Turning the Air Blue: Sustainable English at the Fachsprachenzentrum
(Language Learning Centre at the University of Tuebingen)

In the winter semester 2012/13, university students of different disciplines attended a green language course at the Language Learning Centre (LLC), called ‘Turning the Air Blue’, or TAB (UNLcert® III – CEFR C1\textsuperscript{1}). Launched in 2009, this English course approaches sustainability at a local, regional and global level while examining its environmental, social and economic impact (the *triple bottom line*). Using authentic material in class combined with student presentations, discussions and investigative assignments, TAB is getting the word out on sustainability. This principle has become an increasingly important issue in society over the last few years and is defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”\textsuperscript{2} In November 2012, the class went on a field trip to Stadtwerke Tübingen GmbH for a presentation in English addressing renewable energy in Tübingen and Baden-Württemberg. Hanno Brühl, the Departmental Manager for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency at Stadtwerke, discussed his responsibilities at the company as well as their future goals for converting the region to more renewable energy sources. This authentic insight, combined with the material learned in class, led to a provocative discussion afterwards, which even showed glimpses of a real international forum. By utilizing specific material relevant to the English language as well the culture, TAB offers students the most authentic learning environment possible.

Later, the students were asked how this course has helped them understand sustainability as well as improve their language skills. Below is course feedback, along with some personal insight from students, about the topic.

“I believe the diversity of opinions we hear in the course represents the diversity of positions present in society. The interactive manner in which material is presented enables us to exercise our English in natural-like situations, I like this.”

Ivo Chichkov (Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät)

“Turning the Air Blue is a course that goes beyond borders - we do not have a focused view determined by a certain discipline but live from the diversity and the variety of the disciplines that people in this course are studying. This always leads to very interesting discussion during which we are looking at a problem from many different perspectives. I love the variety of the class session and every time I leave the classroom I feel enriched.”

Anne Beck (Wirtschafts und Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät)

“The language course ‘Turning the Air Blue’ enables me to gain insight into the topic of sustainability in a diversified and inspiring manner. Along the way we get the chance to enlarge our vocabulary quickly. I think this language course is a great opportunity to reflect sustainable ways of living and sustainable economy, which is something that my field of study doesn't cover.”

Sara Baier (Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät)

“You can also bring in your knowledge of your main studies and I enjoy it, when somebody contributes to the discussion with an idea you would never have thought of, so the course definitely broadens your horizons. Moreover, I like the class because it is very "active".

Tillman Oberle (Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät)

\textsuperscript{1} Common European Framework of Reference, i.e. Gemeinsamer europäischer Referenzrahmen (GER)
\textsuperscript{2} World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), p 43.
As stated above, this English language course gives students an opportunity to fully express their views across diverse fields of study and, also, across cultures. This specialized ‘green language course,’ offered at the LLC in the winter and summer semester, is open to all students (with 85 points or higher on the LLC’s assessment test) and is also recognized towards the “Sustainability Certificate” offered by Studium Oecologicum3 (for more information about “Schwerpunkt Nachhaltigkeit” please visit the university’s website). Students who wish to broaden their French language skills should also consider “Environnement et éco-responsabilité” which is offered in the winter semester at the LLC (please contact Jocelyne Launay: Jocelyne.Launay@uni-tuebingen.de.). In fact, the LLC at the University of Tuebingen is the only language centre in Baden-Württemberg to offer French and English language courses on the topic of sustainability to students of all faculties.

I would like to thank the students, ‘Greening the University’ and the local affiliates who are helping make sustainability a reality in Tübingen. For more information about this course, TAB, see our homepage or contact Kurt Robert Herb (kurt.herb@uni-tuebingen.de), English Lecturer at the LLC.

(Kurt Robert Herb, Fachsprachenzentrum Universität Tübingen)

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3 The course is offered in cooperation with Career Service and Studierendeninitiative “Greening the University”; the “Leistungsnachweis” will therefore be accepted within the framework of Studium Oecologicum.