

ENGLISH CENTER BASEL WHAT'S HAPPENING?

JULY 2011

News and Views from the Students and Staff

FREE ~ ISSUE 11

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Who's that?

**SUSAN
HOBBS**
Teacher

Susan is from Scotland. Her husband, John, is English but from Irish stock. Despite being British, their two children, now 10 and 7, have spent most of their lives in Basel: Angus, since he was 3 years old, and Jennie, from just 8 weeks!

Growing up, Susan lived in a number of places in Scotland and England and spent about six years in Brussels in Belgium. She took her degree in economics and social policy at Leeds University in England, and worked in London as a social worker for 13 years until her removal to Basel, following her husband's job change.

Susan leads a busy life, juggling family and work commitments, yet she manages to find time to play tennis, see friends and go on the occasional ski holiday or trip to visit her parents.

(See over to learn more about Susan.)

Top tip

Did you know that ECB's computer system has a grammar reference section which explains all of the grammar covered in the course? There are also extra exercises for each grammar point, so if you want more practice, you can certainly have it!

Another important feature you should know about is the vocabulary flashcard function. Next time you're in the study center, check it out!

Group Courses

**CONTINUOUS
LEARNING**

If you are at B2* or C1** level and want to maintain your level as well as enhance your knowledge and skills, why not sign up for one of our flexible group courses?

+ ADVANCED PLUS

General English:
Thursdays 19:00-20:30
+ UPPER INTERMEDIATE PLUS

Business English:
Tuesdays 07:15-08:45

For details, ask your consultant or send an e-mail to the school for an Information Sheet.

* FCE/BECV equivalent
** CAE/BECH equivalent

FEEDBACK

by June Winterflood - Canada

Why are our students learning English? Some do it for fun; others do it for work: they want to get a new job or feel more comfortable in their current role in an international company. Whatever the reason, we offer a variety of courses: private, group (exam-preparation ones and 'post' exam courses), blended or private-online.

Recently, we have been asking our students for their feedback on our new blended-learning system. Most responses received so far have been very positive: it's harder but better and more modern than the previous system. Students seem to feel that they are learning more and getting more speaking practice in the computer lessons.

Once we have gathered in all of the data, we will analyse the feedback and draw some conclusions. I'll keep you posted!

PREPARING FOR A CAMBRIDGE EXAM

As you probably know, English Center Basel offers exam preparation courses for Cambridge University's suite of exams.

For the First Certificate in English (FCE) and Business English Certificate Vantage (BECV), we offer a free information evening to anyone interested in attending our 10-week intensive courses. The exams and our courses will be explained in the first 30 minutes. After that, attendees are given an entrance test. (See "What's On" below)

If you cannot attend the info evening, you can take the entrance test at the school between 4 July & 28 July, but please book an appointment at reception.

Dance



FIRST PRIZE!

A well-kept secret is that Julie Zulauf-Boath, our head receptionist, is also a dance teacher. In fact, she and a friend run their own successful dance school in Pratteln.

Recently, Julie's school entered the Swiss national dance competition and won two first-place and one third-place prizes! Above is a photo of one of the first-place dancing teams, Melanie and Jana. Congratulations!
www.jvdance.ch

English Theater



SHAKESPEARE IN THE COURTYARD

THE 2011 SUMMER OPEN-AIR COMEDY

From 12 August to 10 September, Upstart Entertainment is putting on Shakespeare's "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM".

In addition, there will be workshops and opportunities to perform on a "soapbox" as well as volunteer during the event. Find out more by going to their website:

www.upstart-entertainment.ch



WELCOME SUMMERTIME

by Laura Almeida - Switzerland & Portugal

Summer - a beautiful, cheerful and colourful season - is calling to be explored.

It's time to take a chance on the next few months coming and try out something new, discover a distant and peaceful destination or just enjoy life as it is.

It's an opportunity to leave those things which you're fed up with behind you and widen your horizons by meeting new people and other cultures, immersing yourself in different languages and opening your mind to the good vibrations summer offers us.

It's a season that lets us think of happiness, freedom, long and marvellous beaches, the deep blue sea, cool ice-cream, and relaxed moments.

Therefore, let's dive into summertime and its sparkling side of life and do whatever we want to do, spontaneously.

From my point of view

A CRITICAL APPROACH TO FACEBOOK

by Claudia Järmann - Switzerland

I'm anything but a digital native, what with being 42, but as a marketing specialist I have to know about social media, so I reluctantly got myself a Facebook account. Lots of my friends still refuse to get involved because they think it's dodgy and a foolish thing to do. Well, this was exactly my point of view too. However, I have to admit that I quite enjoy being part of that community. What I'm really delighted about is the ability to get crucial information fast. Only when I marked the "like" button of my favourite venues or bands did I realize how amazing it is to get their news without having to check their websites all the time.

On the other hand, the whole issue still seems quite dubious to me. Not only are the "recommended" settings in the commercial interests of Facebook, but the company also holds all the rights on the data and deals with it. Although you can change the settings, you must check them frequently due to new features like the automatic "face identifying program" which I immediately rejected. What's more, you can never really delete anything, it still remains in the background, but that's the case for everything on the web.

Whatever someone does on the internet leaves a trace. I'm still too suspicious to reveal anything personal or upload photos onto my Facebook site and wonder at how carelessly most people deal with information and pictures on their sites. Yet, most comments are meaningless, anyway. What's the point in sharing messages like "was shopping, bought two new pairs of shoes", or later: "no more space left in the cupboard"? Who cares?

Anyway, it's absolutely vital for young people to be on Facebook nowadays, because this is the only place where information is passed on among peers. If you're not with the internet community, you're nearly excluded from social life. In order not to miss anything, they are online at all times via mobile phone. Even more important is to have a myriad of friends so as to keep up with your pals. I know somebody who has 864 friends. I mean, how can you handle 864 friends? I don't think I even know that many people! It's disconcerting how we let such mechanisms take control of our lives and that privacy isn't a high value anymore. I'm pretty scared about how companies such as Google or Facebook are taking more and more control over our lives.

As for me, I'm content to write comments to my favourite singer now and then, e.g. after a concert, and I'm thrilled when I receive a reply. I regularly check out the sites of my favourite bands because of the exciting dialogues taking place between the fans and the band members. A welcome benefit is that these "discussions" are in English so that I get a fair amount of colloquial vocabulary as well. And yes, I'm well aware that I leave my traces too...

Dear Reader,

What's your opinion of Facebook, Google and others? Please write in with your views, and your piece of writing will be published in the next issue of What's Happening?

June Winterflood, Editor

PS - Don't worry: I always check your writing and send you back a revised version for your approval before your piece of writing is published. Write to me at JUNE_WINTERFLOOD@YAHOO.COM

WHY NOT LEARN FINNISH?

by Michaela Frei - Switzerland

At University I learned that Finnish and Hungarian aren't Indo-Germanic languages. Well, I couldn't imagine what it actually meant as they didn't show us any examples. Four years ago, I had the opportunity to get an example.

My boyfriend and I had planned a trip to Finland, where we wanted to stay for a week in a "mökki" (a typical Finnish holiday home - see below).



At the Finnish airport, Joensuu, I saw a guy with a Finnish dictionary in his rucksack. I thought: "He must be a freak!"

When I later stood in a retail store, I had to modify my thought: he was the clever one. How can you find anything you want without understanding the language? The language is so different from ours, COMPLETELY DIFFERENT! Well, as long as the package was the same, it was ok; and if I was lucky, it was also written in Swedish or Norwegian. But what if it was just a proper Finnish product? I ended up buying Finnish soured yogurt instead of plain yogurt (same package), an orange fizzy drink instead of orange juice (picture), hot spiced wine syrup instead of "normal" syrup and so on.

A year later, I was the one at the airport with a dictionary. At that point, I knew some words; but I still had no idea how to say anything properly or build sentences...as well, not all the food was in my nice little "Langenscheidt" but I could make some mansikka hillo (strawberry jam).

Last year, surprisingly, we again spent some time in Finland, and since then, I have been able to count from 1 to 9 in Finnish and I can order "makara" (sausages) and, if I get them, "kiitos" (thank you). And I also got to know some pronunciation rules, for example, k sounds more like g (in German) or y is ii.

The idea of really learning that language came up when I went to a folk dance show last summer. Everyone was dancing and in between dances people talked about actors or actresses, what they were doing and so on. It was nice to listen to that wonderful sound of Finnish. The whole show took about 2.5 hours, and I understood one single word insinööri. Wow, amazing! They didn't have a word for that idea so had adopted it from the French?!?

As I want to, and will, spend more time in Finland, I want to learn more so that - one day - I can also talk to people... I am curious about what I am going to learn this summer. After the first ostaa I have some jätelö, as real suomalainen do :-)
Näkemiin.

Didn't you understand? After the first shopping, I have some ice cream, as real Finnish do. Good bye!

What's on at English Center Basel this Summer

INFORMATION EVENING FOR FCE/BECV
For students who have completed or are currently studying B2.2.

THURS. 21 JULY ~ FROM 18:00 TO 20:00

SPEAKING PRACTICE APÉRO

Everyone cordially invited.

THURS. 14 JULY ~ FROM 17:00 TO 19:00

THURS. 4 AUGUST ~ FROM 18:00 TO 20:00

WHAT'S HAPPENING? MEETING

Help to plan the content for next month's broadsheet.

THURS. 21 JULY ~ FROM 13:00 TO 14:00

WED. 31 AUGUST ~ FROM 12:00 TO 13:00

Please sign up at reception or telephone us

English Center Basel is on facebook

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