

# GUIDELINES FOR LANGUAGE AWARENESS AT THE UNIVERSITY

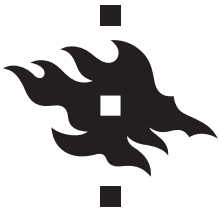
Language awareness is a way of promoting diversity and University's operating culture based on language awareness lays a strong foundation for an inclusive community. The Guidelines for Language Awareness at the University have been written to support everyday multilingual encounters among students and staff, as well as to enable language learning itself.

Both language awareness and language learning require commitment, time and active efforts from all members of the community. Language is an essential tool of interaction and knowledge sharing, and language awareness significantly underlies language use and learning.

When building a community that respects diversity, we have to be prepared to accept different accents as well as varying rates of speech and levels of language proficiency. We also have the opportunity to flexibly converse in different languages. Complete understanding is not always necessary – the key is to pursue open and respectful communication.

We encourage everyone to consider how your activities and work could be made accessible to more people. A diverse community increases opportunities for innovation and creating a positive work and study environment. It also promotes openness and helps to better respond to evolving challenges and opportunities.

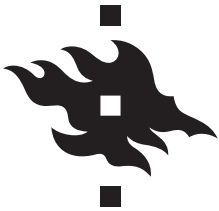




## LANGUAGE-AWARE SAFER SPACES

The principles for language-aware safer spaces have been laid down to make every member of the University community feel as welcome and as safe as possible to participate in the University's operations. Through language awareness, we take into consideration the linguistic diversity of the community, remove barriers to participation, and enable the development of language skills. At this trilingual (Finnish, Swedish, English) university, we are all responsible for establishing a community that values the diverse use of languages.

- Meet others with an open mind, be kind, and demonstrate, to both others and yourself, compassion for and acceptance of different uses of language and language skills.
- Act sensitively, and do not make assumptions or generalisations on a person's first language based on their name or appearance.
- Greet people in the language(s) that you actively use in your work or study environment.
- Do not assume that everyone speaks the same language. Ask others the language(s) in which they wish to continue the discussion. You can also indicate the language(s) in which you are able to communicate. You can agree to use different languages, ensuring that both parties understand the content of the discussion.
- The facilitator of the discussion must ensure that everyone in the space has the opportunity to take part and receive the necessary information, for example, by checking whether everyone has understood or by summarising the discussion. Do not hesitate to interrupt if you do not understand the conversation.
- If you make a mistake, acknowledge it and apologise: *"I'm sorry. Thank you for correcting me/explaining your situation."*
- You can support language learning if the participants so wish. Suggest using another language for discussion and support learning with simple language phrases. The mental resources of those participating in the discussion must be taken into consideration in learning situations, as the emotions associated with learning a language and the opportunities to learn and study new things vary on a daily basis, even from hour to hour.
- Recognise the acquisition of language skills as a long-term process that must be given time and space.
- Recognise the power structures associated with language use. For example, your position (e.g., supervisor, meeting/event organiser, teacher) can make you responsible for choosing the language used. Make sure that your choices enable everyone to fully participate, for example, by asking whether the other person understood what was said.
- Recognise that, even though we are a trilingual university, Finnish as the majority language is often the default. Tackling this issue requires, among other things, the active use of minority languages and the reduction of barriers to participation in such languages.



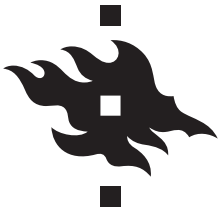
## INFORMAL MEETINGS

### Examples of multilingual communication or language learning

- Coffee sessions or other meetings organised at faculties, campuses or immediate communities where you can practise speaking (eg. Finnish, Swedish, English) or passive language skills
  - Requires an organiser to book the space, announce the meeting and offer topics for discussion
- Lunch sessions for discussion in a language agreed in advance (e.g., Finnish, Swedish, English)
- A table in the breakroom or lunch cafeteria for Finnish, Swedish or another language, where you can sit when you want to learn the language or support others in learning it
- Meetings for smaller groups to practise different languages
- Daily discussions conducted flexibly in multiple languages
  - For example, you can converse in two languages that both participants understand, or use several languages in the same conversation or sentence.
- Compliance even in informal conversations with the principles of language-aware safer spaces

### Language learners can also steer the conversation

- Participation in informal meetings is also possible by listening only. Whenever possible, let others know if you wish to participate by listening only.



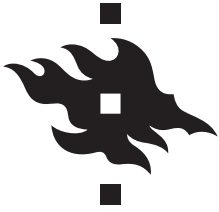
- Do not hesitate to say if you do not understand something and ask your partners in conversation to explain or switch into another language.
- Join in the discussion by asking, in the language you wish to use in the discussion, for example, “*Can I join – what are we talking about?*” or “*What’s up?*” / “*Voinko tulla mukaan, mistä me keskustellaan?*” tai “*Mitä kuuluu?*” / “*Kan jag delta, vad ska vi prata om?*” eller “*Hur mår du?*”
- Let the others know if you wish to learn a language in the discussion. You can also describe your own level of proficiency in the language.
- A reciprocal approach can be applied to situations that promote language use: one meeting will be held in Finnish, another in, for example, Italian or Chinese. Reciprocity can make it easier to get involved.

## EVENTS

### Organising events in parallel languages

- A) Survey the participants in advance and, when necessary, determine their language skills at the time of registration, for example, by asking “*What languages are you able to use in the event?*” and “*In what languages can you follow the event?*”
  - B) If you are unable to survey the language expectations of the participants, let them know in advance the languages to be used in the event and how the languages will be used, for example:
    - “*The languages of the event are Finnish and English: slides, presentation and discussion in Finnish and English.*”
    - “*The languages of the event are Swedish and Finnish: slides in Finnish and presentation in Swedish. You can take part in the discussion in Swedish and Finnish.*”
    - Please always remember to announce if there are small group discussions at the event, and the languages to be used in them.
- Reserve enough time for organising the event in parallel languages, for example, by extending its duration or reducing topics.
  - Prepare the material in parallel languages so that everyone gets the necessary information and feels included. You can also consider in advance using parallel languages in presentations.
    - Each slide should contain the same information in two languages: Finnish or Swedish and English. This too promotes language learning!
  - Start the event by describing the principles for language-aware safer spaces, especially if the event includes discussion.
  - Ask for feedback on the language practices of the event.

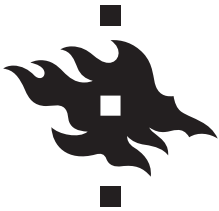




## Organising events that support language learning

- Inform the participants in advance of the language(s) of the event and how they will be used. Also indicate that one of the goals of the event is to encourage language use.
  - Example: *“The event is also intended to encourage the use of the Finnish language. Particular attention will be paid to clear Finnish language in the event presentation. The slides are in English and Finnish. The languages of the discussion are Finnish and English.”*
- At the beginning of the event, describe the language and other practices of the event. Safe events encourage participation.
  - For example, you can first review the principles for language-aware safer spaces.
- Translate keywords into at least two languages and distribute them as handouts on participants’ tables or electronically to participants.
- Reserve enough time for organising the event in support of language learning, for example, by extending its duration or reducing topics.
- Reserve enough time for questions and encourage participants to ask if they do not understand something. Let them know that questions are welcome in languages other than the language of the presentation.
- Ask for feedback on the language practices of the event.





## MEETINGS

Including team meetings, work meetings, meetings of student organisations and the Student Union

### As the person convening or chairing the meeting

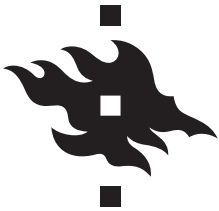
- If possible, survey the participants in advance and determine their language skills at the time of registration, for example, by asking “*What languages are you able to use in the event?*” and “*In what languages can you follow the event?*”
- The meeting invitation should state the language practices of the meeting. Example: “*Language practices are set by the convener or chair of the meeting at the beginning of the meeting so that all participants have the opportunity to take part in the meeting in full.*”
- Describe the language practices at the beginning of the meeting.
- During the meeting, make sure these practices are observed, for example, by sensitively redirecting the discussion back to the agreed language. This can be done, for instance, by translating or requesting a translation of the key points of the previous contribution.
- Make sure that the items in the agenda are discussed so that all participants understand the entries and decisions, regardless of the language(s) used in the meeting. During the meeting, you can ask at intervals whether everyone has understood everything, and encourage the participants themselves to speak up if something remains unclear.
- Have the materials translated into the required languages.
- Ask for feedback on the language practices of the session.

### As a participant

- You may ask the person who sent the meeting invitation about the language practices. Example: “*What is your meeting language?*” or “*What languages can be used in the meeting?*”
- Do not hesitate to ask if you do not understand someone’s contribution.
- You can use languages flexibly, for example, by saying in your own first language words you don’t know in another language. Also do not hesitate to ask for help in translating.

### Meetings in parallel languages – Meeting conveners

- Reserve enough time for organising the meeting in parallel languages, for example, by extending its duration or reducing topics. Always inform the participants in advance of the language(s) of the meeting.
- If possible, send the meeting agenda in advance in the relevant languages.
- If possible, send a list of keywords in the relevant languages, or print out the list for the meeting participants.
- Start the meeting by describing the principles for language-aware safer spaces, especially if the event includes discussion in small groups.



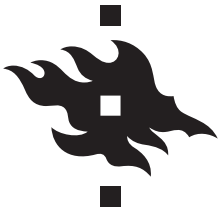
- Use and encourage others to use simple language.
- You can determine the use of parallel languages in meetings on the basis of need. For example, discuss the items that require the expertise of the meeting participants in a language that everyone understands, while presenting lighter topics in Finnish or Swedish.
- Since discussing the items in several languages may often frustrate participants, you can prepare slides in two languages and speak only in one language, or choose the language according to the topic.
- Written meeting material must be available in the relevant languages.

## TEAMS AND STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

- The multilingual practices of teams and student organisations require discussion on the expectations and challenges of language use. This is to avoid assumptions about the expectations and views of others.
- The benefits of discussing language practices include the following:
  - Jointly agreed language practices make people more committed to the activities.
  - It is easier to attend meetings when the language issue has been discussed and shared practices agreed.
  - Such practices make it easier to communicate about the emotions and mental resources associated with learning a language. Example: “*I’m too tired today to speak Finnish*” and “*Today I’m inspired to learn English. Please correct me if I say something funny.*”
  - Learning a language becomes easier when the environment is safe for learning.

### Work communities

- Address the language issue: one-on-one discussions initiated by supervisors, including target and development discussions. You can ask
  - *In which languages are you able to fully contribute to the team?*
  - *In which language(s) can you follow, for example, team meetings?*
  - *What are your expectations for learning Finnish/Swedish/English/another language?*
  - *How much working time do you spend on multilingual practices, such as language learning or translation tasks?*
- Supervisors must listen to the wishes of all members of their teams pertaining to languages and language use.
- Supervisors are obliged to initiate discussion on language practices. However, team members can also take the initiative and request such a discussion.



- Together with the team, review the principles for language-aware safer spaces.
- The team can conclude a [language agreement](#), an arrangement geared to the needs of each work community and designed to support the use and learning of Finnish or Swedish. The language agreement can also be concluded between two individuals.
- At regular intervals, collect feedback on the team's realisation of good language practices.
- Supervisors should describe the significance of proficiency in the local languages, Finnish and Swedish, for career advancement and job opportunities.

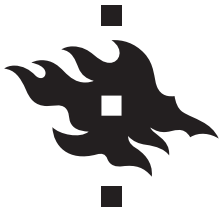
### Student organisations

- Address the language issue: in the first meeting, discuss the language practices of your organisation and agree on common practices. You can discuss, for example, the following questions:
  - *In which languages are you able to fully contribute to the organisation?*
  - *In which languages can you follow meetings even if you are unable to take part in the discussion?*
  - *What are your expectations for learning Finnish/Swedish/English?*
- Together with the board of the organisation, review the principles for language-aware safer spaces. Apply the principles also to members of the organisation.
- At regular intervals, collect feedback on the organisation's realisation of good language practices. Be prepared to amend these practices, depending on who is active in your organisation.

### Supported language learning in teams and student organisations

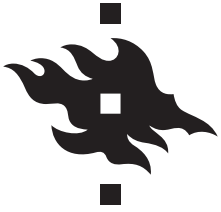
- Examples of practices that support language learning
  - Weekly coffee breaks in Finnish/Swedish/English.
  - Appointing a language mentor with working hours allocated to supporting those who do not speak Finnish or Swedish, for example, by translating the main points of meetings or discussions.
  - Parallel language use according to need: discussion on lighter topics, for example, in Finnish or Swedish, with topics requiring expertise discussed in a language that everyone understands.
  - Languages can be used flexibly, for example, by using two or more languages in parallel in discussion.





## DEGREE PROGRAMME COMMUNITIES

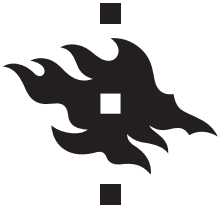
- The multilingual practices of degree programme communities require discussion on the expectations and challenges of language use. This is to avoid assumptions about the expectations and views of others.
  - Various teaching solutions that make it possible to use several languages should be discussed in degree programme steering groups whenever possible.
  - Feedback is collected from teachers and students of multilingual offerings to monitor needs and to develop teaching.
  - The principles of language-aware safer spaces are communicated to everyone.
- The language practices of degree programme meetings and lectures must always be communicated to the participants in advance.
- The benefits of discussing language practices include the following:
  - Jointly agreed language practices in degree programmes make people committed to the operations.
  - It is easier to attend meetings open to everyone in the degree programme or meetings for specific groups when the language issue has been discussed and shared practices agreed.
  - Such practices make it easier to communicate about the emotions and mental resources associated with learning a language, which can vary from one day – or even one hour – to the next.
  - Learning a language becomes easier when the environment is safe for learning.



## GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

- The multilingual practices of groups require discussion on the expectations and challenges of language use. This is to avoid assumptions about the expectations and views of others. For example, you can agree on language use with the help of these questions.
  - *In which languages can you contribute to the assignment?*
  - *What expectations do group members have for learning Finnish/Swedish/English?*
- You can apply the principles for language-aware safer spaces in communication.
- Group assignments can be completed using two or more languages in parallel.
- Make sure that communication and written material are produced in a language that everyone understands.
- The benefits of discussing language practices include the following:
  - It is easier to attend group meetings when the language issue has been discussed and shared practices agreed.
  - Such practices make it easier to communicate about the emotions and mental resources associated with learning a language. Example: *“I’m too tired today to speak Finnish”* and *“Today I’m inspired to learn English. Please correct me if I say something funny.”*
  - Learning a language becomes easier when the environment is safe for learning.





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## LECTURES

### Lecturers

- Teaching should be designed with the understanding that the language of instruction is not necessarily the strongest language of all students.
- At the first lecture, discuss with students the emotions associated with using the language.
- Encourage participation regardless of language skills, for example, by offering the option to say words in another language if students do not know them in the language of instruction. You can also translate certain terms yourself or ask a student to help.
- During the lecture, ask several times whether students have understood everything.
- Read more about language awareness in teaching on the [Instructions for Teachers website](#).

### Students

- Bear in mind that the language of instruction is not necessarily your first language. In other words, be compassionate towards yourself when using the language at lectures.
- Please note that the language of instruction is not necessarily the first language of your teacher. In other words, be compassionate towards their language skills.
- Take part by using several languages in parallel. You can request support from your fellow students or lecturers if you don't know or remember a word.
- Do not hesitate to ask if you do not understand something.



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## LINKS IN SUPPORT OF BUILDING A MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITY

### Work communities

[A language agreement](#) is an arrangement geared to the needs of each work community and designed to support the use and learning of Finnish.

The [steps towards language awareness in the workplace](#) provide tools for multilingual work communities for solving language issues.

Tools for effective multilingual work practices in the work community are available on the [Kielibuusti website](#).

[Monikielisen työyhteisön opas](#) ('Manual for a multilingual work community', in Finnish only)

Tips for organising multilingual events are available on the Kielibuusti [LinkedIn page](#).

The mobile app [WordDive](#) supports the Finnish language studies of staff.

[Language training for staff](#) (Finnish, Swedish, English)

[UniBuddy](#) helps new international employees acclimatise to Finland.

### Student communities

[Finnish-language courses for degree and exchange students](#)

[Bilingual degrees \(Finnish and Swedish\)](#)

App tips for advanced Finnish-language students on the [Kielibuusti website](#) (in Finnish only)

The [steps towards language awareness in the workplace](#) can be followed, as appropriate, by student organisations, among others. The steps provide tools for multilingual communities for solving language issues.

### Guidelines for plain language

[How to speak plain language in Finnish](#)

[How to write plain language in Finnish](#)

[How to speak plain language in Swedish](#)

[How to write plain language in Swedish](#)

[How to speak plain language in English](#)

[How to write plain language in English](#)

These guidelines were drawn up by a working group composed of staff and students: Leena Evesti, Esko Koponen, Johanna Komppa, Salla Kurhila, Tuomas Leikkonen, Harriet Lindberg-Saapunki, Sini Saarenheimo, Janika Sistonen, Alec Thurnham, Eugenie Touma van der Meulen, Stinne Vognæs and Farnaz Farahdel.

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