

JYVÄSKYLÄ UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE POLICY

The aims and objectives of the Jyväskylä University Language Policy are founded on the overall strategy of the University and on the Finnish Universities Act. The Language Policy is concerned with all activity related to language and language use at the University and to language education provided by the University.

In this Language Policy, language is seen functionally from the language user's viewpoint. Knowing a language refers to the ability to use a language - the mother tongue and one or more non-native languages - communicatively for various purposes in different kinds of contexts and environments.

Internationalisation and its increased impetus together with the objectives of the educational and research policies of the European Union call for more attention to the teaching of language and communication skills in the sphere of higher education. For the teaching of language and communication, new demands also emerge through increased multilingualism and multiculturalism in society and higher education and through the development of information and communication technology, which will have its impact on the implementation of the University Language Policy.

The University is responsible for the education of experts for various functions in society who are communicatively competent and are aware of their responsibility for the way language is used. Communicatively competent experts know how to use the Finnish language appropriately both in speech and in writing. They master the language of their own professional and research field, and they also know how to transfer information to experts in other fields and to people outside the academic world. When carrying out their professional duties, they can use at least one non-native language competently in speech and in writing.

Language competence is one of the basic competences of academically trained persons. In addition to language and communication skills, language education at the University also aims at illuminating language's importance as an integral element of students' future activities in their field. Increased language awareness is therefore an important constituent in all degree programmes. Since knowledge is constructed and processed through language, all university teachers are also language teachers. When engaged in teaching, assessment, and tutoring, every teacher who feels responsible for his or her own field pays attention to the interrelationship between subject matter and linguistic expression.

Students are also themselves responsible for the development of their competence in the mother tongue and other languages. Without students sharing the responsibility for language learning, for learning to learn, and for self-evaluation of the competence acquired, learning of languages cannot achieve good results. The University will provide a range of resources for autonomous development of language skills.

The University develops language programmes in view of academic workplace requirements and changes in them. The University will also make an effort to promote national language policy, language education policy, and language planning in accordance with developments at home and abroad. The University will participate in European and other international collaboration to promote language policy and language programmes in the area of higher education.

The University of Jyväskylä will foster the Finnish language and its use. The University lays stress on the importance of the mother tongue for human growth, development, and learning. A good command of the mother tongue and an awareness of the importance of the mother tongue are important ingredients of high-level academic expertise and are also a foundation for the learning of foreign languages.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Language of teaching and research

The University will encourage good use of the Finnish language by teachers and tutors by calling attention to good practices and by providing training in pedagogical communication. Versatile communicative competence in the mother tongue and non-native languages will be given an important position in all pedagogical training in the area of higher education. Special attention will be paid to the way in which language is used in texts produced by and for students, such as papers and reports by students, study guides, and syllabuses.

The University will exploit its inherent multiculturalism for the purposes of internationalisation and the strengthening of its language resources. Members of the academic community who have come from abroad will make it possible to create natural situations of internationalisation in the domestic context.

Language education for bachelors' and masters' degrees will be planned and implemented jointly by the faculties, departments, and Language Centre. When planning and endorsing the syllabuses, the faculties and departments have to ensure

the appropriation of the resources necessary for their implementation. The study plans of individual students will have to include plans for language and communication studies.

The prerequisite for language education offered for all students is that the students admitted to the University have a good command of writing skills in the mother tongue, good basic skills in Swedish, and a good command of at least one foreign language. Good multiple language competence can be taken into account as a criterion when new students are admitted to the University.

The University will offer education which, irrespective of the field concerned, will make provision for the needs of internationalisation. Graduates will be able to serve successfully in the international labour market and in multicultural working environments and will be able to develop their language skills purposefully.

Promotion of language and communication skills is an integral element in all degree programmes. It is not possible to make a distinction between the language and communication skills and the substance of individual degree programmes; this is the reason why the teaching of language and communication skills will be linked up with the process of students' academic socialisation and development of expertise from the very beginning of studies. New learning environments will be exploited to develop flexible models of training and education in language and communication skills which will meet the requirements of the advancing progression of studies and expectations of needs in the future labour market. The impact of the new degree and examinations system on different levels of education will be taken into account in the planning of language and communication courses.

Advanced language and communication skills involve both academic skills and various professional discourse skills. In addition to language and communication skills, students will also be made aware and informed about the meaning of language, language use, and communication, ways in which language is embedded in culture, language learning, and their own strengths and weaknesses as well as future developments in this field.

Students will be made aware of the importance of a good command of the mother tongue for the acquisition and production of knowledge and for personal growth and development. In addition to the courses relating to the mother tongue, they will be expected to give evidence of their mother tongue competence in communicative tasks of various kinds throughout their study careers at the University.

The University seeks to expand the foreign language competence of the students in terms of the idea of plurilingualism expressed in the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching, and Assessment as developed by the Council of Europe. Since English is not enough to meet the needs of foreign language competence for academically trained Finns, the University will make it possible for students to expand their foreign language skills in other languages.

Language degree programmes and teacher education

The training and education of language experts will be developed in the Department of Languages jointly by different language subjects. The Language Centre, the Centre for Applied Language Studies and, as far as the pedagogical studies of language teacher trainees are concerned, the Teacher Education Department also take part in the planning and development of the programmes.

The planning of the programmes of language subjects will be founded on the common scientific and research basis of the subjects and on the principles of plurilingualism expressed by the Council of Europe. Transparent aims and objectives will be spelled out for language proficiency courses.

The programmes in language subjects (for language teachers and language experts) will include an integrated component of credits (studies, practical training, or work placement of some other kind) to be obtained in an area where the language concerned is spoken.

The education of language teachers will be planned jointly by the Department of Languages, the Teacher Education Department, and the University Normal (Training) School.

In all teacher education, special attention will be paid to the importance of language, and the mother tongue in particular, as an instrument for intellectual growth and learning. The role of writing skills and language knowledge will be strengthened in the education of comprehensive school teachers.

Teacher education will conform to the requirements of Finland becoming more multicultural and multilingual so that graduating teachers will be able to take on responsibility for the education of pupils whose home language is other than Finnish and who are taught different subjects in different languages. The teaching of and research into sign language will be developed.

Teaching in a foreign language

A teacher can be allowed to give instruction in a language other than his or her mother tongue only if he or she has a command of the language of instruction sufficient for the use of flexible interactive teaching methods. In practice this can be considered a recommendation to require the second highest level along the six-level grading scale. In addition to having a good language competence, teachers who give instruction in programmes where all the instruction is in a language other than Finnish have to be able to teach and tutor multicultural and linguistically heterogeneous groups, and they have to be given opportunity to develop their language and communication skills.

Only candidates who have been able to give evidence of having a sufficient competence in the language of instruction will be admitted to programmes in which the language of instruction is other than Finnish. Such proof is not required of exchange students who want to participate in individual courses.

Programmes taught in languages other than Finnish will have to have relevance for both Finnish and foreign students. Sufficient scope will be given in the programmes for the development of language and communication skills. Foreign teachers will be informed about the programmes as a whole, for them to be able to adjust their part of the teaching to them.

When tuition forming part of a syllabus is given in a language other than Finnish, it is not necessary to offer the same tuition in Finnish. Students have the right, however, to take examinations and perform writing tasks in Finnish unless they make part of programmes in which language skills are an integral part of studies (e.g. masters' programmes taught in languages other than Finnish). When instruction is in a language other than Finnish, particular care will be taken that Finnish students acquire the relevant concepts and terminology in Finnish also.

Language assessment

The Faculties and the Language Centre will jointly develop uniform criteria for the evaluation of the Maturity Examinations. These criteria will also specify how the grading for the content and for the mother tongue skills are integrated. For the evaluation of the mother tongue, the Faculties and the Language Centre will work out the criteria for good learned and scholarly texts as well as for the written mother tongue competence required for degree.

The assessment of foreign language competence will be based on the principles of assessment criteria of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching, and Assessment, to the effect that the assessments by the Language Centre and those by the Department of Languages will be derived, where applicable, from a common understanding of the language skills required at each level of language competence.

Foreign students

The principle of linguistic diversity as adopted by the European community requires that the University give its foreign students - both exchange students and degree students - good opportunities to study the Finnish language and to acquaint themselves with Finnish culture. Similarly, the language and cultural resources of foreign students will be tapped in teaching and the development of skills and competence required abroad.

Foreign students who are admitted to do full Finnish degrees will be given a chance to carry out studies of the Finnish language at the beginning of their studies to the extent that they will be able to attain a level of competence in Finnish necessary for participation in programmes taught in Finnish.

Foreign students entering masters' programmes taught in languages other than Finnish will be obliged to give evidence of their language competence by reference to credits from a language test acknowledged internationally. Foreign students will be given training which will orientate them towards learning in a foreign language and academic practices.

Exchange programmes

Students who are planning to participate in exchange programmes will be given relevant language and orientation courses. A basic requirement is that they have the language skills necessary for studies in the target country.

To make student mobility possible in countries other than the English-speaking ones, the University will provide students with opportunities to learn, maintain, and broaden competence also in other languages. This is particularly valuable for students who wish to enter the international labour market.

Graduate programmes and publication of research results

Internationalisation of graduate training is one of the challenges for Finnish higher education. Graduate students and young research workers have to have such academic language and communication skills that international networking and publishing in languages other than Finnish are possible. This means that language and communications skills will have to be developed throughout study careers.

Research results will be published in international languages as appropriate. It is also important to publish them in Finnish to maintain research and scientific traditions in the Finnish language.

Postgraduate students and members of the research staff will be given an opportunity to participate in discipline-based courses in science communication in Finnish and English, and also in other languages, if necessary.

Authors of publications are primarily responsible for the quality of language in their publications. Faculties and departments will, if possible, support the translation of publications and the checking of the language in them.

The editors of the series published by the University will share the responsibility for the quality of language in publications in the series.

Staff language competence and language education for the staff

The official language of the University is Finnish. Everybody has the right however, when taking care of personal issues, to use either Finnish or Swedish and to receive the relevant documentation in the language they have used. Administrative units are responsible for there being staff members with sufficient competence in Swedish.

When new staff is recruited, attention will be paid to their competence to take care of professional duties in English or another international language. This can be considered an additional qualification for appointment.

The University will provide its staff with supplementary and brush-up language training in the mother tongue and in foreign languages and will give the staff opportunities for independent language learning.

Information material, information on the web, sign posting

Suppliers of information material, brochures, and information available on the web are responsible for the language and layout of the material. If considered necessary, it is to be checked by competent experts.

All administrative units within the University have Finnish web pages of their own. In addition to the Finnish web pages, the University also has web pages in English which contain an appropriate selection of material from the Finnish pages.

The sign posting on campus will be updated in accordance with plans drawn by the PR and Information Unit and the University Facilities Unit.

Finnish signs will be supplemented with signs in English.

Follow-up

The University will appoint a Language Policy Committee for a set period. The Committee will observe the implementation of the University Language Policy and make recommendations for the implementation of language political objectives. The Committee is also responsible for promoting collaboration and integration of activities between various administrative units in the area of languages. The members of the Committee represent all administrative units responsible for language education and other units giving instruction, administrative staff, and the Student Union.

The Language Policy will be revised when considered necessary, at least every three years.

This Language Policy was adopted by the Senate of the University of Jyväskylä on 6 October, 2004.

