



ISYY INTERNATIONALISATION GRANT 2024

Final Report

Name of the event/project: Language Café

Organiser(s): AEGEE-Joensuu Ry

Time period: Project planning period: 14.-26.11.2024, date of the Language Café: 26.11.2024

Budget

According to the initial project plan, the project was to be composed of two separate events. Due to reduced capacity of our board in the Autumn semester 2024, however, we were not able to implement both events and had to reduce the project to only Event 1 indicated in the project plan (*Event 1: Language Café*). For this reason, the final budget deviates from the provisional budget by the full expenses allotted to the second event (*Event 2: Workshop on Minority Languages*), which was returned to ISYY as part of the unused budget. In addition to this, the badges that were planned to be ordered and distributed to participants at both events were not purchased due to the limited capacity described above. The budget allotted to the purchase of badges was therefore not used and instead added to the unused budget that was returned to ISYY.

The originally planned venue Suvas had not been available for the date chosen for the Language Café, which is why a room on campus was booked instead. As the campus facility was free of charge, the budget allotted to the booking of the venue was not used. Sticky labels were purchased for the participants to write the languages they (wish to) speak on. In addition, cookies and chips were bought to provide snacks during the language exchange. Since the event was held just before Christmas, *Glögi* was purchased and offered to the participants to create a relaxed and cozy atmosphere. The budget allotted to materials and snacks covered the actual expenses appropriately. The difference between the planned and actual expenses for the event was added to the unused budget that was returned to ISYY. See the attached table for more detailed information on the planned and actual expenses, as well as the unused budget.

Execution of the Project

The purpose of the project was to bring together students of different disciplines and backgrounds and provide them with an opportunity to practise their language skills while engaging in cultural and linguistic exchange. An important goal was to create a relaxed social environment where the students feel comfortable to speak languages that they are very familiar with, as well as languages they feel less advanced in. This would allow students to meet more

fellow students that speak the same languages as them, and additionally learn more about languages and cultures they had not been (as) familiar with before.

For this event, AEGEE-Joensuu had no collaborations with any other clubs or organisations. However, collaborations with other associations in future events of similar nature could increase the outreach to students from a wider range of disciplines. Collaborations with student associations of programs with a linguistic and/or cultural focus could be particularly valuable for the event.

The event organised in the scope of the project required relatively little logistical planning, given its rather simple concept. Since our board currently consists of only three people, we did not designate any *Organising Committee* members. Instead, all three board members worked together in the planning of the event, and our president delegated any specific tasks to individual board members.

We made sure to book a venue that provided enough space for the estimated number of participants. After realising that Suvas was booked on the day that the Language Café was to take place, we found a room on campus that met these requirements. Keeping sustainability and possible diets of participants in mind, we planned to buy only vegetarian, vegan, and/or gluten-free snacks. The pre-Christmas timing of the event and the desire to create a cozy and welcoming atmosphere inspired us to also purchase some Finnish *Glögi* for the participants to enjoy while conversing in different languages. We advertised the event in a variety of ways, making sure to reach both domestic and international students. We then prepared discussion topics as starting points for the participants in their conversations. The topics were language- and culture related, including linguistic curiosities and idioms in one's native language, as well as culinary and holiday traditions in one's culture. In addition, we prepared language- and culture-based games to further promote cultural and linguistic exchange. Games included taboo and charades across languages, or more specifically linguistic games like guessing the meaning of an idiom in another player's native language.

The event was open to both international and Finnish students, with a special focus on bringing together students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. AEGEE-Joensuu is an interdisciplinary organisation that aims to connect students and encourage them to take an active role in society. This makes AEGEE-Joensuu's events particularly attractive to international students in Joensuu. The multilingual nature of this event in specific provides an ideal environment for international students to come together, get to know each other, and interact in their various languages. An additional cultural focus of the event creates a welcoming environment for all kinds of students from multiple cultural backgrounds.

The event was organised paying special attention to sustainability. Waste was minimised as far as possible by limiting the use of single-use items, e.g. by using ceramic mugs to serve *Glögi*. All snacks served were vegetarian and/or plant-based.

On the day of the event, we prepared the venue and put out snacks and *Glögi*. Around 10-15 participants attended the event. In a relaxed setting, everyone introduced themselves and talked about the languages they speak. We then introduced some of the cultural icebreakers that we had prepared and gave participants time to chat about their languages and cultures. The participants discussed idioms in their native languages, talked about cultural peculiarities, and exchanged ideas on the topic of language learning. At the end of the event, we played some language- and culture-based games and gave the participants time to continue chatting.

Due to the number of participants being lower than initially expected, it was more difficult to find commonly spoken languages other than English. In addition, in this smaller group setting, joint discussions between all participants felt more natural than splitting up into smaller groups according to language. For those reasons, the focus of the event shifted a bit from conversing *in* different languages to conversing mostly in English *about* different languages and cultures. Thus, the participants did not actively practise their language skills as much as initially intended. Nevertheless, we consider the project successful with respect to the goal of connecting students from different disciplines and cultures and encouraging linguistic and cultural exchange. The participants actively engaged in conversations about their own and other participants' cultures and native languages, resulting in interesting discussions about linguistic peculiarities and cultural differences. This enabled everyone to learn more about languages and cultures that they had not been (as) familiar with before. The event created a multilingual and multicultural environment for students from all kinds of disciplines and backgrounds to get to know each other and engage in linguistic and cultural exchange.

Communications/Marketing of the Project

The event was advertised electronically via WhatsApp, Instagram and Kide.app. We created visuals and prepared a short description of the event including all the necessary information and compiled everything into a post that we could share in various WhatsApp groups, as well as on Instagram. We shared the post in the AEGEE-Joensuu WhatsApp group, which reaches not only AEGEE-Joensuu's members but also students that are generally interested in our organisation and our activities. In addition, we shared the post in several WhatsApp groups for exchange students and international degree students in Joensuu to target international students specifically. We shared the post on our Instagram account and reposted it in our Instagram Story several times closer to the event. Finally, we advertised the event on Kide.app to increase our outreach and to make it possible for participants to register for the event. Registration for the event was not mandatory, however most of the participants did register in Kide.app, which facilitated the planning of the event.

Repeatability of the Project

The simple concept and little amount of logistical planning required give the event a high level of repeatability. It could easily be made a regularly occurring event that is organised bi-weekly or monthly, for example, potentially involving collaborations with different other organisations every time. Due to its flexible format, the Language Café could be adapted to different contexts, e.g. it could be tailored to the participants and collaborating organisations by focusing on different thematic areas or changing the structure by providing more or less guidance with regard to discussion topics and games. As such, the event is also easily reproducible by other organisations who can then tailor the format and structure of the event to their own needs and wishes.

How could the project be improved in the future?

Registration for the event (for example in Kide.app) could be made mandatory in order to facilitate planning. In this way, we would have full control over the number of participants, i.e. by setting a maximum number of registrations. We could then also include a form for people to fill in their dietary requirements, making it easier to assess the amount of, for example, gluten-free snacks needed.

As said before, the number of participants was lower than expected. Increased advertisement through other means could help to increase the number of attending students. In addition, collaborations with other organisations could help us to reach students that we normally would not reach.

During the event, we could encourage participants to speak languages other than English by setting up different tables for different languages. In this way, participants could join the table where the language they would like to speak is spoken. Another option would be to try to find tandem partners, i.e., pairs of participants who speak the same language, and change partners from time to time to increase variability. With more participants attending, it would also be easier to find more people who speak the same language, which would further encourage linguistic exchange.

Free comments

All in all, we enjoyed organising this event and bringing together students from different disciplines and backgrounds to promote linguistic and cultural exchange. We would like to repeat the event in the future and maybe even make it a regular event. For this, we would need to organise it again a couple of times to gather further experience and improve the event as explained in the previous section. Once we have made the necessary improvements and developed a routine for organising and implementing the event, it could become part of AEGEE-Joensuu's regular events.

Attachment: Final Budget

| Event: Language Café | | | | |
|---|----------------|-----------------|----------------|--|
| Item | Income | Planned Expense | Actual Expense | Details |
| Materials | | 5,00€ | 3,98€ | <i>sticky labels</i> |
| Venue | | 100,00€ | 0,00€ | <i>A room on campus was booked instead of Suvas due to scheduling issues</i> |
| Snacks | | 35,00€ | 21,27€ | <i>Cookies, Chips and Glögi</i> |
| Money granted by ISYY | 140,00€ | | | |
| Subtotal | 140,00€ | 140,00€ | 25,25€ | |
| Event 2: Workshop on minority languages | | | | |
| Item | Income | Planned Expense | Actual Expense | Details |
| Venue | | 0,00€ | 0,00€ | <i>room on campus</i> |
| Snacks | | 40,00€ | 0,00€ | <i>tea/coffee, etc.</i> |
| Money granted by ISYY | 40,00€ | | | |
| Subtotal | 40,00€ | 40,00€ | 0,00€ | |
| Cross-project items | | | | |
| Item | Income | Planned Expense | Actual Expense | Details |
| Badges | | 220,00€ | 0,00€ | <i>Badges were not ordered</i> |

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|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|--|
| Money granted by ISYY | 220,00 € | | | |
| Subtotal | 220,00 € | 220,00€ | 0,00€ | |
| Project total | 400,00€ | 400,00€ | 25,25€ | |
| Money returned to ISYY | | | 374,75€ | |