

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ LANGUAGE POLICY
2012



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

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BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY

The strategic direction of the University of Jyväskylä is to be among Finland's leading and most successful multidisciplinary research universities, in which the tradition of education provided in Finnish is combined with modern internationality. Although the University has strong Finnish-speaking traditions, it is today a multilingual and multicultural academic environment whose students and staff e.g. in 2011 represented approximately 90 different nationalities. In the future, the diversity of society will be even more visible in the University's day-to-day activities. Multilingualism and multiculturalism are to be seen as resources that are systematically utilised within the entire University community.

The University of Jyväskylä Language Policy is intended to anticipate and respond to the challenges of the increasingly global society, and to promote the University's internationalisation. The Language Policy aims to specify the University's strategic objectives and to promote dynamic multilingualism in all University operations. Moreover, its aim is to raise linguistic and cultural awareness of staff and students in all fields of activities.

This Language Policy defines the general principles of language use for the entire University of Jyväskylä community. Individual units are to use this foundation for building the practices that their particular disciplines and activities require.

The starting point for the Language Policy is the notion of language as communicative and interactive competence. Language is used to construct and convey information, which is why language is an integral part of research, education, and societal interaction. Every researcher and teacher acts as a model for language usage in her/his discipline.

Modern multilingualism presupposes from individuals rapid reaction, flexibility and readiness to utilise even limited language skills, as well as an open mind and a positive attitude to languages and language use. Modern multilingualism thus includes the idea of partial language competences and of spontaneous co-existence of parallel languages in meeting the communication needs of various situations. The language user does not need to master all the languages in her/his repertoire at the same level in all situations, and in some contexts it may well be feasible to use several languages that come naturally to the communication partners. The opportunity to use different languages increases equality of participation and access to communication.

Current legislation concerning universities grants them considerable powers to decide on the language of instruction and on the other languages used in their activities. In compliance with the Universities Act (558/2009), the language of instruction, examination and administration at the University of Jyväskylä is Finnish, but the University may also make its own decision to use other languages in research and instruction. In administrative matters, however, individuals have the legal right to use Finnish or Swedish in matters which concern them. In practice, the working languages at the University of Jyväskylä are Finnish and English. In addition to them, the faculties and departments use other languages that are strategically significant for their activities.

The University of Jyväskylä is a prominent national and international actor in language-related research and education. As such, its possibilities to rely on research information which



supports modern multilingualism and multiculturalism are excellent. The University's long traditions of acting as a major force in the fields of language and culture are evident from the following:

- The first Finnish-speaking teacher training college, later to become College of Education and then the University of Jyväskylä, was founded in Jyväskylä in 1863.
- Languages, culture, and social change processes form one of the strategic core fields of the University of Jyväskylä. This is manifested both in its specifically assigned national missions (Sign Language Centre, Network for Language Education Policies, National Certificates of Language Proficiency) and in its own concrete practices (Language Campus, integration of language teaching with degree education).
- The University of Jyväskylä has a particularly strong profile in applied language studies (including research into language, language use and language learning) and in exploring the social significance of language, communication and interaction. Research and development in these fields focus specifically on areas with a strong societal impact and a current need for new information.
- University-level studies in Finnish Sign Language as a mother tongue and as a foreign language can only be pursued at the University's Sign Language Centre, which is also responsible for research in the field.
- Internationally acknowledged research related to university language policies is conducted at the University of Jyväskylä.

The interconnection of language and culture, internationality, multiculturalism, and diversity are approached at the University of Jyväskylä from both a Finnish and an international research perspective. As a Finnish-speaking university, the University of Jyväskylä also shoulders its responsibility for preserving bilingualism in Finland. Modernising the teaching of Swedish and exploring the role of Swedish in various disciplines are particular areas of attention.

Implementing the Language Policy in practice requires commitment from the entire University community, but the University management and unit management carry a particular responsibility for this process. With their own example and activities, the University management and supervising personnel are in the key position in making the Language Policy an everyday practice of the University.

The University of Jyväskylä Language Policy is primarily guided by the needs of staff, students and society. Accordingly, this Language Policy document is divided into three sub-areas: (1) University as a work community, (2) University as a learning environment, and (3) University as a societal agent.



1 UNIVERSITY AS A WORK COMMUNITY

In accordance with its Strategy and Personnel Policy, the University of Jyväskylä is a competitive employer and an attractive work community with an international recruitment policy for talented experts. The University makes efficient use of its staff's expertise, taking good care of them and their work environment. The Language Policy defines what this means when the University is examined as part of an international and multilingual operating environment.

The University of Jyväskylä takes its Language Policy into consideration when recruiting staff and enhancing their competences. Special attention is paid to how new staff are received, inducted and mentored, and how their continuous competence and career development are promoted in line with the goals of the University's Academic Life programme. These presuppose both internationally renowned, top-level research and education and well-organised and comprehensive support services of high standards for the Language Policy goals to become true. Furthermore, the entire academic community are encouraged to active multilingual interaction in different forums.

The University management and unit management have a particular responsibility for implementing the Language Policy.

- The University and unit management are to ensure the staff's right to equal communication, as well as provide for the conditions for an open and barrier-free access to communication.
- The preconditions and needs of the various disciplines, units and employees are diverse. Because of this, the management will proactively consider the fluency of daily routines and level of occupational wellness while implementing the Language Policy, making joint agreements on the structures, actions and responsibilities established, documenting them clearly and resourcing them sufficiently.
- The Language Policy principles are addressed in development discussions and observed in work plans.

Equal and barrier-free communication is the right and obligation of every member of the University of Jyväskylä work community.

Equal communication is based on a dynamic and dialogical communication climate, which values the participants' opportunity to understand the content and progress of the communicative situation as well as to share their thoughts and ideas in a way that they feel their own. Barrier-free communication, on the other hand, implies that communication reaches everyone and is linguistically clearly comprehensible.



- The University's principal working languages are Finnish and English, taking into account the administrative and legal role of Swedish.. At unit levels, other languages relevant to their activities are also used. Special attention in the University-level official communication for internal purposes is paid to the appropriateness, clarity and comprehensibility of the language used (Administrative Procedure Act 434/2003; § 9).
- The overall principles of language use are transparency and flexibility. Finnish and non-Finnish-speaking staff are offered equal opportunities to obtain information and to participate in the discussion in their work community. Languages are used flexibly, clearly, and in parallel, according to the situation.
- Administrative and support services are available in Finnish and in English. The administrative and support staff are supported in developing and maintaining the good language and communication competences that are necessary in their duties.
- All essential University-level documents, guidelines, descriptions of services, forms, and information systems used at work are available in Finnish and in English. All internal bulletins in Finnish, which are addressed to the entire staff, will be available at least as English summaries. Moreover, the texts and their backgrounds must be adequately explained and interpreted, as mere literal translation is not always enough.
- The organisational terms, staff titles, degree titles, and other central university-related terminology will be collated into an organisational glossary, which is available for the entire University community in Finnish and in English, as part of the MOT online dictionary.
- Non-Finnish-speaking staff will be taken into consideration in various kinds of University events by using different languages flexibly, e.g., by providing presentation materials in English for an event run in Finnish and by providing Sign Language interpretation.
- The University has an up-to-date and barrier-free website with Finnish and English as its principal languages. PR and information materials are also prepared in other languages in order to strengthen strategic partnerships and student and staff recruitment, for example.
- The University campus and building signs will be visually transparent and barrier-free. They are provided in Finnish and in English, along with appropriate attention to the cultural and historical traditions of the campuses and to the needs of external target groups.

The staff can act flexibly and naturally in multilingual and multicultural settings.

- The staff members are responsible for developing their language and cultural competences to meet the needs of their duties.



- The language and communicative competences presumed in various jobs are considered in personnel recruitment and appraisal. This requirement specifically concerns the Finnish and English proficiency of both teaching and research staff and administrative and support staff. A multilingual competence of an applicant is regarded as an additional merit both in recruitment and in career development.
- It is the right and obligation of all international staff to develop their competences in Finnish language and culture. The expected learning outcomes for this are defined on the basis of the duration of employment, nature of work, and the employee's personal goals. It is the task of the departmental managers and supervisors to encourage their employees through e.g. work plans and development discussions to develop their Finnish skills on a long-term basis. .
- Teachers and counsellors of multilingual and multicultural student groups are expected to be proficient in the language of instruction (minimum level C1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) as well as to have developed intercultural competence. The language and cultural competences of support staff must also be ensured.
- The research information produced at the University is systematically consulted when staff development programmes are being designed in languages, cultures and communication.



2 UNIVERSITY AS A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Knowledge, competence and expertise are built through language. The entire University community is encouraged to enhance their multilingual and multicultural competence. This process includes fostering knowledge of Finnish language and culture, diversifying communication skills in the second national language and foreign languages, and promoting cultural awareness and competence in general. These are also key means to increase the international visibility of the University, attractiveness of its learning environments, and employability and social integration of its students.

The graduates of the University will have multiple and top-level language, communication and cultural competences and ability to act in multilingual and multicultural settings.

- Finnish-speaking graduates are expected in working life to have excellent written communication, speech communication and presentation skills in the mother tongue, as well as fluent English skills. Purposeful learning of other languages gives a clear competitive advantage in the labour market, but also partial competences increase possibilities to interact in different contexts and settings. . All students will be offered opportunities to develop multiple language skills and intercultural communication competences as part of their studies.
- Increasing multiculturalism and multilingualism of Finland will be taken into account in all training for teachers and other education specialists, and their intercultural pedagogical skills will be systematically developed.
- Systematic attention is paid to ensure that the Finnish students completing English-medium degree programmes also master scientific communication in their fields in the mother tongue.
- Non-Finnish-speaking students are expected to have the required proficiency level in English or Finnish (or in another language of instruction) at entry to university, as that is a prerequisite for fluent and successful completion of studies. The degree students who study in English are encouraged and guided to acquire sufficient Finnish skills in order to facilitate their social integration and potential employment in Finland. Multiple language and cultural competences are labour market advantages for these students, as well.
- Expected learning outcomes in language and cultural studies will be included in the outcomes descriptions of the degrees. Students will be guided via personal study plans (PSP/HOPS) to systematically develop their language and communication competences as part of their expertise in the scientific field in question. In this way, language and communication studies become an integral part of their pathway through discipline-specific studies.



- The learning objectives, modes of study, statutory exam contents, and assessment criteria for compulsory Academic Swedish will be developed to better meet current needs.
- Students are responsible for developing their own ability to participate and interact in multilingual and multicultural settings. They should also be able to identify and describe their own competence e.g. in recruitment situations.
- Systematic support is offered on Finnish and English scientific communication in order to ensure the quality of theses and assignments. Support will also be offered in other languages, if necessary. Furthermore, students should also be able to communicate on their discipline to both professionals in their field as well as to the general public, and support will also be available for these purposes.

The Finnish language is the cornerstone of our international university.

- In providing instruction in Finnish, all teachers are responsible for fostering good standards in the language. Particular attention is paid to both oral and written scientific communication.
- The pedagogical approaches used in teaching are tuned to develop and diversify students' interactive skills.
- Incoming exchange students are offered studies in Finnish language and culture.
- Sign Language education focuses specifically on developing students' strong Sign Language communication competence and functional bilingualism.
- Despite encouragement to publish on the most distinguished international forums, the University is also committed to promoting publishing in Finnish and to developing Finnish as a language of science.

A multilingual and multicultural operating environment is the starting point and resource for teaching.

- International student mobility offers a significant learning environment for students to develop their language and cultural competences. Students are encouraged to international mobility e.g. through systematic personal study plan (PSP) guidance. The multilingual and multicultural home campus is also a learning environment that promotes students' language and cultural competences, which is why it is to be systematically utilised and developed.
- New learning environments and social media are utilised in making both the instruction and the learning environment more international (networking, projects, and other international contacts).



- Language plays a more prominent role in knowledge and competence building when teaching and learning is done through a foreign language, rather than in the mother tongue. This requires special awareness from the teacher, as well as mastery of intercultural pedagogy and guidance in the language of instruction. The competences and experiences of the multilingual and multicultural student group can be utilised to add to the international dimension of instruction and expected learning outcomes. The communication skills and intercultural competences of both teachers and counsellors will be systematically developed and also taken into account in recruitment and in the appraisal system.
- Good communication skills in English are also essential for the non-teaching staff in order to ensure a smooth progress of international students' studies and to facilitate their integration in the University community and Finnish society. Systematic support for the non-teaching staff's intercultural communication skills will also be offered.
- In order to enable international exchange, each faculty will offer a sufficient yearly amount of bachelor-level studies in English. The content descriptions of these studies are to be confirmed well before the application period of incoming exchange students closes.
- The main documents and instructions needed in studies and in teaching must be easily found online also in English.



3 UNIVERSITY AS A SOCIETAL AGENT

In order to serve the third mission of universities, the Language Policy will be visible in the University of Jyväskylä's societal interaction through

- both graduated experts and experts working at the University
- participation in public discussion and societal debates
- scientific publications and popularisation of science
- provision of education
- communications and PR.

The University has an interactive relationship to society and its phenomena, and it will maintain and promote this dialogue through its activities. The University acknowledges the significance of research and education for building the Finnish as well as the global society and their future, including language policy issues.

According to the University of Jyväskylä strategy and communication policy definitions, everyone has the right and obligation to actively discuss with both internal and external interest groups and communicate on themes related to their own work and area of expertise to these groups. Information on research will be actively and comprehensibly shared both with the academic communities and society at large.

The University educates future experts who are aware of the linguistic and discourse characteristics of their discipline and able to convincingly communicate on their professional competence and expertise both within their own field and to external target groups and the general public. The University's provision of education reflects the agreed language policy guidelines through a wide variety of languages offered, as well as through studies which aim at enhancing language awareness and integrate subject studies with language, communication and cultural skills.

- The University of Jyväskylä will communicate on its activities mainly in Finnish and in English. Other languages are also used when necessary. The communication is tailored to meet different information needs and cultural conventions, and the content is customised for each target group. The faculties and departments are encouraged to use various languages in their communication and other activities, in compliance with the traditions and needs of the disciplines they represent.
- Each discipline has its own distinct linguistic and communicative conventions. It is important for the various actors at the University to be conscious of the language usage and communication typical of their discipline, and of how the general public should be addressed regarding the discipline.
- The University supports faculty and departmental staff's engagement in societal debate by providing language and communication services and forums for participation. Such participation will be strengthened, and the staff encouraged to it through language, communication and presentation skills training.



- The University's experts have a social responsibility to communicate on research also in Finnish. In this way the University will continue to contribute to the preservation of Finnish as a language of science.
- Scientific writing in Finnish, English and other languages is increasingly important for the University's national and international visibility. Specific training in academic writing and presentation skills, as well as language services, are provided to assist research communication intended both for the research community and for the general public.

The students graduating from the University of Jyväskylä will have had the opportunity to develop a broad language and communication repertoire during their studies, and they will regard language skills as an integral part of academic expertise. This includes the readiness to convincingly communicate on their discipline to different audiences and in different job positions, both in their mother tongue and – in international contexts – in more than one foreign language. Students are also encouraged throughout their studies to demonstrate their growing expertise and to participate in public discussions and societal debates.



4 MONITORING AND FOLLOW-UP

After the University of Jyväskylä Board has approved the Language Policy, the practical arrangements and actions related to its implementation at University, unit and individual levels will be agreed upon. For this purpose, the Language Policy Working Group will draw during spring 2012 a detailed action plan, in which the necessary actions and the respective actors in charge of them are specified.

It is the responsibility of the University and unit management to ensure that the measures determined in the Language Policy are fully implemented at the University of Jyväskylä. Sufficient resources for the support services and training must be ensured in order to adequately support the concretisation of the Language Policy.

In evaluating and developing the Language Policy, efficient use will be made of the University's own research into language, language policy, communication, and culture. In addition, internationally acknowledged, research-based indicators will be utilised. The follow-up of the Language Policy is intended to form a natural part of the assessment and development of staff, units, and university in general. The University management will appoint a Language Policy Committee in charge of the monitoring and evaluation of the Language Policy implementation at university, unit and individual levels.



5 BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Acts

- Universities Act 558/2009
- Administrative Procedure Act 434/2003
- Language Act 423/2003

Strategies and policy documents

- University of Jyväskylä Strategy 2017: Excellence and Dynamism
- Ministry of Education and Culture: Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009–2015
- Jyväskylän yliopiston laatupolitiikka – jatkuva oman toiminnan kehittäminen 2010 (University of Jyväskylä Quality Policy 2010)
- Jyväskylän yliopiston viestinnän strategiset linjaukset 2009, 2010 (Strategic Guidelines for Communications at the University of Jyväskylä)
- Jyväskylän yliopisto: Rahoituksen jakamisen suuntaviivat vuosille 2010–2012 (University of Jyväskylä: Guidelines for Funding Allocation 2010–2012)

Language policies

- University of Jyväskylä Language Policy 2004
- The latest language policies and programmes of other universities

Working group reports

- Development Group for International Staff Services: Final Report 2011
- International Campus Working Group: Final Report 2003

Further material

- Ministry of Education and Culture: High-quality, profilised and effective international university - Proposal for a reform of the university financing model from 2013



APPENDIX 1

Note

Rector Aino Sallinen appointed a Language Policy Working Group on 15 February 2011. The working group was commissioned to prepare a draft for the University of Jyväskylä Language Policy and to support the integration of this policy in the operational agenda of the University's strategy and other activities. The group's term of office lasted from 15 February to 31 December 2011. It was chaired by Professor, Director Anne Pitkänen-Huhta (Department of Languages) and the members were Lecturer Eija Aalto (Department of Teacher Education), Head of Planning and Development Päivi Fadjukoff (Agora Center), Project Researcher David Hoffman (Finnish Institute for Educational Research), University Teacher Jaana Keski-Levijoki (Sign Language Centre), Head of International Office Tuija Koponen (University Services), Secretary of International Affairs Sanna Patja (Student Union of the University of Jyväskylä), Professor, Researcher Mika Risku (Institute of Educational Leadership), Lecturer Anne Räsänen (University Language Centre) and Researcher Taina Saarinen (Centre for Applied Language Studies). Head of Internationalisation Anna Grönlund-Qvarnberg (University Services) acted as the Group's secretary.

The group met eleven times during its term, held a joint meeting with the ISS Development Group on 20 September 2011, and organised a language policy panel open to the entire University community on 12 October 2011. To lay a foundation for the work, the group examined the University of Jyväskylä Strategy and other strategic documents relevant to the Language Policy, legislation related to languages, and the language policy programmes and principles of other universities.

The working group wishes that all the faculties and independent institutes be asked to comment on the Language Policy before it is handled by the University Board.

The working group proposes that its term of office be extended until 31 May 2012. This would allow the group to draw a more detailed action plan, including a clearer specification of responsibilities, as well as English versions of the documents, necessary for implementing the Language Policy.

Jyväskylä, 11 January 2012

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