



HERMES NEWS

The Newsletter of the Hermes Network
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Hermes is part of the **AFANet** Thematic Network in Agricultural and Related Sciences (<http://www.afanet.info>), a project in the framework of the **SOCRATES** programme.

The **Hermes** network was founded as a platform for **foreign language training** within Universities and Colleges of Agriculture and Related Sciences (UCARS). Supported by the European Commission, Hermes acts as a resource and support network for foreign language trainers and institutions.

Activities in 2004

This was the dissemination year of our project and during this time we tried to spread information throughout the AFANet members and beyond about the results of our various workshops and research.

Dissemination took the form of delivering papers at conferences, running workshops, working with other projects and producing publications.

Our website provides full details at:

<http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/hermes/> .

These were our activities:

- **19th-24th May 2004: Professional Development for language teachers: English. Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Viseu / Portugal**
- **8th-11th July 2004: ICT Professional Development for Language Teachers: English. "Texts, corpora & language testing software – tools for the language teacher". Agricultural University of Wrocław, Poland**
- **9th-12th July 2004: Anwendungen für Sprachlehrkräfte „Text, Korpora und Sprachtest-Software“: Agraruniversität Wrocław, Polen**
- **2nd-6th September 2004: Stage de formation pour enseignants de français et d'italien / Seminario di perfezionamento per insegnanti di francese e d'italiano, Università di Bologna, Italy.**

Although the project finished in October 2004 our network remains open.

One of our main goals has always been to stimulate discussion and exchange of experience. We are a small group and are constantly looking for new members and new ideas. **You don't have to work in a big department, work a lot of hours or have very modern facilities – we would still like to hear from you.**



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Project co-ordinator:
Johann Fischer
johann.fischer@uni-tuebingen.de

Hermes Editors:
Johanna Jakobovičová
jj01@fem.uniag.sk
Etain Casey
etain.casey@kcl.ac.uk

Course Books

Most English Language teachers use a general course book in addition to other materials concerned with science and agriculture.

Here is a brief description of the more popular texts at Intermediate and Advanced levels from the MacMillan group of publishers

- **IELTS Foundation**

Suitable for lower level learners who are intending to study in the UK. (ISBN 1405013923 students' book). Cassettes, teachers' book and CDs also available.

- **E Mail English**

Suitable for students of general and business applications who want practice in written communication.

(ISBN 1405012943 Students' book)

- **Reward**

Series suitable for Beginner to Upper Intermediate. Provides 70 hours core syllabus of forty lessons and eight progress checks. (ISBN 0435242350 Students' book Upper Int).

On September 25th 2004 the 7th Annual Hermes Conference was held in Tübingen. This was the last conference of the project which ended officially in October 2004. There were 19 participants, some of whom had been part of the project from its very beginning at the University of Bodenkultur, Vienna, in 1997, but the majority were new members who had joined in one or more of the workshops which the group had organised.

The conference was considering the final reports on three of the HERMES workpackages: 2. Professional Development courses; 3. Professional development ICT and 4. Research on the most appropriate methods to develop a stronger interaction between language teachers and academic staff.

There was also an update on what is happening in the wider world of AFANet and ECHAE, and information on the new ECML project and other applications for funding which the HERMES group is involved in. A HERMES reader is planned which will synthesise all the work and research of the previous years and will be available soon.

HERMES has always been a 'grass-roots' organisation involving practising classroom teachers, student participants, four European languages and people from numerous countries and cultures. We have had radical and exciting ideas and the energy and enthusiasm to pursue them. The conference reflected this creative dynamism with open discussions of new methodology and resources in the world of language teaching.

Discussions continued in the restaurants where the hospitality was, as usual, very generous. There was much to learn for new members and much to go home and think about. It is certain that the network, built up over these years will continue to generate new ideas.

What were we doing in Wrocław?

The last from the *Hermes guide to successful conferences*

Your colleagues may think that you are having a relaxing and glamorous trip when you go to attend a language teaching conference – but we on Hermes know better.

From our list of lost participants, narrow escapes, casualties and cultural misunderstandings we issue the final part of our authoritative survival guide for European academics:

This time we answer the question: souvenirs or no souvenirs?

So what should you buy and carry home in your already overfull suitcase which is full of computing equipment, conference papers and handouts? Is it worth damaging your hands and back?

Well, the answer seems to be 'yes!' judging from our Hermes participants. The check list runs something like this:

Slovakia: market stall must-haves include Christmas decorations and in the 'posh' shops beautiful glassware.

Portugal: you must NOT leave without wine and you must need more shoes and handbags, don't you?

Poland: in a word – shoes. Then more shoes.

Germany: Christmas market heaven and cake supplier to the non-weight conscious.

Wrocław, in modern Poland, was the capital city of Silesia and was an important market centre and a cultural and religious centre with numerous churches and a cathedral. In the early 16th century the King of Bohemia and Hungary attempted to establish a university in the city but the scheme was opposed and the area became caught up in the huge political changes of the 17th and 18th century as the land was struggled over and continuously changed hands between warring factions. By 1811 a more stable university community had been built up and attracted many dynamic Polish-speaking scholars who attended the five faculties. All this, and most of the city, was swept away however, in the 20th century wars and the present university in modern Poland has been systematically built up to incorporate 8 faculties of vocational and professional studies. In 2002 the city celebrated 300 years of learning at the Wrocław site.

In September of 2004 there was a further but more peaceful invasion as the Hermes group, comprising Lisa Lena Opas Hänninen from Oulu University in Finland and Hermien Miltenburg from Wageningen University, accompanied by Johann Fischer from Tübingen, arrived to run a Professional Development course focusing on ICT. Two courses were taught over two days, one in English and one in German and covered the use of corpora and ICT for language testing. Wrocław language teaching staff attended the courses to lead their university into the latest methodologies as well as teachers from Bulgaria and Germany, a total of 18 participants.

Our hosts at Wrocław were generous, helpful and committed to improving teaching and learning for staff and students. This energy was also applied to the science of souvenir shopping and some very successful incursions were made to local retailers with considerable economic advantage, we hope, to the city economy.

In the feedback that was supplied after the course it was clear that the participants had enjoyed their experience. The trainers also spoke highly of the facilities at the university and the support services available. This is clearly a very good destination for future ICT courses and co-operation and there is a demand for an extension to this type of course for language levels and assessment and co-operation with subject area specialists.

Two other aspects came to light as a result of the course. The first was that a number of language teachers would welcome a basic skills course, i.e. keyboarding, file management, word processing skills and internet access. In a busy professional life it is not always automatic that every teacher gets good skills.

Teachers also need a testing programme in English and German language and further research is required to find a suitable and inexpensive product.

HERMES Professional Development Activities

Over the last **seven years** members of the HERMES group have been involved in Professional Development Activities in **eleven different countries** in Europe (and beyond). A large number of these workshops have not been financed by the AFANet project, but by other sources (university funding, German Association for Academic Exchange – DAAD, TEMPUS TACIS projects etc.). The workshops covered areas like **task-oriented language and problem-based teaching, language testing and assessment, ICT** in language teaching and learning, or the use of **case studies** in language teaching.

Here is the list of **over 30 HERMES workshops** with more than 300 participants from 1999 to 2004:

1999: Vienna / AT – English
 2000: Angers / FR – English
 2000: Vienna / AT – English, German
 2001: Moscow / RU – German
 2001: Almaty / KZ – English, German
 2001: Nitra / SK – English, German
 2002: Novosibirsk / RU – German
 2002: Vienna / AT – English
 2002: Gödöllő / HU – English
 2003: Hohenheim / DE – French, German
 2003: Moscow / RU – English
 2003: Nitra / SK – English, German
 2003: Tübingen / DE – Italian
 2003: Gödöllő / HU – English
 2003: Bologna / IT – French, Italian
 2003: Poznań / PL – French, German
 2003: Dresden / DE – German
 2004: Viseu / PT – English
 2004: Hohenheim / DE – German
 2004: Wrocław / PL – English, German
 2004: Bologna / IT – French, Italian
 2004: Tübingen / DE – English

Bologna: French and Italian star at HERMES Professional Development Courses

2004 was the **AFANet Dissemination Year**, and the HERMES working group on Professional Development decided to offer once again the whole range of the HERMES training modules to AFANet institutions and HERMES partners, to language teachers and also to students.

In May, **Viseu** in Portugal made a start and during a very intensive three day programme ten teachers of **English** got acquainted with task-oriented and problem-based teaching methods and developed an appetite for more, particularly for more case study activities. A group of students from the Portuguese Catholic University in Viseu served as guinea-pigs: In a three day intensive English course the language teachers from Finland, Germany, Portugal, Slovakia and the UK tried out new teaching methods on them.

Teachers of French and Italian had to wait until September, when HERMES Professional Development Courses with a similar structure were organised for them in **Bologna**, Italy. After first steps into the world of teaching French and Italian in 2003, the HERMES group tried this year to bring on board more French and Italian language teachers, train them as teacher trainers, and run teacher training courses. At the end of the project, the HERMES group is no longer a group of teachers of English, with some “odd ones out”, but a truly multilingual community with an increasing number of teachers of German, French and Italian. teachers of Italian welcomed this step where finally something is organised for them, whereas in the past teachers of English were the lucky ones.

An important step has been made by the **HERMES ICT group** as well: After a successful Professional Development ICT course in Vienna in 2002, our trainers repeated the experience in 2004 in **Wrocław** and ran their first training course in **German**.

But will it continue? – The answer is “yes”. Some members of the HERMES group have successfully started the LCaS project with the Council of Europe funded European Centre of Modern Languages in Graz (www.ecml.at/mtp2/LCaS), and will run a first workshop in March 2005 in Finland. Three other project proposals for EU funding are at the moment in Brussels and hopefully will hopefully get a positive welcome by the Commission.