

UNIVERSITÄT ERFURT

**UNIVERSITÄT
ERFURT**

Sprachenzentrum

< sprachbote >

ISSUE 2 | Winter Semester 2024/25

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Editor

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1 Greeting

Dear Readers,

We had barely put out the printed copies of the first issue of our newsletter when it was already gone. This was a pleasant surprise and motivated us to create this issue. Once again, it provides a summary of our achievements, challenges, successes, and outstanding contributions, as well as a glimpse into what you can expect from us in the future.

We are particularly proud of our new, beautifully designed podcast production room, which we set up with the support of the University Computer and Media Centre. This room is now available to all podcasters at the University of Erfurt. As a side effect, this room provides an opportunity to network more effectively within the university. Initially, a closer collaboration with the e-Teach team has already been established. You can read more about this under the headings "News" and "Outlook."

In 2025, the city of Erfurt will be looking back on a special event. Sixty years ago, US jazz legend Louis Armstrong played a concert in Erfurt. Under the circumstances of the GDR dictatorship in the 1960s, this was undoubtedly a unique and unusual experience. The 'Erfurt Jazz Project', previously featured in the last issue of our Sprachbo(o)te, will honour this event with four unforgettable musical performances.

As in the previous semester, our employees attended conferences and meetings to stay current on all relevant matters. One of this winter's key topics was the use and application of AI tools in language teaching. Tracy Rammler and Beate Walter report enthusiastically from an AKS-FOBIcert® summer school. Jesús Fernández Álvarez himself led a practice-oriented workshop at a university in Valencia, Spain, which offered many valuable tips on how AI can enrich the teaching of Spanish.

We are particularly keen to contribute to the internationalisation of the university. For example, we developed and organised a German course for employees from other areas of the university. An offer that was gladly accepted. This semester, the new German-language episodes of the podcast 'Uni&Erfurt - der Campus-Kompass' will also be used to produce some English-language episodes for international students as part of an English course. We are eagerly awaiting the results.

You can find out more information on the following pages. As always, we hope our readers enjoy reading this issue and look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

On behalf of the Language Centre
Susanne Hoppe

2 News and Novelties

New Podcast Room at the KIZ



The Language Centre of the University of Erfurt, with support from the Media Technology Service of the University Computer and Media Centre (URMZ), has established a podcast production room in the Communication and Information Centre (KIZ) on campus. Located in room 2.12, the space is equipped for recording complete podcasts, individual episodes, or other audio content with up to four speakers.

Professional microphones and a mixing console are available, and the easy-to-use recording technology is optimized for the room's acoustics. Users only need to bring their own microSD card to store the recordings.

The room has been available to staff and students since 1 December 2024. Since then, various university departments have utilized the space for professional audio production, interviews, and podcast recordings. The Speech Training section, for example, has produced 13 new episodes for the podcast "Uni & Erfurt – The Campus Compass."



Guest Lectureship by Prof. Dr. Vitalija Kazlauskienė

University of Vilnius, Faculty of Philology

In early November, Prof. Dr. Vitalija Kazlauskienė visited the University of Erfurt. Specializing in applied linguistics, Francophonie, and FLE didactics, she delivered two highly engaging lectures and inspired students in two B1-level French courses.

Her lecture explored the term 'freedom' (*liberté*) and its usage in French-language corpora. By analyzing its collocations, she illustrated how social developments—such as tolerance policies, gender equality, and digitalization—have shaped and redefined its meaning over time.

In another lecture, she explored the historical influence of the French language in Lithuania since the 16th century, encouraging students to deepen their understanding of the country.

We extend our gratitude to Prof. Dr. Kazlauskienė for her inspiring contributions and to all students for their enthusiastic participation.

New Language Centre Stalls at STET 2024

During the university's Student Orientation Days (STET) in early October, the Language Centre was present with an information stall on two days.

On 7 October, our stall was set up on the ground floor of building C03, strategically positioned next to the distribution point for "Welcome Bags" for first-year students. This location ensured high visibility and many inquiries about language courses, placement tests, and proficiency levels. Language Centre staff members took turns managing the stall. Additionally, tutor groups guided their students to the stand to provide information about the available language courses and answer questions regarding exchange semesters and required proficiency levels.

On 8 October, the stall was relocated in front of building C18 with direct visibility to the KIZ (see image). While students still stopped by regularly, the number of inquiries was noticeably lower than on the previous day, likely due to the changed location. In the final team review of STET, we decided to keep the stall only on the first day in the future.



New Smartboards for the Language Centre



incorporating playful applications to facilitate vocabulary learning and everyday language use. Additionally, lecturer desks were modified in all seminar rooms to include HDMI and USB-C ports as well as power outlets.

At the start of winter semester 2024/25, three seminar rooms in the Language Centre were equipped with new smartboards. Special thanks goes to the UMRZ staff, whose quick and efficient installation ensured minimal disruption to teaching activities.

Naturally, not all technical aspects worked seamlessly at first. Lecturers had to familiarize themselves with the new presentation surfaces, and laptops needed to be adapted to the new technology. However, after three weeks of troubleshooting, everything ran smoothly and reliably. The smartboards offer new interactive possibilities for creating board visuals, editing existing documents, and

A Different Kind of Christmas Party

Unfortunately, the Language Centre was not spared from the wave of illness that affected the university since November. Following an executive meeting—humorously referred to as a "superspreader event"—the entire management team fell ill. Nevertheless, the planned Christmas party on 12 December 2024 was intended to proceed to spread holiday cheer and encourage team bonding. However, without the leadership team, the celebration did not feel complete, and the festive spirit was lacking. As a result, the Christmas party was canceled in favour of an end-of-semester brunch in February.

On 20 February 2025, the rescheduled gathering took place with a fully recovered leadership team and nearly all staff members present. The team enjoyed a relaxed morning with a variety of culinary delights—springtime birdsong replacing Christmas music, yet the festive spirit remained.

Continued Growth in the SPZ Service Team

As previously reported in <sprachbo(o)te>, six student assistants left us at the end of summer semester 2024. In the last edition, we welcomed Joaquin and Sofia, who had already joined the SPZ Service Team at that time. With the start of winter semester 2024/25, Filipp, Maria, Linda, Valentina, and Emilia completed the new team. The experienced team members

Justin, Pauline, and Laura supported the newcomers in learning their roles. The team is growing together, and everyone is finding their place—at least for summer semester 2025. After that, some will embark on exciting exchange semesters or transition into their professional careers.

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3 Projects and Events

JAZZ in Summer Semester 2025

On 7 April 1965, Louis Armstrong gave a legendary concert in Erfurt. As an American superstar, his performance in the GDR attracted significant media and political attention. The Socialist Unity Party (SED) portrayed him as a civil rights activist fighting against racism and oppression, presenting him as an emblem of a better America. Meanwhile, the U.S. government used his music as part of its "Jazz Diplomacy" to promote the "American Way of Life."

In 2025, a series of four events will explore different perspectives on Louis Armstrong's political and musical significance, marking the 60th anniversary of his performance in Erfurt.

- On 7 April, the Gary Winters Quartet will present a short history of jazz at the Erfurt Town Hall Festival Hall.
- On 21 May, a Louis Armstrong Revival Band will re-enact Armstrong's legendary 1965 concert from the Thüringenhalle at Haus Dacheröden.
- On 17 June, Prof. Jack Cooper will give a lecture at the Andreasstraße Memorial on the differing perceptions of Louis Armstrong in the East and West. Following the lecture, he will perform a concert alongside the legendary trombonist Hermann Anders of the Jazz Optimists, who performed with Armstrong in East Berlin in 1965.
- On 24 October, tenor saxophonist Lawrence Clark from New York will perform.

The main organizer is the Erfurt Jazz Project, with the Language Centre of the University of Erfurt, the University of Memphis, KuNo e.V., the Thüringer Schlosskonzerte, the Andreasstraße Memorial, and the City of Erfurt as partners.

Music Connects: 25 Years of the Academic Orchestra Erfurt e.V.

Colleagues Annika Fingerloos and Viktoria Markov showcased their musical talents: as violinists, they performed in the symphony and children's concerts of the Academic Orchestra Erfurt e.V. on 25 January 2025 in the Thomaskirche in Erfurt and on 26 January 2025 in the Aula of the Friedrich Schiller University Jena.

The programme featured the overture "Coriolan" and the second symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven, as well as the Concerto for Clarinet, Bassoon, and Orchestra in C Major, Op. 11, by the Erfurt composer Michael Gotthard Fischer.

Originally formed as the university orchestra, the Academic Orchestra Erfurt celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. The ensemble brings together musicians from various fields—students, professionals, and retirees—who regularly captivate audiences with high-quality performances.

Future opportunities to experience the orchestra live are already planned: concerts for summer 2025 are in the works. Music lovers can look forward to discovering which pieces will be performed next. More information can be found at: www.orchester-erfurt.de.



Additional Episodes of "Uni & Erfurt – The Campus Compass"



New episodes of the "Uni & Erfurt – The Campus Compass" podcast were recorded again this semester. Sophie Laufer (Speech Training section) dedicated two courses to podcast speaking, resulting in 13 new episodes with 24 students.

The newly designed podcast room provided optimal conditions, allowing students to practice their speaking skills comfortably. Episode topics include a university glossary (A-P), studying pedagogy from a parent's perspective, news from Erfurt (events, leisure activities, food spots), and

the university's digital learning platforms. Frieda and Max even invited a guest, their academic advisor Markus Gilbert, to discuss the mathematics minor and highlight its benefits for listeners. The result is an authentic interview-style episode featuring interesting facts and anecdotes.

The new episodes premiered on 3 March 2025 and are now released weekly on Mondays at 10:00 AM on the [university podcast page](#), [Spotify](#), and [Apple Podcasts](#).



4 Further Training

Speech Training Section

Anniversary Conference "Speaking in the Teaching Profession", 14–15 March 2025, in Leipzig – Marie Seeliger, Dr Uta Wallraff, Sophie Laufer

The Speech Training section participated in the 10th project day "Speaking in the Teaching Profession" at the Centre for Teacher Education and School Research at the University of Leipzig on 14–15 March 2025. In addition to insightful expert lectures and stimulating workshops on vocal and speech training for teaching students, the conference provided ample opportunities for exchange and inter-institutional networking.

The section's colleagues are part of the nationwide network "Vocal Health in the Teaching Profession," which now includes members from 15 universities across Germany.

At the conference, Berlin-based illustrator Johanna Benz translated lectures and discussions into images in real time, creating a series of intriguing and humorous interpretations of speech training. Some of these works will be displayed in the Speech Training section's showcases in C03 on the 2nd floor.



Interpretation of a vocal cord by the illustrator Johanna Benz

33rd AKS Conference at Ruhr University Bochum

Tracy Rammler and María Rocío del Río Miguel participated in the 33rd AKS Conference "Teaching, Learning, and Living in New Realities: Language Centres on the Move", from 12 to 14 March 2025 at Ruhr University Bochum.

The AKS (*Arbeitskreis für Sprachenzentren an Hochschulen e.V.*) is an international network with over 150 language centres and higher education institutions, primarily in Germany but also across Europe and beyond. Its goal is the continuous development of research-based language teaching and professional exchange among educators.

This year's conference featured inspiring discussions on current challenges and opportunities in



Rocío and Tracy enjoy the scenic view from the top of the German Mining Museum in Bochum.

language teaching, focusing on topics such as diversity awareness, AI-assisted language learning, and the development of key competencies. The event underscored that language instruction is not merely about teaching language—it shapes perspectives, fosters critical thinking, and strengthens democratic values. "We don't just teach vocabulary and grammar; we teach ways of thinking and promote democracy," emphasized Alexander Grimm, head of the Language Centre at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. The next AKS conference will

take place from 11 to 13 March 2026, at Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg.

English Section

Small Scale, Big Impact – AKS-FOBIcert® Summer School, 2–6 September 2024, in Paderborn – Tracy Rammler and Beate Walter

Unlike the larger AKS conferences, the FOBIcert® Summer School in Paderborn provides an opportunity to engage in small, interactive workshops—ranging from half-day to full-day sessions—on various aspects of foreign language teaching in higher education. The sessions covered topics such as the neurobiological foundations of learning, peer consulting, and experimenting with and critically evaluating AI tools for teaching and assessment design.

In one interactive session, current challenges in foreign language teaching at universities were discussed, including incorporating diversity concepts, addressing students' concerns about climate and political crises, and managing their engagement with social media and AI.

The next AKS-FOBIcert® Summer School will take place from 7 to 11 September 2026. Tracy and Beate highly recommend it to anyone looking to get inspired in a creative atmosphere among like-minded educators.

Leadership of the Language Centre

Humour is a Leadership Matter" – AKS Leadership Conference, 27–29 November 2024 in Halle/Saale – Susanne Hoppe and Maria Victoria de Dios Ouiedo

Every year, on the first weekend of Advent, the heads of German-speaking language centres from across Europe convene for a leadership conference. In 2024, over 50 leaders met in the Audimax of Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg.

The head of the Language Centre hosted a humour workshop for executives, offering engaging insights into the use of humour in leadership. Using role-playing and interactive exercises, participants examined how humour can help navigate challenging situations in multicultural groups while maintaining an appropriate tone.

Additionally, the conference provided a platform for discussing challenges facing language centres across German-speaking regions. Attendees worked collaboratively on solutions for topics such as AI in foreign language teaching and German and FIT projects. Peer exchange and mutual encouragement were central themes. Five former leaders shared their experiences in short talks that served as a basis for smaller group discussions.

The next leadership conference will take place on the first weekend of Advent in 2025 in Oldenburg and remains a highly anticipated event in the demanding schedules of all language centre directors.

Spanish Section

Learning Spanish with AI – Jesús Fernández Álvarez on Opportunities and their Implementation in València



At the 20th International Forum for ELE/EL2 Teachers, organized by the University of València (Spain) and Editorial Difusión, Jesús Fernández Álvarez (Lecturer in Spanish) held a workshop on 21 March 2025, exploring how artificial intelligence can enhance Spanish language learning.

Using tools such as chatbots, image generation, and visual translation, he demonstrated practical ways to develop lexical competence, text production, and mediation skills. Rather than getting lost in the complexity of AI, the workshop

provided clear strategies for leveraging its benefits in the classroom. It was a dynamic session full of useful ideas for educators looking to integrate technology effectively into their teaching.

Russian Section

Winter school for methodological and didactic training in Russian language teaching (online) – Ella Schramm

The International Programmes & Projects Institute of the Moscow Finance & Law University held a “Winter School” from February 24 to 28, 2025—an additional professional development program focused on methodological and didactic training. The program’s theme was “Current Trends in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language”, aimed at educators and lecturers of Russian worldwide. During the online training, participants had the opportunity to communicate with instructors via video or chat. The program covered topics such as “Modern Pedagogical Technologies in the Methodology of Teaching Russian as a Foreign and Non-Native Language” and “Integrating Various Communicative Speaking Activities in Russian Language Instruction.”

I gained many valuable insights for my work as a Russian lecturer at the University of Erfurt’s Language Department and look forward to incorporating these new ideas and approaches into my courses.

5 Absurd and Amusing Miscellanea

Intercultural Shock in Evaluations

Katharina Kraut-Stuber (DaF) shares: "Final grade: two fives! Well, you can't please every student, but this result left me rather puzzled. In the course discussion, it turned out that two students had graded according to their home country's grading system—where five is the best mark, not the worst..."

Sometimes a grading system is all that stands between us and a compliment!

A Sweet Macron

To celebrate their birthday, a lecturer brought macarons to class to brighten up the dull classroom atmosphere. A student cheerfully exclaimed, "Oh, Macrons!" and happily ate one. Rest assured, a quick call to the Élysée Palace in Paris confirmed that the French president was still in good health.



A Class of Wine?



In an English course, some students wondered when the lecturer would finally bring wine for everyone. After all, the PowerPoint slide, which the instructor had used for three years without noticing the mistake, had erroneously promised a "class of wine" instead of the expected "glass of wine."

(Created with the help of Copilot)

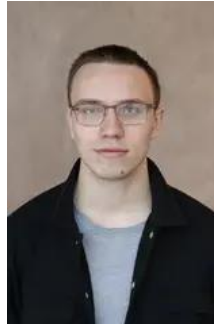
6 Personnel

SPZ-Service-Team

We welcomed our new student assistants in winter semester 2024/25!



Emilia Fiebig



Filipp Shinkler



Linda Ellabadi



Maria Cadena



Valentina Manara

7 Outlook

New Collaboration with e-Teach

During summer semester 2025, a new collaboration is planned between the Language Centre and the e-Teach team, led by Maren Würfel and Thorsten Ziegler. This initiative emerged from discussions between Sophie Laufer and Maren Würfel regarding the new podcast room and the use of the media production room at the KIZ.

On 13 March 2025, the Language Centre's leadership team met with the e-Teach team to identify common goals and explore ways to expand media-supported teaching. One outcome was the idea for a workshop designed for University of Erfurt staff. In addition to an introduction to the technical capabilities of the available rooms, the workshop will offer participants the opportunity to reflect on their own presentation skills through individual recordings. The Speech Training section will provide constructive feedback and strategies for improvement.

The two-hour workshop is scheduled for late September 2025, with further details to be announced during the summer semester.

HIT 2025

Once again, the Language Centre will be represented at University Information Day (HIT) on 26 April 2025 with two stalls. This year, a key change is the location of the stalls, which will now be set up in the foyer of the KIZ and in C19.

At both stalls, prospective students can learn about available language courses, placement tests, the tandem programme, and other services offered by the Language Centre. As in previous years, visitors can look forward to small giveaways, which our student assistants have already prepared.



New Course for English-Language Podcast Episodes

In addition to new German-language episodes of *Uni & Erfurt – The Campus Compass*, several English-language episodes are set to be recorded in summer semester 2025. Dr Susanne Hoppe and Christopher Forlini will offer a joint course, where students will explore topics such as “finding your first apartment”, “tips for registering with local authorities”, “public transportation in and around Erfurt”, and “choosing German as a Foreign Language courses”.

The primary audience for these episodes will be international students planning to study at the University of Erfurt and will provide them with an easy way to get an overview of essential organisational aspects.

Fun fact: This idea was actually inspired by an enthusiastic father from Spain, who emailed Sophie Laufer to say that his son would love to access to English-language episodes to learn more about the university. Parents always want the best for their children, don't they? 😊

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