves of the moral stance of the speaker. Quite frankly, this seems to be moving on very thin ice, to put it mildly.

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[1] (Donovan, Clare "Ethics in the Teaching of Conference Interpreting", *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer (ITT): Volume 5, Number 1. Special Issue: Ethics and the Curriculum: Critical Perspectives:* 109-128. 2011)
[2] (Baker, Mona and Maier, Carol "Ethics in Interpreter and Translator Training: Critical Perspectives", *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer (ITT): Volume 5, Number 1. Special Issue: Ethics and the Curriculum: Critical Perspectives:* 1-14. 2011)

Of course our students need to be mature citizens with an awareness of ethical issues. They may bring that awareness into play by selecting certain clients and refusing others if they are freelance interpreters and are not staff interpreters of an international organisation. For example, a pacifist could decline work at a conference of the armaments industry. But once an interpreter has taken on a job I cannot see how they can operate ethical choices such that they censure and amend the input of speakers. Even contemplating that in a classroom discussion strikes me as dangerous.
Thus, to repeat, the inclusion of professional ethics I advocate is much more modest and cautious, and aims above all at ensuring that our future colleagues will respect the basic rules which are crucial for the good repute of the profession.

A possible starting point: the AIIC code

Course leaders need to decide who among the trainers is to deal with ethics and how to do so. Much of what we know about professional ethics is instinctive and common sense, with just one or two guiding principles. Trainers are thus not always sure how to set about dealing with ethics on their courses. Sometimes one has the feeling that ethics are mentioned on the course, that trainers refer to the need to respect confidentiality and to act collegially, but then leave it at that, and indeed are somewhat at a loss as to what to add. A little more detail on some of the basic concepts used when talking about interpreters' professional ethics, and some suggestions as to how to deal with ethics on the course are therefore, we feel, appropriate. Some of the examples may look all too obvious to experienced interpreters, but they all need to be spelled out to trainees.
How then, can trainers proceed? A starting point might be to recommend to students to consult and reflect upon the "Code of professional ethics" of the AIIC. This can be found, at the time of writing, at the Internet address: http://aiic.net/code-of-ethics .
If, for some reason, the address changes in the future, then it should be possible to find the code by going to the AIIC home page http://www.aiic.net and taking it from there.
Although some students will never become members of AIIC, this is still an excellent reference document to begin with.
That being said, trainers should then take the question further and devote some thorough debate to ethics. They can build on the elements of the AIIC code but in discussion with students should explicate them much more and introduce new ones not in the code, or at least not explicitly in it.

Confidentiality

The first substantive element of the AIIC code is confidentiality. Here the code is perfectly clear and I believe should meet with the agreement of all conference interpreters. It says “Members of the Association [we can read: interpreters] shall be bound by the strictest secrecy”. Trainers should insist on this "strictest secrecy", and not talk about exceptions bar in one case. That one case is information provided to conference interpreter colleagues *which is necessary for them to be able to work in a related meeting*. Let us say interpreter A interprets in consecutive in a bilateral meeting on an important business deal between a German and a Polish company. The meeting is of course under the strictest business secrecy. That interpreter then cannot work, for whatever reason, in a follow-up meeting between the same partners. Interpreter B is to interpret at it. In such circumstances it is not just reasonable and ethically acceptable, it is indeed desirable as being in the interest of high professional quality, for interpreter A to inform interpreter B about the first meeting and possibly to provide background documentation.

A second point of confidentiality is that it concerns documents as well. Interpreters sometimes receive confidential documents during meetings. They must know what to do with them. Sometimes the meeting organisers or the leader of the team of interpreters will arrange to pick them up. But that is not always the case. Students should be aware that when they are left with confidential documents at the end of an assignment they should spontaneously offer to return them to the meeting participants who provided them, or to the meeting secretariat, or in a worst case scenario, if they cannot return them but feel they cannot just leave the documents lying around in the booth, that they should take them away with them and then destroy them.
Related to confidentiality is also the point in the AIIC code that interpreters shall not derive any personal gain from confidential information they acquire in the exercise of their duties. That is also worth raising and asking students how they feel such a situation may come about. Possible examples could be interpreting at important business negotiations and knowing that it is a good time to sell or buy certain shares, or at political meetings which will have an impact on the economy, for example on exchange rates, and acting ahead of the market as one knows the likely economic or monetary trends. Such situations do not arise every day of the week, but they are an important dimension of professional ethics.

Collegiality

A second important point of ethics is collegiality. One thinks immediately of the interaction between colleagues working in a booth in a given meeting. But collegiality is much more than practical team-work between two or three interpreters sitting in the booth together.
Firstly, there must be collegiality within an entire interpreter's team, particularly if relay is being used. Those providing a relay should remember they are being taken on relay and make every effort to provide a good service for their colleagues. Those taking the relay could have the courtesy of thanking the relay-provider, when the opportunity presents itself, for the service provided. Of course, if there is a large team with many languages and much use of relay between various booths, colleagues do not have to go round to see one another systematically in other booths, and the event should certainly not turn into a mass mutual congratulation session with the English thanking the Germans for the relay from Greek and the Germans thanking the English for the relay from Portuguese, and so on. But a word of thanks here and there will provide professional satisfaction for the relay-provider, motivate them and probably encourage them to try to continue to provide a good relay in future meetings. If, on the other hand, there is a problem with the quality of a relay, those who have experienced difficulties should provide any feedback to the relay-provider politely, sensitively and constructively.
Sometimes it may happen that a colleague will be taken on relay, but does not really expect it. An interpreter working into Danish has the reputation for having very strong Spanish. A colleague in the English booth has very strong Danish. If the English colleague's intention is to benefit from the Danish relay for Spanish, they should probably go to the Danish booth before the meeting starts and warn their Danish colleague, who may well overlook the possibility that, as Danish is not one of the most widely used languages, anyone will be taking them on relay.
Further, when relay is used, interpreters should show solidarity with the relay-provider in public. Let us say a delegate speaks Slovene. The Slovene is interpreted into German somewhat indifferently and the English booth, taking the relay from German, finds it difficult to make a good interpretation out of the German. There are then complaints from an English-speaking delegate that the English interpretation is no good and they cannot understand. This is frustrating for the English interpreters, but out of collegiality there is no way they should defend themselves by informing the English-speaking delegate, even bilaterally after the

meeting, that they were not to blame and it was actually the fault of other colleagues. They just have to take it on the chin and accept the criticism, however unfair it may seem.

Another case of broader collegiality, that is within a team as a whole, not just in one booth, is sharing documents. If one or more interpreters in a team have obtained, one way or another, documents which are not generally available to the rest of the interpreters' team, but which could be helpful to them, then they should try to have copies made (or in more modern terms forward electronically) such that all colleagues can benefit.

Interpreters and trainers will no doubt be able to think of a range of other examples, and not all examples have to be spelled out to students, but in a session on ethics the importance of the interpreting team as a whole needs to be made clear to them.

To return to collegiality manifested within one single booth at a given meeting or conference, it is important for students to understand that, once they are working with colleagues in a meeting, they are not rivals of those colleagues, but partners. The participants in a meeting always judge the interpretation on the basis of what they have heard generally, and often as a function of the weakest link among the interpreters. There may be two highly competent interpreters at the top of their form and one who, for whatever reason, is working badly that day. The reaction of delegates will almost certainly not be: we had good interpretation today, but one of them was not as good as the others. The reaction will rather be: the interpretation was no good today. In other words, what is important is what comes out of a given booth as a whole, not what each interpreter does individually.

What is the conclusion we can draw from this? It is not only that interpreters should work as a team as described earlier in this chapter, but also that they should do *everything* to help one another. This means, for example, sharing terminology and glossaries with one another. There may be a natural tendency to feel one has proprietary rights to a technical glossary one has built up, perhaps over a number of years. But that should not prevent the owner of it providing all or part of it to colleagues when they work in a meeting where the glossary is useful or perhaps even indispensable.

A further point of collegiality which may sound too basic to experienced colleagues but which really needs to be raised with students is quite simply good booth manners. Interpreters need to avoid making extraneous background noise and disturbing their colleagues, be it by rustling newspapers or eating or drinking. All interpreters need to drink in the booth, but can do so more or less discreetly. As a rule they should not eat, but it is true that some interpreters do need a bit of body sugar to keep concentration, or chocolate or something similar just to provide encouragement. But again students need to be made aware of keeping things within bounds and not to start picnicking in the booth. As interpreters work more and more with laptops and other gadgetry in the booth a further point of good booth manners is appropriate use of these: keeping your mobile off or at least on silent, not pounding away on the keys of the laptop so as to disturb colleagues, and so on. One could continue at great length with such examples, but a sensible discussion with trainees should enable them all to understand the basic idea and the need to respect colleagues in the booth.

Lastly on collegiality, there is one aspect which must absolutely be mentioned to students. That is protecting the reputation and the dignity of the profession by not denigrating it or colleagues in public. (Cf. the AIIC code: "They [interpreters] shall refrain from any act which might bring the profession into disrepute.") Interpreting is an extraordinary, indeed unique, profession in one respect. It is the only profession I know where, when one mentions in public what one's profession is, there is at least a 50% chance that one's interlocutor will respond with a story about "how the interpreter got it wrong", and there is still a reasonable chance that they will explain how they were "able to put the interpreter right"! If one announced one were a doctor, one assumes the response would not be to talk about medical errors; or if one introduced oneself as a lawyer or judge, nor would the interlocutor immediately talk about

miscarriages of justice. Why do we mention this seemingly anecdotal point? It is important because interpreters have a reputation to defend. They do a very difficult job requiring a unique mix of qualities and skills, for the most part in adverse circumstances; they do it generally very well, but are constantly exposed to criticism. In such cases, it is only too easy to fall in with the trend and accept the criticism, to joke about interpreters' blunders, indeed to become somehow apologetic about one's own profession. Even worse, some interpreters talk in public to non-interpreters about the inadequacies of their colleagues, sometimes giving the impression that they are the only ones free of blemishes. We are not suggesting that interpreters become anti-social or aggressive to those who criticise us, but students should be aware of the dignity of the profession and the need to defend it appropriately They should never criticise the quality of work of their colleagues outside of the profession; and they should never denigrate the profession itself.

Professionalism

A third aspect of professional ethics is that interpreters should always work with due professionalism. This, too, needs fleshing out. Although it sounds unbelievably basic, students need to realise that professionalism begins with punctuality. Even the term "punctual" needs to be explained. It does not mean turning up at 8.55 or even 8.59 for a meeting which starts at 9.00. It means being on the spot at least a quarter of an hour before the start of the meeting to find their booth, to greet their colleagues, to check the language regime of the meeting, identify where relays may be provided (and whether they themselves are to provide a relay), and of course to have a look at any documents that may be in the booth but were not provided in advance. Here it is important that trainers also preach by example. If they make a point of stressing the importance of punctuality in the profession, then they must turn up on time, not to say a bit early, for exercises with their students.

Secondly, it means interpreting from and into languages for which they are competent. A student or a young interpreter, for example, may have passive French and Spanish in their language combination. Further, they have a rudimentary knowledge of Italian based on some personal contact with Italy and may understand a fair bit of Italian simply thanks to the proximity of those romance languages. Such a young interpreter may feel tempted to interpret from Italian given the opportunity. That kind of thing is dangerous and students should be warned about it clearly. Inter alia they should, as always when talking about ethics, be reminded that it is not just their personal reputation that may be at stake, it is the reputation of the profession as a whole, which brings us back to the question of collegiality. Students should be brought to feel part of the body of interpreters worldwide and to live up to the highest standards because of that.

Thirdly, professionalism is also expressed in having respect for *all* delegates. This is perhaps a less obvious concept and certainly needs to be discussed with students. Conference interpreters are called upon to work in interesting, sometimes prestigious meetings. Most of the time they work for clients who are highly intelligent, often articulate, almost by definition experts in the field of the meeting. It is easy to feel respect for such delegates. But then interpreters also have to work sometimes in less prestigious circumstances. There are humdrum working parties of excruciating boredom because of the repetitive nature of the work of these committees. Some delegates are notorious for being slow on the uptake, repetitive in their comments, inarticulate. In these latter cases and similar ones it is only too easy for the interpreter to feel a certain condescension or even disdain of the meeting or the delegate, and to feel that their high quality interpretation is somehow "pearls before swine". The upshot of this is that the quality of their interpretation disintegrates. Students need to understand that all delegates are clients and deserve the same service, the same quality of

service, irrespective of the degree of prestige or boredom of the meeting, irrespective of the intellectual brilliance or obtuseness of delegates. Here there are two aspects to which trainers can refer. Firstly, there is the purely ethical point that as a matter of principle what has just been stated holds: all clients have a right to the same quality. But then there is a more subtle point to which trainees should be sensitive. Interpreting is an intellectually stimulating and enjoyable activity if one does it properly. Whatever the subject of a meeting or whatever the quality of debate, one can always find some intellectual interest in interpreting, be it only from a selfish point of view as an intellectual exercise, a kind of art for art's sake attitude. Students should be aware that the more they put into the job and the more they make the effort to find some interest in the activity, the more they themselves will also enjoy the job and the more they will get out of it. A last point which can be used by trainers here, or another way of saying the same thing to the students, is this: deciding a meeting is "not worthwhile", that it is going to be boring, tedious and unpleasant to work in, is a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the interpreter starts off with that attitude, they are sure to have their expectations met.

Neutrality

Fourthly, professional ethics call for total neutrality on the part of the interpreter. Again, this should go without saying, but it is better said explicitly. Even if a delegate says something which seems politically or morally unacceptable, even reprehensible, the interpreter must respect what the speaker says. Clearly, the interpreter is not going to be very tempted to intervene and say that the speaker has got it wrong – although even that has been known to happen. But there is most definitely a temptation to attenuate, to change slightly what the speaker is saying if one finds it too extreme. One may be a convinced socialist and have to interpret a gung-ho liberal propounding wholesale privatisation of social services. That is merely an ideological difference of views with the speaker. Worse, one could even be from a family which was persecuted and which suffered terribly under a totalitarian regime (of whatever colour) and have to interpret a speaker defending the historical record of that regime. The interpreter has to remain faithful to the speaker’s intention. In presenting this point to students, trainers should not just say that "the interpreter becomes the speaker", our role is to convey the speaker's message and nothing else. That is of course true and in a way should suffice. But the trainer can take the point further, by helping students understand, through discussion and perhaps examples, that the speaker's errors or even lies can only be exposed, contradicted and refuted by their opponents (who agree, in this case, with the interpreter) if that speaker’s message is conveyed faithfully and fully. It is a matter of logic. If, for example, flagrant crimes against humanity are defended by a speaker, then other speakers can attack such a position effectively only if they know what has been said. This additional argument should help students – who in the very near future will be young interpreters, our colleagues – cope with such psychologically difficult situations if they arise.
Two comments should be added to the above. First, interpreters need to differentiate between things which they feel are morally objectionable and which are to be dealt with as just mentioned above, and a speaker’s objective errors. This latter case is not an ethical issue, but falls under more general interpreting technique. When a speaker makes a slip of the tongue or says something crassly wrong out of ignorance, then it is up to the interpreter to decide how to react from a technical point of view. They might simply correct the speaker’s error, if it is a minor one where the interpreter is pretty sure that it really is just a slip of the tongue. Alternatively, they may repeat what the speaker has said and add the words “the speaker says”, or something similar, to alert listeners to the fact that the speaker has said something but the interpreter is not sure that that is what the speaker really wanted to say. And lastly the interpreter may nonetheless just repeat what the speaker has said, for it may be important for

the other participants in a discussion to be aware of the speaker's error or ignorance. But these latter instances fall out of the range of professional ethics and are, as mentioned, essentially matters of technique.
The second additional comment is that the notion of the interpreter's total neutrality may be called into question by students: is it really possible, is it morally right to remain neutral? Trainers may certainly concede that there are occasions where it will be very difficult for the interpreter, but in discussion may refer back to the fundamental role of the interpreter: to ensure effective communication. We serve truth and justice, including for those we oppose, by enabling communication, not by distorting it. That is why it is in the nature of the interpreter's work to strive for neutrality to the maximum. To give just one anecdotal example, I worked as an interpreter in peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. On one side was a senior Israeli minister. On the other was a senior Palestinian representative. Due to the linguistic configuration of the meeting I was interpreting the words of both of these speakers. Their views were of course diverging on various issues. Short of being schizophrenic I could not agree with both of them. But as an interpreter I was able to remain neutral and express accurately what each of them was saying in defence of their views, whatever my own personal feelings may have been, and thus contributed to effective communication, and, in my small way, to the peace process. Ethically speaking, that is certainly a higher objective than selfishly wanting to have my views privileged to the detriment of communication. I genuinely believe that interpreters can be complete and ethically responsible human beings but remain strictly neutral in their interpretation. And I should like to convey that belief to my students.

Diplomacy

There are other aspects of professional ethics which can be discussed separately with students, such as ensuring that interpreters work in appropriate technical conditions, but one last major point which may mould young interpreters' behaviour when they come on the market requires discussion after confidentiality, collegiality, professionalism and neutrality. This last element concerns relations with conference organisers and meeting participants. It is difficult to find one simple term to define it, but one could conceivably call it "diplomacy", or if that is considered too pompous, then "relations with clients".
What do we mean by this? Interpreters have to strike a difficult balance in relations with their clients. On the one hand they have to be demanding, insisting that working conditions are adequate, that rules on working time are respected, that adequate documentation is provided on time, that they are not expected to perform the impossible. On the other hand, interpreting is a service industry and interpreters must do all they can to be flexible, to satisfy the client. It is obvious that there is a very fine line to be drawn here. Although this may not seem to some a crucial issue of ethics, it is in fact something which comes up so often that trainers should discuss it with their students. In such discussion, there are two watchwords to be sounded by trainers. One is common sense and the other is diplomacy.
On common sense, one could give the example of working time. A meeting, according to institutional rules or perhaps a contract, must finish at 18.30. If the meeting participants just plough on and look as if they will continue for at least another half hour, then the interpreters can fairly withdraw their labour, after having duly warned the meeting participants. If, however, the chairman of a session announces publicly that the meeting really needs to conclude on a point but that it will take just five minutes, if *de facto* a few extra minutes makes no difference to the interpreters – no planes will be missed, and so on – then it seems only reasonable for the interpreters to show some flexibility. The reader can argue that these examples are too easy, they are cut-and-dried, and in real life there are often decisions which

are much more on a knife edge. That is true, but trainers cannot prescribe to trainees for all real situations. What they can do is provide one or two examples, indicate principles of common sense and proportionality, and trust in the intelligence and sensitivity of their students. The example just given concerns working times. Experienced interpreters will easily be able to find other examples for discussion concerning working conditions, how to react to speeches read at impossible speed, and so on.

On diplomacy, students should be given guidance as to how to talk to their delegates and meeting organisers and secretariats. (There is a caveat to be mentioned here, concerning the role of the team leader, which we shall return to below.) Above all, interpreters need to be polite without being subservient, and diplomatic. To a large extent, this means presenting things in a positive light. If possible, the interpreter should always begin by presenting themselves, indicating they are there to provide a service, and that any inquiry or request they are making is with a view to providing that service in the best possible way. For example, a keynote speaker has not provided their text to the interpreters at a conference. The interpreter who goes to talk to the speaker or the conference secretariat should not say something along the lines, "We need the text in order to be able to interpret it," which sounds at one and the same time like a threat and a declaration of incompetence by the interpreters. Rather, "If we have the text that would help us make sure your message is conveyed as well as possible" will certainly predispose the speaker better to the interpreters. Or again, although this sounds extreme, it is true that there are cases of interpreters who have greeted the chairperson of a meeting or conference and immediately asked, "What time do you intend to finish?" They may have done so with the best will in the world, but the effect is obviously disastrous. A statement to the effect that the interpreter is the head of the interpreting team, that if the chairperson or secretariat need anything he/she can be contacted in such and such a booth, perhaps a confirmation of the languages that can be used, will get the introduction off on the right foot; only then should one ask, not what time the meeting finishes, but rather whether the chair can indicate their time-schedule for the day.

All of this may sound desperately obvious to experienced interpreters, but it is useful for such matters to be discussed with trainees. Although most of the training in relation to ethics will be done through discussion sessions with the trainees, this is one area that could usefully be practised through role-play exercises. One need not devote too much time to this, but one could invent situations – a grumpy delegate who does not want to provide a speech, a PowerPoint presentation where the interpreters cannot see the screen and do not have copies of the slides, a chair who insists on continuing beyond the scheduled cut-off time of a meeting – where a trainer and some students could play delegates and other students play the interpreters. After the role-play the trainer can then talk the trainees through the situations, the way they tried to cope with them and possibly the way the students could do it better. Maybe one or two teaching hours, say on a Friday afternoon when this can be used as an element of variety in training at the end of the week, could be spent on this.

Here, however, we must turn to the caveat of which we gave advance warning above. A team of interpreters has as a general rule a team leader. In an international organisation the team leader will be appointed according to in-house rules and practices. On the private market the team leader will be the recruiting interpreter, or the interpreter who is de facto the main contact for the conference organiser, or will be determined consensually or will emerge naturally on the basis of experience. One way or another there will be such a leading member of the team. One hopes that one's students, as young novice interpreters in the near future, will not be team leaders right at the beginning of their career. Therefore one can reassure them that many problems of relations with delegates will be spared them at the beginning of their career. On the other hand this brings another obligation for novice interpreters which should be mentioned to students. They must respect the role of the team leader. It can cause

considerable confusion, and even disrupt seriously the proper functioning of a team of interpreters, if different members of the team take it upon themselves to play the role of leader, start discussing with the conference secretariat or the chairperson, and so on. New young colleagues, out of sheer enthusiasm, are sometimes tempted to fall into this kind of behaviour, and should be warned by their trainers about the negative impact indulging in it can have.

Conclusion

In summary on ethics we can say that there are five main areas to be covered, but that each of them needs to be developed and discussed thoroughly with trainees, even if trainers sometimes have the feeling that they are stating the obvious. The five areas are confidentiality, collegiality, professionalism, neutrality and diplomacy.

How are trainers to present ethics? We have to admit that days and days cannot be devoted to this, however important it may be: there just is not enough time on most courses. For most of the points covered above it should be possible, even with the kind of explanations and examples referred to, to deal with them in two teaching hours each. This can be done by an ex cathedra lecture by a trainer, but a discussion format where the trainer elicits responses from students is likely to be more fruitful. It will involve the students mentally to a greater extent and probably be more persuasive. Even though we are dealing "merely" with professional ethics and not higher ethical considerations, students will be able to reflect for themselves and develop a genuinely ethical approach much better through discussion and/or role-play. An ex cathedra lecture on ethics always runs the risk of seeming like the older generation thrusting its antiquated moral values on the younger one. As mentioned above, "diplomacy" is an area which certainly lends itself to role-play and practical exercises.

Lastly, and quite importantly, throughout the course trainers should not forget the ethical dimension. In particular comments on collegiality can regularly be included when dealing with team-work. Its importance can be referred to when relay exercises are done. Professionalism can be touched upon in relation to document preparation. And so on. In other words, professional ethics can and should be dealt with in at least one, and maybe as many as five, thorough discussion sessions devoted specifically to the topic, but they should also be a kind of all-pervading element which is present through the course and can be brought into play as appropriate by trainers, without their wasting time or being sententious, when it is relevant to a given exercise.

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