



aalto-yliopiston ylioppilaskunta
aalto-universitetets studentkår
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AYY's Language Policy

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I Introduction: The 'what, why and who' of AYY's language policy

What?

The language policy for inclusion is a roadmap to inclusive language usage for the Aalto community. Its purpose is to empower Aalto community members to use language to include other members of the community. This document is in line with AYY's values, policy and strategy, and it is also intended to be in line with the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion plan.

The language policy defines inclusion as being able to participate within one's chosen community regardless of one's personal characteristics, such as ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, disability, age, religious affiliation, and political opinion.

Why?

AYY is committed to addressing structural inequalities. Through language, structural inequalities are manifested and perpetuated. By changing how we use language, we draw attention to and challenge the structure.

Who?

This document is applicable to the representative council, volunteers, board, and staff of AYY. The language policy is based on recommendations by AYY's community for inclusive language.

2 Contexts of language use and policy

This section describes the contexts in which language is used, and what practices should be used for the inclusion of diverse students.

2.1 Official written documents and events

According to the Universities Act & the AYY constitution, the official administrative languages of AYY are Finnish and Swedish. English is also an official language of communication according to the AYY constitution.

2.1.1 Official documents

Official documents are usually translated to three languages: Finnish, Swedish and English. A document is considered official documentation and thus should be sent for translation if

- a) it will be accessed for the foreseeable future, *and/or*
- b) it contains information that is relevant or necessary to a multilingual audience

Examples of official documents published by AYY are, amongst others:

- announcements, statements and blog posts on the website and social media
- informative webpage contents
- regulatory documents that are publicly available, such as policy and strategy

- AYY website publications
- agenda and records of decision-making in the representative council

Such documents should be available, coherent, and current in all three languages. In some cases, it is possible to apply discretion and translate only headings and main points.

2.1.2 *Official events*

Official events are events that represent AYY as an organization to the entire student community, and should, in principle be at least bilingual, and trilingual¹ if required and possible. If interpretation or live subtitling is used, the main point is for inclusion of participants to be systematically considered, not necessarily that trilingualism must be achieved at all costs.

Events that are officially organized by AYY for all members include

- meetings of the representative council
- the AYY annual ball
- official training events organized by AYY

2.2 **Semiformal and informal written communication and interactions**

In communications that do not meet the criteria for formal interpretation and translation, it is important to assess the intended audience and be linguistically flexible.

Linguistic flexibility in communication at AYY allows for 'translanguaging,' or, in short, flexible mixing of languages. In practice, this means:

- utilization of personal linguistic resources (e.g., spoken and written language, metalinguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge etc.) to ease communication
- flexibly switching between languages as needed for the purposes of smooth communication
- asking colleagues for help with language version creation and proof-reading
- using linguistic resources to ensure everyone present understands proceedings and can participate
- persons that may not be present but may later have an interest in the interactions are taken into consideration.

¹ Simultaneous interpretation is the most common form in conference and decision-making contexts, and it is also the most expensive. It is not, however, the only form available. For example, in a small meeting or discussion, the use of consecutive interpreting may be more appropriate. In festive events, a community interpreter or cultural interpreter may fill the need. In the latter case, this is possible to fulfill by assigning a peer or volunteer to the task.

To facilitate this, AYY maintains an operational culture where participants feel comfortable asking when they do not understand and apply kindness and compassion when interpreting meaning in interaction. AYY also develops tools in collaboration with minorities that allows community members to communicate inclusively.

2.2.1 *Semiformal and informal written communication*

Though the text does not meet requirements for formal translation, this does not exclude the possibility of requesting a professional translation, if deemed necessary. However, these translations do not take priority. These texts are primarily translated by oneself and with the help of colleagues.

Communication that is semiformal and informal includes texts such as

- event invitations
- sign-up forms
- blog posts that target only one language group
- emails
- teams communications
- office presentations

2.2.2 *Semiformal and informal spoken interaction*

In semiformal and informal spoken interactions, the goal is inclusion of all who are present.

Interaction that is semiformal and informal includes

- events
- meetings
- hallway and kitchen discussions

2.3 **Official public spaces and signage**

Information is available in three languages. The order of languages is either randomized, or if known, selected by order of language that will reach the target audience most effectively.

2.4 **Volunteers**

Volunteers commit to AYY's values, policy, strategy, and mission; thus, they are to be given training in these areas, and in AYY's language policy.

2.5 **Associations**

AYY provides training and consultation in intercultural communication, making basic translations, and peer interpretation.

3 Internal review

The elements of diversity and inclusion are not static, and language also changes over time. The needs of students evolve, and thus, a policy that is inclusive and centered on the needs of students must also have a mechanism to interpret the policy in a manner which is current and informed by students.

AYY will work with the community's minorities and international representatives and collaborate with Aalto to convene a panel of students identifying as members of minorities to review its own inclusive practices, or 'minority panel.' The function of the panel is to develop and evaluate inclusive practices.

The panel, which convenes at least every other year in the Autumn, can propose strategic actions changes to the language policy. The minority panel is also involved in developing tools to increase inclusion.

AYY's staff member in charge of equality is responsible for the coordination of the minority panel.

The representative council will decide on changes to this document.