

Language Principles of the Student Union of Tampere University

Towards a truly international university community

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1. Introduction

To ensure equal footing for all Student Union members, the activities and communications of TREY and the associations operating within it, as well as the services and supervision of interests provided by them, must also be accessible to those whose working and communication language is not Finnish. This document describes the Student Union's practices regarding how different languages are wanted to be used in different situations. The aim is that those operating within the Student Union could more easily take different language groups into account in their activities and work appropriately in regard to them. The document functions as a guideline in the realisation of the Student Union's internal multilingualism. Moreover, it sets the goals and draft measures for what is wanted from the University's multilingualism.

Many of the goals listed in this document are difficult to reach within a short period of time, such as in the span of a year of the Executive Board being in office. The purpose of the language principle document is to support the planning of

International Affairs' activities and the fulfilment of the goals over the next three years. The document will be updated again in 2025.

In this document, bilingualism refers to the use of Finnish and English.

Multilingualism, on the other hand, refers to the use of multiple different languages in the community.

1.1. Current situation

Out of the 18,000 students at Tampere University, approximately a thousand are exchange students, depending on the year, and approximately 1,300 are international degree students. The language of the University is specified in the Universities Act. Finnish is the sole official language of the University and the Student Union, although many of the students and staff in the university community use English as their language of communication.

The Student Union has developed the bilingualism of its own activities in the Council, for example. All of TREY's guideline documents are available in both Finnish and English. TREY's communication channels are bilingual. The Council's meetings are interpreted in Finnish or English if necessary.

However, international students still have rather limited opportunities to participate in the decision-making, discussion, and various kinds of activities in the university community without knowledge of Finnish. International students are considerably underrepresented in the Council. Likewise, international students are underrepresented in halloped (student representative) positions because they require knowledge of Finnish. The associations within the student union operate in Finnish for the most part. TREY provides association actives with training mainly in Finnish.

The latest Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government (2021) sets the goal of tripling the number of new international degree students at higher education institutions by 2030. There is great pressure on the university community to become more international. The internationalisation of Tampere University also results in more and more international students becoming members of TREY. TREY has to respond to the needs of the higher education community, which is becoming increasingly international, and ensure that international students get to be part of the Student Union and the university community.

In spring 2021, TREY carried out a survey on language principles, in which members of TREY were asked to share their views on the multilingualism and internationalism of TREY and the University of Tampere. The survey received 410 replies. The survey revealed that students view multilingualism as an important asset to the university

community. The respondents wished for improvements in the opportunities to study different languages, clarity of communication and understandability in multiple languages, as well as the creation of a sense of community between international and Finnish students. The responses also brought up the challenges international students have faced while trying to participate in the activities of the University and TREY in English.

1.2. Central values

TREY's strategy defines a vision of a student community in Tampere that everyone wants to and feels they belong to - all the way from fresher to alumnus. In order to achieve this vision, it is crucial that each student has an equal opportunity to be part of the Student Union regardless of their understanding of Finnish. Bilingualism plays a central role in the achievement of a truly international university community.

Internationalism and bilingualism are an important strength and resource for the whole university community. The Student Union's bilingualism is seen in a positive light, and its necessity in the equal treatment of its members is understood.

The language principles further the operation of TREY as an equal, communal, open and responsible student union in which the student is at the heart of everything.

2. Internal objectives of the Student Union

The long-term objective of the Student Union of Tampere University is that the students, associations, and the Student Union's office form a close international community where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in activities and express themselves. TREY is a strong operator that encourages internationalism and whose support can be counted on.

2.1. Employees, the Executive Board and the Council of

Representatives

Objective: People using Finnish and English alike as working languages can comfortably work in TREY's office.

Actions: The capacities for working bilingually in the office are developed and maintained. The rules of the office are discussed annually, and bilingual working is discussed if appropriate. Documentation of the Student Union's activities is

translated into English. The adequate language skills for each job are defined in the recruitment processes. Applications are hoped for from people from different language backgrounds.

Responsibility: Main sector

Objective: International students can apply for the Council of Representatives and work as members of the Council with ease.

Actions: Information on representative elections and the Council's actions is communicated bilingually and with high quality. International students have access to sufficient information on the Council. The internal culture of discussion in the Council is examined. International students are asked for feedback and proposals for improvements on the Council's actions.

The amount and necessity of the material meant to be translated is examined every year. Based on the examination, decisions are made on the conduct regarding the material to be translated each year.

Responsibility: Main sector

2.2. Associations and member services

Objective: TREY encourages the associations operating under it to communicate bilingually and to enable bilingual participation in their activities.

Actions: TREY provides associations with training on bilingualism and brings them together to discuss and share good practices on bilingualism. TREY works as an example of bilingual activities.

Responsibility: Association sector, communications sector, international affairs sector

Objective: TREY's trainings reach more international students and association actives.

Actions: TREY offers more trainings and more diversely in English as well. The possibility of interpreting at, for example, Associations' Kick-off is examined.

Responsibility: Association sector

Objective: TREY's members receive service in Finnish and English via phone and email and in the service offices. All information on member services is available in both Finnish and English.

Actions: Member service workers put effort into the understandability of the guideline translations and the fluency of customer service in both Finnish and English.

Responsibility: Member services

Objective: The activities of TREY's working groups are open and inviting to everyone regardless of language background.

Actions: Both Finnish and English are used seamlessly in working group meetings. The communication related to working groups and the materials produced for meetings are bilingual whenever appropriate.

Responsibility: Every sector with its own working group

2.3. Tutoring

Objective: TREY provides its members with training and services regarding calls for tutors, tutor training and tutoring in Finnish and English. TREY offers high-quality

international tutoring in English and strengthens the role of international tutoring in the university community.

Actions: The tutoring sector communicates bilingually and on time, building a multilingual community from its side. Tutors are instructed to use English as the language of communication in tutoring. The role of international tutoring is strengthened as part of the university's working groups and in conjunction with Hovi, the working group of tutoring organisers.

Responsibility: Tutoring sector

2.4. Events

Objective: The Student Union's events can be attended comfortably regardless of language background.

Actions: Models for the promotion of interaction between Finnish and international students are created. Communication on events is provided and feedback is collected bilingually every time.

Responsibility: Event sector; other sectors organising events

2.5. Communication

Objective: The Student Union's communication is always bilingual. The communication is simultaneous and of equally high quality in both languages. The bilingualism of TREY's communication is well-resourced, and TREY's operators are appropriately trained.

Actions: TREY's operators take bilingualism into account in the planning and execution of all communication. TREY's operators are annually instructed on communication and the principles of its bilingualism. TREY's translation work is well-resourced so that the communication can be simultaneous and of high quality in Finnish and English. TREY's operators reserve enough time for translation work to ensure the quality of the translation.

Responsibility: Communications sector; every sector communicating outwards

2.6. Advocacy

Objective: TREY's Executive Board and employees know the central challenges related to bilingualism faced by their respective sectors and interest groups.

Actions: TREY provides its operators with training on how to recognise the challenges of bilingualism in their own sectors. The sector testaments given to new members of the Board include a section on bilingualism.

Responsibility: Every sector

Objective: All of our interest groups, such as Tampere University, the City of Tampere, SYL (National Union of University Students in Finland), YTHS (Finnish Student Health Service), TOAS (Tampere Student Housing Foundation) and Nyyti ry, invest into clear communication and bilingualism.

Actions: We encourage and spur all of our interest groups to bilingualism. We remind our interest groups of bilingual communication when needed.

Responsibility: Every sector cooperating with interest groups

Objective: Every operator in the university community can and is willing to engage in advocacy work for multilingualism.

Actions: Student representatives and Student Union actives receive training on multilingualism.

Responsibility: Every advocacy sector

3. Objectives concerning Tampere University

The Student Union promotes the following goals in its advocacy work with Tampere University:

- Tampere University provides high-quality education in multiple languages.
- The core vocabulary of the courses taught in other languages than Finnish is available in Finnish, which supports the role of Finnish as the language of science and helps international students learn the vocabularies of their own fields in Finnish. Correspondingly, the core vocabulary of the courses taught in Finnish is available in English.
- Tampere University bears responsibility for the national culture and the role of the national languages. Emphasis is placed on the status of the Finnish language as the language of science.
- The University recognises the value of minority languages (such as Karelian and Sámi) and the challenges faced by the users of those languages.
- The materials of the working groups and organs of Tampere University are also available in English and participation in their operations is enabled bilingually.
- The teaching staff are offered training in language-aware pedagogy, which supports the emergence of cross-linguistic interaction among the students.

- The teaching staff have the opportunity to receive comprehensive support to strengthen their knowledge of English. People without the sufficient capabilities are not obligated to offer teaching in English.
- The language used has to be understandable and easy to digest. Everything is expressed clearly.
- The "Finnish as a Foreign Language" studies are of high quality, and international students have the opportunity to study Finnish at least until the B2 level. The international staff are also offered the opportunity to study Finnish alongside work.
- The possibilities for completing courses are diverse, regardless of the language.
- Multilingualism is recognised as a source of richness and a valuable asset to the university community.
- In Tampere University, no assumptions are made regarding the language one uses based on their appearance or name.
- The communication of Tampere University is bilingual whenever appropriate. The communication in different languages is simultaneous, well-resourced and of high quality.

4. Monitoring

The implementation of the language principles is assessed annually alongside the semi-annual report. Every responsible sector named in Chapter 2 participates in the assessment. The assessment is conducted under the supervision of TREY's Specialist in International Affairs and others in charge of International Affairs on the Executive Board of the Student Union. In conjunction with the updating of the document, a report is written on the progress of the language principles on the whole every three years. The report will be delivered to the Council of Representatives and published on TREY's website. A survey on language principles will also be carried out alongside the updating process.

The Council, the Board and the Student Union's new employees will be instructed on the language principles.