

UNIVERSITÄT ERFURT

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Sprachenzentrum

# < sprachbote >

Issue 4 | Winter Semester 2025/26

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### Table of Contents

1	Greeting	3
2	News and Novelties	4
3	Projects and Events	6
4	Further Training	8
5	Personnel	10

#### Editor

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Language Centre - University of Erfurt  
Postfach 900 221  
99105 Erfurt  
Telefon: +49 361 737-27 00  
E-Mail: [susanne.hoppe@uni-erfurt.de](mailto:susanne.hoppe@uni-erfurt.de)  
<https://www.uni-erfurt.de/sprachenzentrum>

Editorial Team: Dr. Susanne Hoppe  
Layout: Sophie Laufer

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# 1 Greeting

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Dear Readers,

With this fourth newsletter, we warmly invite you to look back with us on a lively and eventful semester. We are particularly pleased about the numerous opportunities to make an impact beyond the campus of the University of Erfurt and to initiate new projects.

A key highlight is the new collaboration with the Language Centre of Bauhaus University (BU) Weimar on the German Language Examination for University Entrance (DSH). This exam is an essential requirement for our international students wishing to pursue full-time studies in Germany. Thanks to this co-operation, prospective students can now attend preparatory German courses at the same rate as BU Weimar students – a significant step in supporting their successful start to university life.

Beyond the university, the Language Centre team is also active in the wider community. Christopher Forlini, originally from New York, inspired students at the Kaleidoskop Gemeinschaftsschule in Jena with insights into U.S. politics, society, and culture. You can read a student's firsthand account in this newsletter.

Under the section *Further Training*, it becomes clear how relevant and inspiring the question remains of how artificial intelligence can enrich language teaching. Tracy Biedermann led a creative hands-on workshop on this topic at the Regional Conference of Thuringian Language Centres, held this year in Nordhausen.

In our courses, we prepare many students for study abroad experiences. Three participants from Sara Campi's Italian courses share unforgettable moments in the *Eternal City*, describing their time in Rome as "one of the best decisions of their lives," made possible thanks to the thorough preparation in our courses.

Looking ahead, a special project in the upcoming summer semester will see our voice trainers prepare students in voice and speech techniques for recording texts for an audio trail as part of the project "Nature-Based Interventions in Student Health Management." You can read more under *Projects and Events*.

There is much more to discover beyond these highlights. We hope the following pages inspire you, and as always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions.

On behalf of the Language Centre  
Dr. Susanne Hoppe

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## 2 News and Novelties

### New Promotional Film

As part of the Early Bird University Information Day, the Language Centre presented its new promotional film. We would like to thank all participants who took part in the filming and were willing to share key information about the Language Centre in short interviews or provide insights into their teaching practice. Their openness made it possible to create an authentic and motivating compilation that highlights the Language Centre's services and responsibilities. The video can be viewed on the Language Centre's homepage on the university website under the "Our Profile" section or on YouTube.



### Silent Night and Shuba – Christmas Party at the Language Centre



This winter semester, the team at the Language Centre once again got into the Christmas spirit together. As the 2024 Christmas party had to be cancelled due to illness among many colleagues, both lecturers and student assistants were particularly looking forward to the event. The traditional international buffet was especially abundant, with *shuba* (a Russian herring salad with beetroot) prepared by Ella Schramm proving a favourite. After a lavish evening meal, the atmosphere in Room 343 became very tuneful thanks to Tracy Biedermann on guitar and several colleagues eager to sing.

Christmas carols were sung in various languages, different lyrics were tried out, and some verses were performed as canons. "Silent Night, Holy Night" was especially delightful, as it is one of the few songs that exists in almost every language, perfectly reflecting the spirit of the evening: "Many languages, one melody – Christmas brings us together!"



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## New DSH Co-operation



We are very pleased about our collaboration with the Language Centre of Bauhaus-Universität Weimar. This year, the German Language Examination for University Entrance (DSH) will not only be offered on a joint examination date for the first time but will also be developed in close academic co-operation. In addition, our prospective students will have the opportunity to attend the DSH preparation course at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar. We would like to express our sincere thanks to Weimar's Language Centre for making this possible. Through this co-operation, we aim to further strengthen the network of DSH locations in the region and make meaningful use of existing synergies.

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## New York Visits the Classroom (by Twelfth-grader Hannah Braun)

The week before Christmas was anything but ordinary for the advanced English course (English-eA) at the Kaleidoskop Gemeinschaftsschule Jena. The reason? A special visitor: Christopher Forlini from New York, an English language instructor at the University of Erfurt, joined the class on Wednesday, 17 December 2025. He introduced himself, shared insights about his work, and answered students' questions on a variety of topics, including everyday life and current political issues in the USA.



This special English lesson was a real highlight for the twelfth grade. Students had the rare opportunity to discuss topics that are usually only briefly touched upon – or not covered at all – in class and could pose their questions directly to an expert. Christopher, a native American, shared firsthand experiences of politics, society, and culture in the USA. At the same time, students were able to put their English skills into practice: they engaged with Christopher before and after the lesson, while the class itself was highly interactive, with Christopher responding attentively to the students' questions and interests.

We sincerely thank Christopher for taking the time to visit our school.

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## New Staff Room Planned for Language Centre Team

Since the renovation of Staff Building 2, the Language Centre team has been spread across campus, making informal chats and casual exchanges rare. Starting in summer semester 2026, this will change: a new staff room in former office C03 | 344 will offer a cozy seating area, a coffee machine, and a welcoming space for conversation, relaxation, and team time. We can't wait to enjoy it!

### 3 Projects and Events

#### Reading by Author Fann Attiki

On 20 October 2026, we had the honour and pleasure of welcoming the Congolese author Fann Attiki to the University of Erfurt. The event, organized in co-operation with the Institut français, the Romance Studies Department, and the Language Centre, drew great interest and was well attended by both students and French teachers from across Thuringia.

Fann Attiki not only read excerpts from his debut novel *Cave 72*, for which he received the French literary prize *Voix d'Afriques* in 2021, but also shared insights into the book's creation. The audience gained further perspectives on contemporary Congolese society, particularly the living conditions and challenges faced by young people.

We are pleased to announce that the book is available in both French and German at the University Library. We are eagerly looking forward to his second novel, which he is currently putting the finishing touches on.



#### Looking Ahead: Collaboration Project between the Language Centre's Voice Training Section and GeKo at the University of Erfurt



Through the support of the university's Health Management programme, the Voice Training Section of the Language Centre will contribute to an exciting project/module on health communication (GeKo), led by Dr Kristin Köhler, in summer semester 2026. The project, titled "Nature-Based Interventions in Student Health Management," aims to develop a nature-inspired audio trail on the university campus. This trail will allow students to engage with mental health and stress reduction exercises as part of the University's student health management initiative.

To create effective and high-quality audio recordings, participants will receive voice and speech training from the Voice Training Section, including instruction in text reading and professional guidance on the podcast studio recording equipment. This approach will enable creative audio experiences, such as guided visualizations at the lavender patch or relaxation exercises under the maple tree. We are very much looking forward to the results!

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## Erasmus Exchange and Internships in Italy – Students Share their Experiences

Italian is a popular language among our students for their language courses. It is, therefore, not surprising that, alongside their courses at the University of Erfurt, they are also eager to gain practical language experience in the land of *la Dolce Vita*. Sara Campi asked her students about their experiences, and they provided a brief insight into their time in Italy:

### **Victoria Jentschke**

#### **Internship in Rome - November and Dezember 2025**

During my Master's studies in History, I was able to deepen my interest in the Italian language and culture at the Language Centre, and I was able to combine this with an internship at the German Historical Institute in Rome. In addition to engaging tasks related to German-Italian history at the institute, I also had the opportunity to work independently in Roman archives and libraries. Visits to places I had read so much about, such as *Cinecittà* or *the Mausoleo delle Fosse Ardeatine*, left a lasting impression, as did the magnificent churches and museums. Experiencing Rome during the Christmas season was another highlight. I particularly appreciated the open and warm encounters with people there, which made my stay truly unforgettable.

### **Helen Würthele**

#### **Internship in Rome**

Last year, I completed a six-week internship at the German Embassy in Rome. After six semesters of Italian courses at the Language Centre and my Erasmus stay in Rome, I was very well prepared linguistically for the internship. Although the working language at the embassy was German, I regularly read and analysed Italian news, followed parliamentary hearings, and assisted guests in Italian at receptions. Attending the university's language courses proved incredibly helpful, as they gave me the confidence I needed to use the language effectively. Overall, it was a highly formative experience in which I learned a great deal about diplomacy and Italian politics. I had an unforgettable time, meeting many inspiring people, gaining valuable life experiences, and further improving my Italian skills.

### **Pauline Wanner**

#### **Erasmus Project and Internship in Rome**

When I set off for the *Eternal City* last September, I could not have imagined how incredibly wonderful my Erasmus experience in Rome would be. Thanks to the warmth of the Italian people, the everyday *Dolce Vita*, and my walk to the language school past the Colosseum, the past six months have truly been a dream come true. In addition to my studies, I had the opportunity to work as a language ambassador for the German language with the Goethe Institute Italy, visiting schools in Rome and sharing about my day-to-day life in Erfurt as well as my experience learning a new language with the students. This experience also greatly improved my Italian, though my language course in Erfurt had already given me a solid foundation for navigating daily life. Living in Rome and speaking Italian was overwhelming in the best way and, in retrospect, one of the best decisions I have ever made.

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## 4 Further Training

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### Regional Conference of Thuringian Language Centres

On 26 February 2026, Alexandra Aberle, Head of the Language Centre at the University of Applied Sciences Nordhausen (FHN), welcomed participants to the regional conference “Education on the Move: Linguistic, Cultural, and Technological Diversity in Teaching” on FHN’s campus. Around 30 attendees joined, including Tracy and Susanne from our Language Centre.

After a welcome from the Vice President for Study Affairs, Professor Dr Cordula Borbe, keynote speaker Alexander Dotsenko, Professor of Computer Science specializing in Software Engineering and AI, explored the question “Is AI a Cure-All?”, highlighting opportunities and challenges for AI in language teaching. These topics were further examined in two workshops, focusing on integrating AI into academic writing and assessing written language proficiency, as well as balancing between traditional exams and real-world language use.

Tracy then led a hands-on workshop titled “ChatGPT in Material Development for C1 Courses: A Best-Practice Workshop for Language Instruction for Professional Purposes”. Participants created teaching materials using ChatGPT, generating lively discussions and creative outcomes.

The afternoon sessions addressed the role of English as a key skill in engineering and current challenges in teaching German as a foreign language. The conference concluded with coffee, homemade cake, engaging conversations, and a shared commitment to meet regularly at various Thuringian universities.

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### Gathering of Thuringian Language Centre Directors

During the pre-Christmas season, the directors of the Language Centres had the pleasure of being Ms. Hoppe’s guests, using this opportunity for collegial exchange and discussion of current work-related topics, such as time tracking and teaching loads for language instructors (LfbAs), the introduction of English-language degree programmes, HISinOne, campus management, and student support services.

Time tracking for LfbAs, implemented at the University of Applied Sciences Erfurt since October 2024, has proven problematic. The main issue is the conflict between two legal frameworks – the ThürLVO and the Working Hours Act – which are difficult to reconcile. Both fail to adequately reflect the real responsibilities of LfbAs.

At the Universities of Applied Sciences in Erfurt, Nordhausen, Schmalkalden, and Jena, LfbAs still teach 24 hours per week (full-time). This represents the maximum possible discretionary workload, which conflicts with higher education policy goals such as modern university teaching, didactic innovation, hybrid learning, and AI-supported teaching methods. Prioritizing quantity over quality does not align with the actual demands and expectations placed on LfbAs, which include administrative and academic responsibilities as well as increasing committee work and student counselling.

All participants confirmed that their institutions do not teach only languages, but also many fundamental skills and key qualifications. These transferable competencies are highly valuable for universities, as they support student success and employability.

The gathering strengthened collegial cohesion and underscored the shared commitment to continue shaping the diverse work of language centres in Thuringia in a dedicated and forward-looking manner.

*Abridged version: A. Aberle, HS Nordhausen/ S. Schrabbach, FH Erfurt. The unabridged version was published in AKS Newsletter, Special Edition 1, February 2026.*



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From left: D. Berndt (Jena), S. Schrabbach (Erfurt), U. Garde (Weimar), P. Voerkel (Schmalkalden), S. Hoppe (Erfurt)

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## XXVIII Jornadas Hispánicas in Freiburg

From 26–28 February 2026, I had the pleasure of attending the XXVIII Jornadas Hispánicas in Freiburg, the largest national conference on Spanish as a Foreign Language in the German-speaking world. The event was organized by Albert Ludwig University of Freiburg and Freiburg University of Education as partners within the School of Education FACE, in cooperation with the German Association of Spanish Teachers (DSV).

Under the theme *“UMBRALES. Polifonías, pluricentrismo y post-digitalidad,”* the conference explored how Spanish teaching can embrace multiple voices and perspectives (*polyphony*), recognize the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Spanish-speaking world (*pluricentrism*), and creatively combine analog and digital media in a post-digital learning environment.

Highlights included the opening keynote *“Habitar la polifonía”* by Yvette Bürki (University of Bern), a panel discussion on the future of Spanish in Germany, an exhibition on graphic novels, and a literary conversation with Chilean author Nona Fernández. Exchanges with more than 300 participants from 21 countries made the conference an inspiring and enriching experience.

María Rocío del Río Miguel

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## 5 Personnel

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### French Section

In the winter semester 2025/26, Colette Kurth joined the French team at the Language Centre, stepping in to cover for a colleague. Admirably, and in record time, she familiarized herself with the Centre's procedures, study regulations, and institutional requirements and taught French at an additional language level on short notice. Her friendly manner, reliability, and meticulous approach to work were highly appreciated by both her colleagues in the French Section and the management of the Language Centre. While it is wonderful that the colleague she was covering for can now return to full-time work, it is equally regrettable that we will be losing Colette, who will leave us at the end of March.

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### SPZ Service Team

In the winter semester 2025/26, we bid farewell to three of our student assistants. Our thanks go to Sofia Orefice, Frauke Walter, and Emilia Dalipaz, who actively supported both lecturers and students in their courses at the Language Centre and were always approachable for suggestions or concerns. Their commitment to the Tandem Programme deserves special recognition, as a total of 30 tandem pairs were formed during the winter semester to improve participants' language skills.

Starting in April, we will welcome three new student assistants to our team, who we would like to briefly introduce:

- Riley Noel Knappe: History  
Languages: English, Spanish
  - Muriel Mae Kohla: International Relations/Arts  
Languages: English, French, Spanish
  - Emilia Minou Wery: International Relations/Economics  
Languages: English, Spanish
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# Author Directory

## News and Novelties

New Promotional Film

Silent Night and Shuba – Christmas Party at the Language Centre

New DSH Co-operation

New York Visits the Classroom

New Staff Room Planned for Language Centre Team

**Sophie Laufer**

**Sophie Laufer**

**Katharina Kraut-Stuber**

**Hanna Braun**

**Christopher Forlini**

**Sophie Laufer**

## Projects and Events

Reading by Author Fann Attiki

Looking Ahead: Collaboration Project between  
Language Centre's Voice Training Section and GeKo  
Erasmus Exchange and Internships in Italy

**Béatrice Giribone-Fritz**

**Sophie Laufer**

**Victoria Jentschke**

**Helen Würthele**

**Pauline Wanner**

**Sara Campi**

## Further Training

Regional Conference of Thuringian Language Centres

Gathering of Thuringian Language Centre Directors

XXVIII Jornadas Hispánicas in Freiburg

**Susanne Hoppe**

**Susanne Hoppe**

**María Rocío del Río Miguel**

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