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Date: 26-10-2024
Case no.: 2024-052-01089

Language Policy for Department of Computer Science, Aalborg University

Background

An inclusion survey in autumn 2022 showed that several international staff members at AAU did not feel included at the university. According to the study, language barriers in particular challenged inclusion. And to such an extent that one in five international academic staff expressed that they did not want to stay at AAU.

Language barriers are also a challenge at CS: The latest work environment evaluation (APV) from 2023 highlighted issues related to language diversity and communication within the department. Specifically, concerns were raised about the exclusive use of Danish instead of English, and instances of microaggressions related to language use. Additionally, there have been reports of meetings that begin in English but transition to Danish, which is perceived as exclusionary to non-Danish speakers.

According to the AAU Language Policy, Danish and English are to be treated as equally important communication languages. Furthermore, in email communications, English content should precede Danish.

Principles for Language Policy

- **Inclusive communication:** Employees should use language and communication methods that promote inclusion and understanding and avoid using language that excludes or discriminates.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Employees are encouraged to demonstrate understanding and respect for cultural differences in language and communication.
- **Language choice:** Both Danish and English are accepted as equal working languages for all employees. The choice of language should be determined by the appropriateness to the specific context.
- **Meetings:** It should be clearly stated in which language a meeting will be held, to ensure optimal preparation and participation for all parties.
- **Language training.** Courses in both Danish and English can be offered to employees whose language skills are lacking.
- **Minutes and other summaries from meetings** must be written in the language in which the meeting was held.

Note Regarding Translation Needs

As a general principle, minutes are written in the language in which the meeting is conducted. This approach promotes efficiency and responsible resource use.

If an employee needs to translate a minute or other documents from Danish to English, it is recommended to use AAU Translate, which uses intelligent machine translation, but also utilizes AAU's existing termbases and translation memory from Memsource (the software used by AAU's professional language consultants for their translation tasks).

The program is best suited for longer texts rather than individual words, as it requires the text to be uploaded or pasted. Once submitted, the translation will be returned via email.

AAU Translate can be accessed via staff.aau.dk/templates#communication-and-press.

The principles stated above take effect as of October 26, 2024. The principles are decided by Head of Department Peter Axel Nielsen after discussions in SAMU and coordination group.