

Language Policy
for
the IT University of Copenhagen



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Abstract

Since the IT University of Copenhagen is a Danish state institution and at the same time is an affirmatively globally interactive university with numerous non-Danish staff and partners, it needs to be able to operate adequately in both a Danish language context and an English language context. The purpose of this language policy is to describe how the university handles operating in those two language contexts - with the overall goal of ensuring consistency and best practice in regard to both language contexts and the numerous roles, functions and situations in which staff and students may find themselves.

This document was developed by the management of the IT University of Copenhagen, based on the recommendations of the language group (put forth in the document "LANGUAGE POLICY FOR THE IT UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN, *Suggestion from the Language Committee*", December 2010 version).

1 Respecting Diversity

ITU acts as a global university with an open, respectful, and forthcoming language practice. In general, employees and students at ITU are expected to be open, respectful, and forthcoming in their interactions with one another and with external partners. With regards to language, this includes recognising that ITU is a global university with employees, students, and stakeholders from all over the world, all of whom have different degrees of mastery of English, Danish, and other languages. It is therefore expected that

- All employees and students respect each other's proficiency levels and make an effort to communicate in a way that is as accommodating as possible, while keeping in mind that we will never all share one common language spoken in the same way to the same level of proficiency.
- When non-Danish speakers are present, or when communicating to/with an audience that may include non-Danish speakers, it is expected that those communicating switch to English.
- A prerequisite for such a policy is that all employees and students be open, forthcoming, and respectful towards the efforts of their colleagues and co-students, and actively help each other when facing communication challenges, questions, and problems.

2 Roles and Languages

The implication of the language policy for a student or an employee at the IT University depends on the role of the person in question.

The language policy distinguishes between the following roles:

- Student (not including PhD students)
- PhD student
- Untenured Faculty (e.g., assistant professors ("adjunkt"); external lecturers; visiting faculty; tutors and post docs)

- Tenured Faculty (“lektor”; “professor”)
- Leadership Roles (e.g., head of a department, a faculty group, or a study programme)
- Administration

Note that a person can hold more than one role at the same time.

Consider a language (here Danish or English). We say that a person can *function* in the language (or is *proficient* in the language) *with respect to* a role, if the person, if placed in a context where all communication takes place in that language, can carry out the normal tasks that are associated with the role. We say that a person can *function* in the language, if the person is able to function in the language with respect to all the roles that the person holds.

The language policy operates with a distinction between *required*, *expected* and *recommended* language proficiency.

For a role to *require* proficiency in the language means that one is not supposed to obtain that role unless one is proficient in the language with respect to the role.

For a role to come with an *expectation* of proficiency in the language means that it is possible to obtain that role, even if one is not proficient in the language with respect to that role, but that one is expected to acquire language proficiency with respect to the role (within an agreed time frame).

By contrast, a *recommendation* to become proficient in the language means that although it is in principle possible to avoid learning the language and still perform the normal tasks associated with the role, the University recommendation is that one can perform the tasks better, if one learns the language.

The language policy operates with two types of study programmes. The language of a study programme is said to be

- Danish, if all students admitted on the study programme are required to be proficient in Danish and English with respect to the student role;
- English, if all students admitted on the study programme are required to be proficient in English with respect to the student role, but are not required to be able to communicate in Danish.

For brevity, we refer to the two as Danish and English study programmes, respectively.

2.1 Students

Students enrolled on a Danish study programme must be able to function in Danish (regulations on the use of Scandinavian languages on the studies may be stipulated in the curricula) and English as students. In particular, a student on a Danish study programme is required to be able to read books and papers that exist in English (but do not exist in Danish), attend lectures in English and submit course work and project reports in English.

Students enrolled on an English study programme must be able to function in English as students. In particular, a student on an English study programme is required to be

able to read books and papers in English, attend lectures in English, and submit course work and project reports in English. Students enrolled on an English study programme can complete their studies without learning Danish, if they so prefer.

The language in which a project or thesis is submitted is determined before the project is begun and is part of the project agreement between students and supervisors associated with the project. If no agreement is made, the language of the study programme is assumed.

Students enrolled on a Danish study programme can choose to submit their thesis/final year project in Danish, even if their supervisor does not have Danish as his or her first language.

2.2 PhD students

For PhD students, the policy is the same as for students on English study programmes, unless the nature of the subject makes it important to write parts of a PhD thesis in Danish.

2.3 Untenured Faculty

By untenured faculty, we refer to a member of scientific staff whose employment contract is for a limited time period. Examples include assistant professors ("adjunkter"); external lecturers; visiting faculty; tutors and post docs.

The role of untenured faculty comes with an expectation of proficiency in English.

For assistant professors, learning Danish is recommended. For other untenured faculty, Danish may be recommended, depending on the particular job function.

2.4 Tenured Faculty

By tenured faculty we refer to a member of the scientific staff whose employment contract is for an unlimited period. Examples include associate professors; full professors and external lecturers employed for an unlimited period.

The role of tenured faculty comes with an expectation of proficiency in English.

Moreover, the role of tenured faculty comes with an expectation of proficiency in a Scandinavian language (Danish, Norwegian or Swedish).

2.5 Leadership Roles

By leadership roles we mean having roles such as head of a department; head of a faculty group; head of a study programme or head of a board of studies.

All roles of leadership come with an expectation of proficiency in English.

Moreover, all roles of leadership come with an expectation of proficiency in a Scandinavian language (Danish, Norwegian or Swedish).

2.6 Administration

All members of the administration are expected to be proficient in Danish and in English. The level of proficiency expected varies with the job in question (determined by the head of the relevant department).

3 Written Communication

3.1 Composing text

The following policy applies to choice of language of written communication produced by staff and students as part of their work or studies at the IT University. Written communication includes all forms of text, whether on-line, printed, email or other forms.

1. In the case of scientific publications, the author may choose whatever language he or she finds most suitable, including languages other than English and Danish.
2. In all other cases:
 - A. By default, documents should be composed in Danish or English, not both. In particular, operating with both a Danish and an English version of a document should be done very rarely and only after careful consideration, in order to avoid the overhead involved in producing and maintaining consistency of versions in more than one language.
 - B. Moreover, the language of the document should be English, if one or more of the intended readers of the document are not proficient in a Scandinavian language, according to the expectations defined in Section 2.

Here are some examples of the consequences of the above policy:

1. Emails composed at ITU to all ITU students (or all ITU staff) must be in English and in English only. Likewise, newsletters; notices to all students and staff and minutes of meetings that all employees are expected to read should be in English and in English only;
2. On English study programmes, all written material needed to apply; enrol; study and graduate must be available in English;
3. Danish is used in cases when the author and the intended readers all prefer Danish, for example when writing letters to the Ministry of Science and Technology, or when a group of Danish speakers work internally on something that only they need to read. Such uses of Danish are fine, even though there might also be employees or students who are not expected to be proficient in Danish who might find the document interesting.
4. Emergency instructions, some marketing materials and relevant parts of itu.dk content may very well need to be in both Danish and English.
5. Material posted on notice boards produced by students or staff at the IT University should be in English, unless they are only relevant for people who are proficient in Danish.

3.2 Handling Text Not Produced by the University

For many roles at the university, day-to-day work involves processing written information produced by people who are neither students nor staff at the university. Some of that information is in Danish; some of it is in English. The following policy applies:

Processing written information produced outside the university must respect the language expectations listed in Section 1.

Here are some examples of consequences of this policy:

1. A request or an invitation in English received from somebody outside the university can be forwarded (without translation into Danish) to any relevant group of students and staff for their consideration and action, since all roles assume the ability to function in English.
2. A request or an invitation in Danish received from somebody outside the university can be forwarded (without translation into English) to any relevant tenured faculty for his or her consideration and action, since tenured faculty are assumed to be able to function in Danish.
3. A text in Danish received from outside the university should preferably not be forwarded to all students or all employees. In cases where such messages are forwarded after all, they should be forwarded with a brief explanation to non-Danish speakers.

4 Spoken Language

The following policy applies to spoken communication at the IT University, including teaching sessions and scheduled meetings:

1. English should be chosen when at least one person present does not speak a Scandinavian language; otherwise Danish (or some other common language) is fine.

Examples of consequences of this policy:

1. In meetings where at least one person does not speak Danish (or is not yet comfortable understanding Danish), the meeting is conducted in English.
2. A lecture on an English study programme should be in English, if there is just one student present who does not understand a Scandinavian language.

5 Recruitment

Expectations concerning language proficiency should be made clear prior to appointment, so that the applicant knows what the university expects of the applicant and so that the university as employer knows to what extent the applicant satisfies the language expectations that come with the role in question.

In cases where appointment is made knowing that there is a gap between the expectations associated with the role and the current language proficiency of the preferred applicant, a plan should be agreed as to how the applicant will acquire the

expected language skills, if employed, within two years of employment. If no agreement is made, the expectation is in force from the day of employment.

6 Implementation

This language policy takes effect from June 9th 2011.

Importantly, employees who need an upgrade of their language skills in order to meet the language proficiency required of the roles they hold will be given opportunity and resources to do so. Courses in English as well as in Danish addressing the spectrum of proficiency levels among the staff will be made available and funded centrally; i.e. language courses will not depend on means being available within the budgets of individual departments. However, agreements concerning language training, course availability and timing should be made between employees and their immediate superior.

Some parts are implemented immediately after the language policy takes effect, such as Section 5.

Other parts will take longer time. In particular it should be recognised that:

1. Some members of staff may need time to develop their skills of Danish or English.
2. The translation of some materials from Danish into English may depend on the availability of internal resources and may be subject to the overall prioritization of tasks by managers of individual departments or heads of organisational units

Concerning translation from Danish into English, each organisational unit is responsible for deciding what parts of the information it provides need to be translated. Also, the unit is responsible for making a plan for the translation process.

The time frame for the implementation process should be three years. More precisely, as from June 9th 2014, all employees who have been employed for at least three years are expected to have the language skills described in this policy. Also, the materials that need to be translated in order to fulfil the language policy should be translated within that same time frame.

The Language Policy was adopted at the Co-operation- and Safety Board meeting on June 9th 2011.