

UNIVERSITÄT ERFURT

**UNIVERSITÄT
ERFURT**

Sprachenzentrum

< sprachbote >

ISSUE 3 | Summer Semester 2025

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1 Greeting

Dear Reader,

Language connects – diversity enriches. In times when society seems to be drifting apart, this serves as a poignant reminder. As our colleague Katharina Kraut-Stuber aptly summed it up at the International Conference of German Teachers (IDT) in Lübeck, building bridges means creating opportunities for people from different languages and cultures to communicate with each other. That's what motivates us to keep trying new things and expanding our language programmes. In this issue, we share what we've achieved, the challenges we've overcome – and what's still on our minds.

As last semester, many of us participated in conferences and training events. One hot topic remains the use of AI in language teaching. We now feel confident about using these tools in meaningful ways – and about exploring them together with our students. Some of us are eager to start.

Internationalisation is also high on our agenda. This summer semester, we realised a special project close to our hearts: students in an English course produced new English-language episodes of the podcast 'Uni & Erfurt – der Campus-Kompass.' From October onwards, three new episodes in English will be available – an excellent resource for exchange students!

And speaking of podcasts: our recording studio has become very popular – not only with us, but also across different departments. We even received our first external request this summer.

In the 'News' section, we also report on the transformation of our computer lab C03 | 343. Instead of expensive upgrades to Windows 11, the room is being transformed into a flexible seminar space. Since students almost always bring their own laptops anyway, the new concept creates a bright, welcoming space that is perfect for interactive language learning – and where both teachers and students feel at home.

Another significant milestone: in June 2025, we successfully renewed our status as an authorised DSH examination centre. The Fachverband DaF (FaDaF) approved our application, granting us authorisation for another five years. This means international applicants can continue to take the exam directly with us.

There have also been changes within the team. We have said farewell to long-serving student assistants and welcomed new faces. Since some colleagues had to reduce their hours, we also created two additional substitute positions.

You can read about all this – and more – in the following pages. We hope you enjoy this issue and, as always, we look forward to your feedback and ideas.

On behalf of the Language Centre,

Dr. Susanne Hoppe

2 News and Novelties

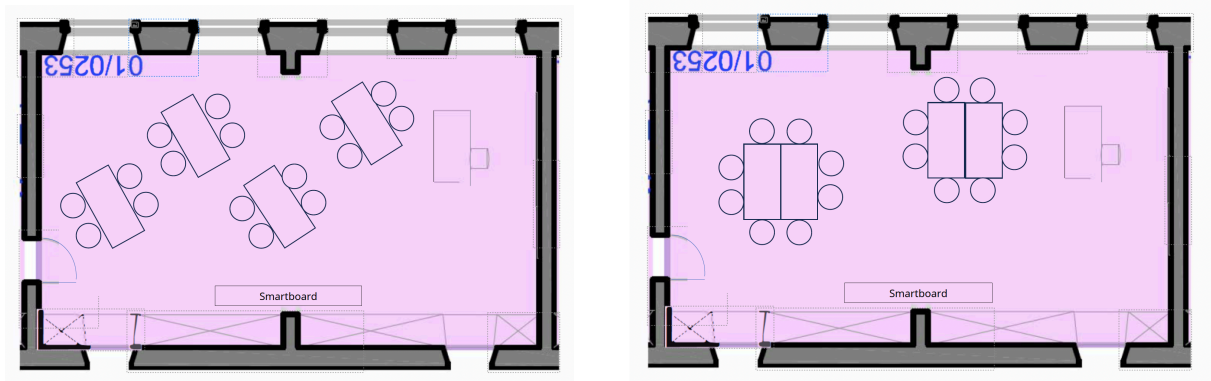
Farewell to Dr Hakan Cangır and Çiğdem Alparda Cangır

At the end of the summer semester 2025, the Language Centre and the Chair of Applied Linguistics said goodbye to Dr Hakan Cangır, a lector sent by the Turkish government, and his wife, Çiğdem Alparda Cangır, after five successful years together.

Dr Cangır enriched the university with numerous Turkish language and conversation courses as well as linguistics seminars. Ms Alparda Cangır supported the Language Centre by teaching English courses to both students and staff. After this rewarding cooperation with the Turkish Consulate, the couple is now returning to Turkey as planned. We thank them and wish them all the best for the future.

Transforming PC Lab C03 | 343 into a Flexible Seminar Room

Following staff feedback and considering the high costs of upgrading from Windows 10 to Windows 11, the Language Centre management decided to repurpose the PC lab in room 343 into a modern, flexible seminar room. From the winter semester 2025/26 onwards, this space will enable more dynamic teaching. Movable tables and stackable chairs will create four islands of four seats each, ideal for group work and active communication in the target language. The refurbishment will also include new flooring and freshly painted walls, making the room brighter and more welcoming for both teachers and students.



The change was prompted partly by the lab's limited use – students now almost exclusively work with their own devices – and partly by lecturers' long-standing wish for more flexible teaching spaces. Since languages are best learned through practice and direct interaction, the new room will better meet these needs. Looking ahead, the room may also be equipped with a smartboard, complementing the existing projector and whiteboard.

Summer Picnic under the Maple Tree

This semester, the Language Centre once again hosted a summer picnic for employees on 11 June 2025, held at the semicircular stone benches in front of C03. As always, colleagues brought a wide variety of international dishes – from French cheese and Italian tramezzini to Turkish baklava. In the cool shade of the maple tree, surrounded by the scent of blooming linden trees, the team enjoyed a leisurely afternoon of lively conversation and tasty snacks. Dr Uta Wallraff captured the spirit in a thank-you email afterwards: '... I would like to thank all of you for the relaxing and joyful hours yesterday under the maple tree at the stone benches in front of C03, with pleasant chats, delicious food, sunshine, birdsong and wonderful weather!'



Re-registration as a DSH location

Whether from Helsinki, Hanoi, or Harare, anyone wishing to study in Germany must demonstrate their language proficiency. One option is the Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang (DSH), the German Language Examination for University Admission.

In June 2025, our Language Department was approved as a DSH test centre for a further 5-year period. This represents another step in our internationalization efforts: our international applicants can take the exam directly on-site at the University of Erfurt.

The exam is ideally scheduled: in September, right before the start of the winter semester.

For the development of the new sample exam, the German as a Foreign Language (DaF) team invested numerous hours in thorough research, gathering and evaluating countless ideas—keeping about as many as we ultimately dismissed. We explored topics, identified relevant texts, crafted tasks, assigned points, and refined the materials until we reached the conclusion: It is now just right.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Mr. Becher for his meticulous attention to the legal intricacies involved in adapting the examination regulations.

With these preparations, we are well-equipped to support all those intending to study at our university and who want to successfully complete the DSH as part of their academic journey.



New Faces in the SPZ Service Team

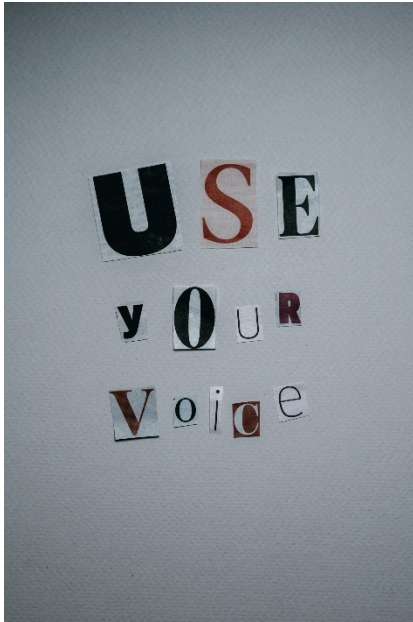
As in every semester, we have also had to bid farewell to some of our student assistants who have completed their studies, moved on to new challenges, or embarked on an Erasmus exchange programme. You can find out more about who is leaving and who we are wishing well under Personnel

On a brighter note, we were delighted to welcome six new student assistants during the semester. After inspiring and pleasant conversations, they will officially join the Language Centre team on 1 September or 1 October 2025. Here's a quick introduction:

Jasper Adden	International Relations (major), Romance Studies (minor) Languages: German, English, Spanish, Dutch
Luis Wendler	International Relations (major), Social Sciences (minor) Languages: German, English, French, Dutch, Italian
Karla Richter	International Relations (major), Law (minor) Languages: German, Spanish, English, Italian
Ani Uzunyan	International Relations (major), Management (minor) Languages: German, Armenian, Russian, English, Spanish, Chinese
Emilia Dalpiaz	International Relations (major), Social Sciences (minor) Languages: German, Spanish, English, Italian, Arabic
Frauke Walter	English and American Studies (major), German Studies (minor) Languages: German, English, Italian

3 Projects and Events

Professional Development Programme: 'Mindfulness and Voice in University Daily Life' by the Department of Speech Training (Summer Semester 2025)



The two-part training programme "Mindfulness and Voice in University Daily Life" successfully supported university staff in enhancing their vocal and speech competencies. The first part, held in June and July 2025, consisted of five sessions that laid the foundation for a more conscious voice management and raised greater awareness regarding the mindful use of one's voice. The second part followed in August 2025, with three sessions designed to extend participants' knowledge and expressive power in various speaking situations. All meetings were conducted in small groups (maximum of 10 participants). The programme, offered by the Health Management Services of the University of Erfurt, was led and supervised by Dr. Uta Wallraff from the Language Department (Speech Training Section). Additionally, participants had the opportunity to receive individual voice consultations to address specific issues, such as speaking in large rooms, managing stage fright, podcast speaking, professional reading, or preparing important presentations.

Participants came from diverse professional fields, including administration and teaching. The positive feedback indicates that participants can now use their voices more consciously in their daily professional activities and have improved both their personal speech style and confidence in speaking. Those experiencing health issues related to their voice could be referred to experts such as phoniatrists, voice and speech therapists.

Three New Podcast Episodes in English

Incoming exchange students can look forward to three new English-language episodes of the "Uni & Erfurt" podcast. Starting in October, the episodes "Learning German," "How to find a place to live," and "Discover Erfurt with us" will be available online. The episodes were produced as part of the course "Translation & Podcasting" taught by Christopher Forlini and Susanne Hoppe. Students not only researched the topics in depth, but also wrote scripts, recorded the episodes, and edited the audio. This allowed them to refine their skills in writing, pronunciation, and free speaking. At the same time, the translation practice helped them understand the differences between German and English and transfer culturally specific terms into other languages so that they make sense to international listeners. We hope you enjoy listening!

Learning Russian with Pushkin

In the B2-level Russian course, Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* was integrated into the syllabus. To make it more accessible, Dina Kirchner used various media such as film, opera and other audio recordings as well as the original text. The students presented sections, memorised excerpts, and recited them. Despite the linguistic and thematic challenges of the work, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive: many experienced the beauty of the Russian language for the first time, and some even read the entire novel in its original form. The project shows that literature, especially Pushkin, can inspire enthusiasm for language and culture.



Fancy a chat? Why not join our Advanced English Conversation class this winter term on Thursdays from 2-4 pm?



Image: istockphoto-471368631

Unlike the English Café, which invites students to overcome their fear of speaking English in a casual setting, this conversation class offers a more structured approach with specific activities, designed to facilitate language development in a friendly and conducive learning environment. Participants are invited to give short presentations on topics of their choice to spark lively group discussions. Feedback on individual language and presentation issues as well as additional targeted practice will enable them to further extend their English language skills and

fluency in the company of like-minded peers.

This course is for you if you are studying in a BA or MA programme and have already obtained your C1 certificate or scored 110+ points in the placement test and would like to continue practising English or are currently working towards a PhD or on a research project.

There is no module or course exam. Credit points can be obtained based on regular, active participation. Further information regarding course requirements and enrolment can be found on elvis. If you have any questions, please contact the instructor via email on beate.walter@uni-erfurt.de.

4 Further Training

The German Section's Report on the IDT

At the end of July, an international event of superlatives took place in Lübeck for the field of German as a second and foreign Language: the IDT. Katharina and Viktoria were on site and share their impressions with us.

Theres: Katharina, Viktoria, you both went to the IDT this summer. What exactly is it?

Viktoria: IDT stands for *Internationale Tagung der Deutschlehrer*innen* (International German Teacher's Conference). Every four years, German teachers from around the world gather in a German-speaking country to exchange ideas about innovative teaching methods and reflect on the political and social developments that impact the teaching of German worldwide.

Katharina: This year's 18th IDT took place in Lübeck from 28 July to 1 August, with more than 2,500 participants from over 100 countries. The theme, "Daring Diversity – with German", sent a powerful message in times of polarisation, migration debates, and growing scepticism about diversity: diversity as an asset and language as a bridge!



Theres: What new trends are emerging in DaF?

Viktoria: The conference made it very clear that foreign language teaching must keep up with the times. Ignoring artificial intelligence is no longer an option. We all know that our students are already using AI tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini. So why not actively integrate them into teaching? AI should be understood as a tool to support learning, not replace it. As teachers, we also have the task of guiding our students to use AI tools in a reflective way.

Katharina: Beyond DaF, I think the focus in the future will increasingly be on empowerment – building the skills learners need to study independently and participate in society. If we keep that focus, DaF will remain relevant, even in a world where English is the lingua franca.

Theres: Was there a talk or workshop that particularly inspired you?

Katharina: My professional highlight at the IDT was the encounter with the "Strudelwürmli." Psychologist or Author Maja Storch coined this charming term for the unconscious – that inner force that guides our actions – also in learning. Prof. Sara Hägi-Maed applied this concept to DaF teaching: if the "Würmli" is addressed in an appealing way, a dry "I have to learn grammar" becomes an enjoyable "I allow myself some linguistic refinements" – and with this intrinsic motivation, foreign language learning becomes significantly more effective.

Theres: What will you take away for your own teaching?

Katharina: I want to bring "Strudelwürmli" more into play – both my own when I teach, and those of my students. And I also hope to be more relaxed when learners come with very different backgrounds. A colleague from Cameroon told me she regularly teaches classes of 80 students or more! I'll think of her in those moments. 😊



Viktoria: I came back with a list of fantastic AI tools I'm eager to explore with my students. I'm really excited to see how they will react and how much fun we'll have exploring them together.

Theres: And how was the overall experience?

Viktoria: It was my first IDT, and I was blown away by the sheer number of German teachers from all over the world. On Monday morning, at the very start, there was already a huge crowd at the entrance to the Music and Congress Hall – the main venue. I loved meeting so many familiar faces – old classmates from Leipzig and lecturers from my own studies. It felt like a giant class reunion.

Katharina: Some of my sessions took place in a convent building dating back to 1283 – it doesn't get more atmospheric than that! And Lübeck itself, with its Hanseatic charm, welcomed the international guests so warmly. The shanty choir at the champagne reception, a

fish sandwich at the harbour, the *Magic Mountain* reading in the old port building – these little touches perfectly complemented the academic programme.

Theres: So, will you attend the next IDT?

Both: Definitely!

6 Personnel

Thank You to Victoria de Dios Oviedo – Our Former Deputy Head

Since April 2025, the Language Centre has had a new leadership team. Victoria de Dios Oviedo, who previously served as deputy head, has chosen to dedicate herself fully to teaching, with a special interest in exploring the many ways AI can enrich language learning.

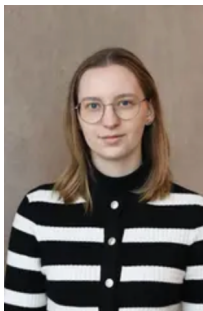
We are deeply grateful for her unwavering dedication since January 2018. During her tenure, she navigated numerous challenges – from the COVID-19 pandemic to the head's extended absences and the sudden relocation of the entire SPZ staff from the rundown MG2 | C12 building. Always pragmatic and driven by a strong sense of fairness, she handled every obstacle with poise. Above all, she was a passionate advocate for our student assistants, who will miss her dearly. At the same time, we hope that in appointing Sophie Laufer as the new deputy head, we have found a worthy successor.

Thank you, Victoria – and a warm welcome to Sophie!

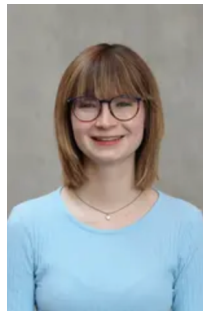
SPZ Service Team

This summer semester, we say goodbye to several of our student assistants who have been an invaluable part of our team in recent semesters. A very special thank you goes to Pauline and Laura, whose work in setting up and managing the many Moodle registration rooms made them truly indispensable. We are grateful for your patience and your intercultural resilience. 😊

We wish all of our student assistants success in their next steps – whether embarking on their careers or enjoying unforgettable adventures during their Erasmus year.



Pauline



Laura



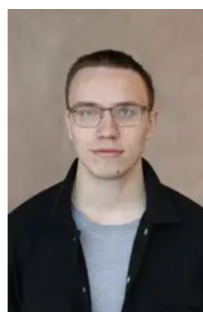
Valentina



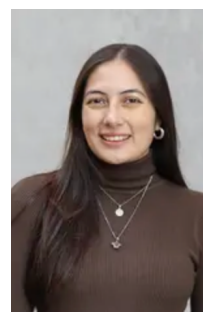
Joaquin



Linda



Filipp



Maria

Spanish and French Sections

In August and September, two temporary positions opened in the Spanish and French sections. For Spanish, we are delighted to welcome Catalina Manjarrez Gonzáles – the first Mexican lecturer to join our centre. With her arrival, the Language Centre now has staff from 16 different countries. We are excited about working together and about the intercultural exchange she will bring.

In French, the position went to Dr Colette Kurth, who grew up bilingual in German and French. She brings extensive experience in teaching French language and culture, gained during her tenure as a lecturer at the University of Jena's Language Centre. We are also looking forward to collaborating with Dr Kurth.

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