

Finland Good Practices: Language Café

Main Goals

- To promote language learning
- To raise awareness about the prevalence of minority languages in the local community
- To provide a space to practice language skills

Objectives

- To enhance communal cohesion
- To provide a chance to form social bonds
- To promote intercultural communication
- To further interest in foreign cultures
- To arrange a memorable event

Resources needed

- Premises
- Coordinator
- Volunteers (table leaders & others)
- Equipment and resources (printouts, writing materials)
- Refreshments

Challenges

- To give everyone interested a chance to participate despite the limited resources
- To find volunteers to run the event / competition
- To provide service for each level of language learner equally

In our globalised world, the demand for language skills is growing – and this doesn't just mean English! As the current lingua franca, it has proven its importance, but at the same time, multilingualism is ever more prevalent. Language learning is useful both as a method of flexing your brain and widening your horizons: it is often the very first point of contact between a person and a new country, and it can further the interest in a culture otherwise left unknown. Kompassi's Language Café is an easy access point to starting a journey into the new as well as a chance to brush up old skills!

Our Language Café is open for everyone. The target group consists of the local population of all ages, native Finns and immigrants alike: both are needed for the successful implementation of the event! Kompassi promotes the Language café through several media: our newsletter, Facebook page, flyers and posters as well as the word of mouth – we invite our visiting customers to join and ask them to spread the word in their respective communities.

The Language Café coordinator summons up the volunteers needed to run the event; mainly this means the table leaders, who are all native speakers of the languages provided. The coordinator must always gauge the demand of languages, often on the basis of the previous Café sessions and customer feedback. The table leaders prepare the materials they want to use, however in accordance with each theme of the Café, and lead the conversation during the event.

Kompassi communicates with its volunteers and other Language Café participants mainly via Facebook and email, however calls and texts are used in the organisational context. The evaluation of the event works both ways: the table leaders have a chance to provide feedback to the participants according to their wishes, and the public can leave feedback to Kompassi either orally or in writing. Kompassi takes this feedback into account when developing further Language Café- and other events.



The first language cafe at Kompassi in 2017



The reason why I'm organizing language café at Kompassi is because of my passion for languages, meeting new people and getting to know to new cultures.

Sofia Sarkava from Finland

Facts and points:

- ✓ Kompassi started arranging Language Café events in 2017. These were the first ones in Kuopio.
- ✓ Kompassi aims to provide Language Café at least twice every spring and autumn.
- ✓ An average on 60-80 people visit the café each time.
- ✓ All the table leaders as well as the coordinator are volunteers.
- ✓ Café's popularity has spread around, bringing many different language cafés all over the town.
- ✓ It provides a great amount of exposure to the internationality of the Kuopio city.