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Plenary lectures

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Minimal languages

The idea of “minimal languages” has emerged from decades of cross-linguistic research conducted by linguists in the NSM (Natural Semantic Metalanguage) framework. By a “minimal language” we mean a radically simplified language consisting of universal, near-universal and widely-known words, together with simple grammatical patterns which can be easily transposed across languages. Minimal languages are both easy-to-translate and easy-to-understand.

The first minimal language to be developed was Minimal English. The goal was to build on the advantages of English as a global lingua franca, while reducing its linguistic complexities and cultural biases. Minimal English corresponds closely to minimal versions of other languages: Minimal Spanish, Minimal Chinese, Minimal Finnish, and so on.

Minimal languages can be used for a wide and open-ended range of functions, including in language teaching, Easy-to-Read projects and intercultural education. The core vocabulary consists of about 300 known cross-translatable words. These include simple meanings such as ‘someone’, ‘something’ and ‘people’, ‘do’, ‘say’, ‘want’ and ‘happen’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘when’, ‘where’ and ‘because’; other basic words such as ‘men’, ‘women’ and ‘children’, ‘hands’ and ‘mouth’, ‘fire’ and ‘water’, ‘sky’ and ‘ground’, ‘mother’ and ‘father’; and widely known words such as ‘money’ and ‘doctor’. Depending on setting, users, and purpose, the core vocabulary can be expanded by adding limited numbers of domain-specific and culture-specific words, e.g. ‘illness’, ‘plastic’, ‘mosquitoes’, …

In this presentation I explain the linguistic research behind minimal languages and discuss how minimal languages can be used to create cross-translatable texts, to help us think more clearly, and for more effective communication and explanation. This will be illustrated by practical examples from several fields and settings, including science education and health communication.
Easy Language and beyond: How to maximize the accessibility of communication

Accessible communication is easy to find, easy to perceive, easy to understand and is related to the previous knowledge of the recipients. Target groups may have special communication needs necessitated by sensory, cognitive or psychological impairment, low education or critical life events such as illness, loss of reference persons or forced migration. When texts fail to address the needs of these target groups, they become barriers to successful interaction: sensory and cognitive barriers, media and culture barriers, language or specialized language barriers or even motoric barriers.

Accessible communication comprises all measures to prevent texts (oral or written) from becoming a barrier for the intended target groups. This is a broad field of action that comprises, but goes way beyond Easy and Plain Language: A text could be written in Easy Language but the intended users have no access to it; a text may not be well perceived and therefore not understood; a text may be accessible online, but directed to users with different media preferences; a text may be easy to perceive and understand but not acceptable with respect to the politeness requirements of the users. What good are such texts to the target audience?

My contribution focuses on Easy Language and Accessible Communication in Germany. Based on the following questions, I will discuss communication barriers and the conditions of communicative accessibility for people with diverse needs: What road have we travelled thus far? Where are we right now? Have we really covered all necessary aspects of accessibility? Where do we go from here?
Section papers

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The pleasure of literary reading in people with intellectual disability towards Easy-to-Read texts

The development of reading, as a form of leisure and enjoyment, reports several benefits to those who practice it, at an intellectual, social and personal level, and that is the reason it is linked to any academic activity and educational process. Reading is, therefore, an essential source of knowledge transmission, but also one of the main leisure activities that can increase the welfare factors of those who practice it; multiple studies support and detail the benefits that activity can facilitate and increase, cognitively, personally or socially.

However, it is estimated that around 25% of the population shows difficulties in reading comprehension for different reasons: intellectual, cultural, social, linguistic, etc. (OECD, 2017). These groups would have more difficulties to access literary reading, to experience reading pleasure and so, to enjoy the benefits of reading.

In the case of people with intellectual disabilities, reading has traditionally played a merely functional role both in their academic path and in their daily lives. People with intellectual disabilities has been impeded to use literary reading as a source of pleasure and entertainment and, consequently, it has been excluded from most of their approaches and leisure time activities.

This prevents people with mild or moderate intellectual disability (and so with literacy skills) from benefiting from the enormous number of positive effects that literary reading provides to those who practice it frequently.

Easy-to-Read is a standardized and international methodology of adaptation and production of accessible texts for people with reading comprehension difficulties. This methodology proposes three types of guidelines so that a text can be considered as an Easy-to-Read one: content, format and speech.

The present research wants to confirm that people with intellectual disabilities can experience the same reading pleasure and enjoy the aforementioned benefits that reading offers, regardless of their level of reading comprehension. For getting those results, Easy-to-Read methodology will be applied to the texts that will be used in the research process, to find traces that a better understanding of texts increases the reading pleasure of the subjects participating in this work.
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Semantic primes in easy-to-read writing

We live surrounded by text, but not everyone has the reading capacity required to access information and literature. Recent legislature has made accessible information a responsibility of both the authorities and business enterprises. That an approximated 10 percent of the Finnish population are in need of easy-to-read texts to be able to access information makes the need of knowledge of how to write such texts apparent. One strategy for easy-to-read writing is using everyday words that are easy to understand. Could the semantic primes of the NSM-theory be considered as such words?

For my thesis (Arle 2018) I’ve studied what part the semantic primes play in writing easy-to-read fiction. I’ve compared three easy-to-read adaptations to the original novels they are based on them, and studied the use of the semantic primes in the adapted novels. My study includes an analysis of the Swedish exponents of the semantic primes and a word frequency analysis.

The word frequency analysis shows that many, but not all, of the semantic primes are more frequent in the easy-to-read adaptations than in the originals. The qualitative analysis shows that semantic primes have been added to the adapted text as replacement for more complicated words, to clarify unspoken context, and when the original text has been abbreviated and summarized into shorter and easier paragraphs.

The examples included in my thesis can be used as a model for how to make use of the semantic primes in easy-to-read texts. An updated Table of Swedish semantic primes (Goddard & Karlsson 2008) would be helpful for introducing the semantic primes as a tool for easy-to-read writing, as would translations of the Chart of NSM Semantic Primes (Goddard 2017) and the 150 Canonical Sentences for identifying NSM semantic primes in different languages (Goddard & Wierzbicka 2018 [2014]) and the Minimal English concept.

References


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Using Crowdsourcing to Evaluate Lay-friendliness of BabelDr

Due to the current European refugee crisis, hospitals, emergencies, and immigrant health service departments are more frequently obliged to deal with patients who have no language in common with the staff, and may fail to share the same culture. To address this problem, BabelDr translation application, a speech-enabled phraselator, was developed in a collaboration of the Geneva University Hospitals (HUG) and the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of Geneva University. BabelDr supports translation from French to Arabic, Spanish, Tigrinya, Farsi, LSF-CH (Swiss French Sign Language). To enable patients act accordingly, the target language utterances must be easy to understand i.e. lay-friendly. The present study intends to use crowdsourcing to evaluate the lay-friendliness of the Farsi translation of the system. To achieve the objectives of the study, Telegram, a freely available cloud-based mobile and desktop messaging app, which has 200 million users worldwide and around 40 million users in Iran i.e. half of the country’s population is used as a crowdsourcing platform. 30 Farsi sentences are selected based on defined criteria including syntax complexity, vocabulary complexity, etc. Telegram Bots are designed to enable Farsi speakers (the crowd) to submit their evaluation of the lay-friendliness of each sentence based on a defined scale. The study reports on the crowd’s evaluation of the lay-friendliness of the Farsi translation of BabelDr and the implemented crowdsourcing workflow.
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Easy-to-read German put to test: results from empirical investigations in the LeiSA project

So far, Easy-to-read (ETR) German (“Leichte Sprache”) has been subject mainly to theoretical and linguistic considerations. In the LeiSA project (University of Leipzig, 2014-2018) linguists conducted several empirical studies with two target groups (people with so-called intellectual disability (ID), so-called functional illiterates) putting the intelligibility of common ETR principles to test. For the purpose of reducing communication barriers, ETR German uses a rigid rule-based practice, that is not sensitive to context and text type. There are several rulebooks with directives and prohibitions regarding linguistic and typographic features of ETR German texts that have shaped the understanding of what ETR German is. Based on the results of the empirical studies, the LeiSA project developed an alternative concept of producing ETR texts: Instead of rules and rulebooks, the concept of appropriateness has been emphasized. It has been elaborated an orientation framework for the process of text production in ETR German, that is sensitive to different contexts, text types and target groups.

The results of two empirical studies will be outlined in the talk:

1. A psycholinguistic experiment, testing the effect of word segmentation on reading comprehension (in cooperation with Sandra Pappert, University of Heidelberg). According to the rulebooks on ETR German, compounds are to be segmented. The experiment investigated whether semantic transparency has an impact on the reading of segmented and unsegmented compounds.

2. A qualitative study investigating the impact of macrotypographical features on text intelligibility (in cooperation with Sabina Sieghart, Munich/FH Salzburg). This study addresses ETR German from a text-linguistic perspective; the results emphasize the need for context- and text-type-sensitive solutions.

References

Drago Brumen
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Project “It is easy to read”

The project developed methods and didactic materials for training of people who need Easy-to-read information. It had been selected in the 2017 tender "Language integration of vulnerable groups of speakers in the Republic of Slovenia (RS)", issued by the Ministry of Culture of the RS and is co-funded by the RS and the European Union from the European Social Fund.

The project partnership produced manuals, a collection of drawings and photos to be used in Easy-to-read publications, a dictionary of synonyms with recommended words, trainings for end-users and their support persons, a short film and a proposal to the government on how to systemize Easy-to-read and accessible communication in Slovenia.

Manuals cover newly developed and thoroughly tested Slovenian guidelines for production of Easy-to-read, written in Easy-to-read language, legislation, learning and teaching methods, instructions on how to assure quality of information and publications, tips on efficient communication etc.

One of the main achievements of the project is the definition of the Easy-to-read levels for Slovenian language which are partially non-language specific and can be applied to the general concept of Easy-to-read.

The project development included active input from over 100 end-users, who helped develop, test and evaluate the materials in several focus and test groups, and from support persons and professionals from all over Slovenia.

All project results, licensed under Creative Commons BY (CC BY 2.5 SI), are free to use and can be found on the project website http://www.lahkojebrati.si/.
The Ugly Duckling: A Fairy Tale in Easy-to-Read Danish

This paper has two purposes: (1) to present an Easy-to-Read (EtR) rewriting of an excerpt of one of the most classical Danish fairy-tales, The Ugly Duckling (Den Grimme Ælling) by Hans Christian Andersen, and (2) based on this rewriting, to discuss an intruding problem when doing an EtR rewriting: How can you make sure to maintain the core literary elements of the story, when making an EtR rewriting of a classical novel or fairy-tale?

Based on several guidelines for EtR (Inclusion Europe 2016, IFLA Professional report No. 120 2010), this paper introduces a rewriting of the fairy-tale The Ugly Duckling by Andersen. The theoretical foundation for EtR is furthermore supported by studies of the German concept of Leichte Sprache (Maaß 2015). Likewise, inspired by Finland (Vanhatalo & Torkki 2018), is the theory of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (Goddard 2018, Wierzbicka 2014) being implemented with the purpose of strengthening the theoretical foundation. Since the core of EtR is comprehensibility, using NSM gives the opportunity to make EtR texts more comprehensible for second language learners (immigrants etc.), which is a potential target group for EtR texts.

The rewriting of the fairy-tale has been done through an iterative process. This gives the opportunity to consciously and stepwise work with the text from different perspectives (respectively EtR, core literary elements and NSM). This iteration-strategy gives a great insight in the thoughts put into the choices behind the rewriting. The paper will present examples from the iterative process in form of different rewritings of central passages of the fairy-tale.

We see in the guidelines from Inclusion Europe, that EtR should not only concern information-texts (news articles etc.), but fiction as well. However, to some extent, these existing guidelines for EtR seem insufficient when doing a rewriting of fiction, since some fundamental different things are into play in respectively information-texts and fiction. Therefore, will this paper consider a potential approach to these literary elements when doing an EtR rewriting.

References


Inclusion Europe (2016): Information for all.


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Easy Language under review. Expressing causal relations in texts in German Easy Language

Easy Language ("Leichte Sprache") is a variety of German that has been simplified at different linguistic levels and is intended for people who cannot easily understand texts in standard language (for example people with learning difficulties). Concerning Easy Language in Germany, four different guidelines exist that all ban, amongst others, the use of subordinate clauses. Therefore, writers of texts in Easy Language are faced with the challenge of finding alternative ways to express causal (in the stricter sense, conditional, consecutive, final and concessive) relations that are often verbalized through adverbial clauses in standard language. Specific transformation strategies related to causal relations are only proposed in the guidelines published by the University of Hildesheim (Maaß 2015; Bredel & Maaß 2016). However, not all existing texts in Easy Language are formulated according to these rules.

Against this background, the question arises as to how causal relations are de facto realized in texts in Easy Language. To this end, a corpus with texts in Easy Language containing more than 31000 words has been compiled. This corpus reflects the vast range of different texts in Easy Language, as it contains different text types and texts that have received one of the different seals of certification. The corpus was integrated in the program “UAM Corpus tool” and every linguistic realization of a causal realization was annotated accordingly. From a qualitative perspective, the results show the broad range of options realized in authentic Easy Language texts. From a quantitative perspective, frequency patterns identify the prioritization among the strategies to establish causal relations. Based on these results, a subsequent eye-tracking study, that will be briefly introduced in the presentation, will be conducted in order to shed light on the question which of the applied linguistic structures expressing causal relations require the most or least processing effort. In the long run, the existing rules should be optimized based on the collected evidence.

References


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Evaluation of Easy-to-Read text production processes

In this presentation we report on select aspects of the formative and summative evaluation of easy-to-read text production processes carried out in the project “Simply easy to understand! E2R in adult protection law procedures”. The project ran as a collaboration between a Swiss School of Social Work and a local Adult Protection Authority. Crucial documents of this authority and an information brochure on adult protection law procedures were generated in E2R and further implemented in the professional practice. In addition to a study on the reception of the E2R documents with regard to the participation of the persons concerned, the translation and text production processes were evaluated. This evaluation aimed at identifying advantages and disadvantages of the implemented processes and disclosing requirements and relevant aspects. While formative partial results of the evaluation made it possible to adapt the ongoing processes, the summative results should be used to trace “what works, for whom and in what context” (Kazi 2003: 816). As a result of the evaluation we formulated around 30 recommendations concerning the provision of services in the domain of E2R text production with practice partners.

All texts were produced by the research team in close cooperation with the adult protection authority. The transfer of original (legal) letter templates in E2R posed specific challenges due an important lack of common ground (Clark, 1996) between experts (lawyers, social workers, psychologists) and laypeople with communication and cognitive disabilities (cf. also Schum, 2017). Consequently, the initially planned transfer of official letter templates in E2R was supplemented by the realisation of a brochure providing background information about the adult protection procedure.

In this contribution we address advantages and disadvantages of processes and procedures chosen, by focusing specifically the linguistic and subject matter competence of the translating persons, the organisation of comprehensibility tests by the target group and the active involvement of practice partners into the text production process. Furthermore, we re-think this text production process against the background of discussions about intralingual translations (e.g. Zethsen, 2009) and critically reflect the text production by non-professional translators.

References


Testing Linguistic Accessibility of Multilingual Administrative Communication: The Case of Switzerland

Accessible communication should be an institutional priority when drafting administrative texts. These not only deal with legal content, but they often address the lay citizen and may provide general information on services and reforms or simply instruct on a specific procedure to be followed. Switzerland is particularly sensitive to issues of accessible communication and strives for citizen inclusion and language accessibility. Since most of the drafting takes place in German and the texts are later translated into French and Italian, language clarity is further at the stake because of the process of decoding and recoding involved in the interlingual translation activity. Moreover, the same multilingual policy implies thinking of drafting with an eye to translation.

Moving from the Swiss multilingual context, this paper is based on a preliminary interlinguistic analysis of insurance brochures in the three official languages of the Confederation – German, French and Italian (Felici and Griebel 2018, 2019). Our preliminary results showed that plain communication is not always the case. With the help of readability indices and other computational tools, we highlighted common linguistic gaps whose quality was also explored manually by taking textual aspects into account.

Based on these results, two test corpora with simplified excerpts from the original corpus are built. Corpus 1 contains simplified parts of the texts according to the plain language rules (linguistic reduction). Corpus 2 consists of simplifications according to the rules of easy-to-read language (linguistic and content-related reduction) (Bredel and Maaß 2016, Inclusion Europe). The simplified sentences are presented to the target groups of plain and EtR language in order to test their comprehensibility among the respective stakeholders. Sentences from corpus 1 are tested through crowdsourced testing. In a future stage, corpus 2 will be presented to EtR target groups via their networks.

On the basis of the results, general rules will be developed for (multilingual) administrative communication on two different levels of simplification and with regard to different stakeholders.

References


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The validity of German Easy Language rules: First empirical evidence from ET, EEG and fMRI studies

German Easy Language (“Leichte Sprache”) was developed through practical experience. In 2009, two sets of rules and regulations were published: the “European standards on how to make information easy to read and understand”, compiled by Inclusion Europe, and “The Rules for Easy Language” formulated by the Netzwerk Leichte Sprache. However, these first two sets of rules and regulations were based more on intuition and purely theoretical notions of complexity (see Bredel and Maaß 2016: 67) than on empirical and experimental evidence. Moreover, many rules were defined quite vaguely. With the foundation of the centre for Easy Language at the University of Hildesheim in 2014 and the publication of “Leichte Sprache. Das Regelbuch” (Maaß 2015) and “Leichte Sprache. Theoretische Grundlagen. Orientierung für die Praxis” (Bredel and Maaß 2016), Easy Language was provided with a scientifically-based linguistic foundation for the first time. In spite of this, there is still a necessity to further empirically underpin these rules with findings from comprehensibility research and cognitive science.

For that reason, the research training group “Simply complex! A multimodal and interdisciplinary approach to examine linguistic complexity within Easy Language” was established at the University of Mainz (Germany). Its major objective is the investigation of the empirical validity of the postulated rules for Easy Language, combined with evidence from linguistic complexity research, and the further, evidence-based development of these rules using neuroscientific methods e.g., EEG, ET, and fMRI. Therefore, the following studies are currently being conducted:

- An eye-tracking study with pupils with prelingual hearing impairments or deafness concentrates on the morphological level with the aim of shedding light on the effects of visual segmentation on the processing of German noun-noun compounds.
- Focusing on hierarchies in lexical complexity, another eye-tracking study with subjects with intellectual disabilities attempts to find out whether there are effects on visual word processing caused by word frequency, word length and repetition.
- Regarding semantics, the question whether the recommended typographic marking of negations leads to processing advantages of negated sentences compared to negated sentences without typographic marking is currently being investigated in an EEG-experiment.
- An fMRI-study with neurologically unimpaired subjects focuses on the syntactic level and investigates whether the postulated transformation of causal clauses into autonomous sentences really simplifies processing.
- With respect to the text level, the question whether repeated items in Easy Language have a beneficial effect on subjects from the target group when establishing coherence is currently being investigated in an EEG-study.

The presentation at Klaara 2019 will outline these empirical research projects and provide insights into first results.

References


The Research Center on Easy-to-Read German in Hildesheim has been promoting accessible communication in Germany since 2014. The starting point of our research was the analysis of specialized texts coming from different fields of science, public administration, judiciary, medicine, etc., which are difficult to understand even for people without disabilities. Our goal was to reinforce the understandability of these texts. Regarding people with disabilities, the process has to go one step further: The texts have to be adapted to the special communicative needs of people with disabilities. These adaptions are not limited to the language itself, but also regard the content of the text, meaning that the translator has to choose which parts of the original information s/he wants to keep and which concepts have to be explained (Bredel/Maaß 2016).

For the past 5 years, we have not only done a lot of practical translation work, but we have also initiated and conducted several research projects; one of the milestones has been the publication of the theoretical manual “Duden Leichte Sprache” (Bredel/Maaß 2016) and the Handbook of Accessible Communication (Maaß/Rink 2019). We are now in a period of application of the EtR rules to other practical fields; for instance, we are one of the eight partners in the Erasmus+ project “Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training” (EASIT), where we are developing a curriculum for the training of experts in audiovisual content in EtR. In addition to EASIT, we will be presenting other projects that we have finalized, are currently working on and will be involved in in the future.

Our experience and the need to professionalize EtR German motivated us to start the first master program in Germany for accessible communication (October 2018). The curriculum consists not only of EtR German, but also of sign language, text interpreting, assistive technologies, accessible online communication, understandability and specialized communication, etc. Furthermore, we focus on the knowledge about the different target groups of accessible communication and their individual needs. As the Finnish Centre for Easy-to-Read is one of our closest partners, we would like to present how the exchange between Hildesheim and Helsinki has enriched the work and research on EtR in both countries.
Measuring the Impact of Neural Machine Translation on Easy to Read Texts: an Exploratory Study

Over the last decade, translation research has experienced an increased interest in the study of controlled languages (CLs). The vast majority of studies carried out during that time have focused on technical documentation, with a strong emphasis on the implications of combining CL approaches with machine translation (MT) for the quality of the final translation product. However, few research efforts have been devoted to exploring the impact of MT on texts that follow the guidelines of other forms of controlled language, such as plain language (PL) or Easy to Read (EtR). The most recent example can be found in the work by Rossetti (2018), who measured the machine translatability of PL summaries of health-related complex systematic reviews through the estimation of number and severity of errors in the MT output. Yet, the focus was still on target text fluency and adequacy rather than usability of the resulting PL text. Similarly, target users have rarely included people with special needs, as most studies of this nature are aimed at non-native speakers of a given language.

By shifting the focal point towards the end user, our project aims to explore the impact of neural machine translation (NMT) on the usability of EtR texts by people with intellectual disabilities. The main goal of the planned study is to understand whether the EtR guidelines followed in the source text are respected in the resulting NMT output for the English-French language combination. The rationale behind the tests is that, as opposed to statistical machine translation (SMT), output is less predictable and undesired grammar and vocabulary changes can be introduced by the system (Neubig, Morishita, and Nakamura 2015). The study will consist of two phases: first, a textual analysis will be carried out to compare the outputs of two SMT and NMT systems in terms of translation quality and EtR guidelines violation. Second, a user evaluation stage will be conducted to assess the resulting translations for comprehensibility and satisfaction. We expect that study findings will provide further insight into whether NMT is a viable option for translating EtR documents for accessible communication in this particular language pair.

References


Making audio-visual information easier to read and easier to understand

Project Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training (EASIT) is an Erasmus+ funded project dedicated to developing innovative multilingual materials for training of experts on making audio-visual information easy to understand.

At this stage, the project partnership has already researched current trainings and practices at European level and talked to many professionals in order to gain insight into possible recommendations when it comes to hybridization of Easy-to-read and Plain language concepts with access services such as subtitling and audio description.

The challenge of providing new expert knowledge and skills requires definition of the skills of the experts who (will) create easy to understand audio-visual content. Generating easy to understand audio-visual content calls for fusion of skills of different professionals and when the skill cards are defined and available, a curriculum and open educational materials for different learning environments will be developed.

Finally, EASIT will explore possibilities for future professional certification to enhance recognition of this exciting and complex career profile.
Leealaura Leskelä  
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The complexity of simplicity – Formatting an evaluation tool for EtR-texts

In recent years, the term Easy to Read (EtR) has settled in many European countries to refer to a simplified language form of standard language for persons with various reading barriers. In Scandinavian countries principles for EtR have been developed mainly in order to give practical instructions for producers of EtR-materials (e.g. Leskelä 2019: 90–91; Bohman 2017: 450; Leskelä 2015: 69–70). Scientific approaches to, and linguistic interventions in the EtR-principles have, however, been in a smaller role so far. This presentation aims to expose a process of formatting the Finnish EtR-principles, developed in the last few decades for practical purposes, in a form of a linguistic instrument. The objective of the instrument is to serve as an evaluation tool for the EtR-specialists to estimate whether a text is or is not an EtR-text. The instrument should help the specialists to evaluate the level of difficulty of a certain text. It contains 80 paragraphs divided in three categories: category of text structure, category of vocabulary and category of morpho-syntax. In addition, the instrument contains a category of visual elements, but it was not included in the formatting process described here. The instrument is thus a compilation of linguistic analysis of Finnish EtR-principles, combining the practical tradition of developing EtR in Finland and theoretically motivated and linguistically valid interventions.

18 EtR-specialists, trained by the Finnish Centre for Easy to Read, took part in the formatting process in years 2014–2018. They evaluated EtR-texts with the instrument in two iteration rounds. They first made an overall assessment on the basis of their practical expertise, whether the text was or was not an EtR-text. Then they evaluated the text by using the instrument and scoring each paragraph according to the instructions. The evaluation results were analyzed and compared to each other in each round, then leading to further development of the instrument. The first iteration round showed somewhat wide dispersion concerning categories of text structure and vocabulary, which led to development measures. In the second iteration round dispersion seemed to decrease, but it revealed a new problem: Overall assessments were not always congruent with the result of the instrument. This, then, led to more radical changes in the instruments scoring system. In the presentation I will focus on the results of the formatting process thus showing the complexity of evaluating and validating EtR-texts.

References


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Minimal Scandinavian: Lexicons and Literacies for Nordic Communication

This paper sets out to devise a new system of literacy called “minimal Scandinavian”. “Minimal Scandinavian” is designed as an “auxiliary literacy” for intra-Scandinavian communication, as an alternative or supplement to new Scandinavian Englishes, and semi-communication. Based on studies in Scandinavian NSM semantics (Levisen 2012, Haugen 2016, Arle 2018), and following the semantic typology of Scandinavian languages proposed by Levisen et al 2017, the paper expands the comparative analysis by including new impulses from the “minimal English” movement (Goddard 2018), and the Finnish “65-words” movement (Vanhatalo and Torkki 2018). The purpose of “Minimal Scandinavian” is to partly to replace semi-communication and miscommunication with an intra-Scandinavian clarity of expression, and partly to foster intra-Scandinavian language awareness in a time when the traditional Scandinavian “high willingness to communicate” principle is being replaced by various new “Englishes of the North”. “Minimal Scandinavian” makes use of the relatively high degree of lexico-semantic unity between written Danish, Swedish, and Bokmål. At the same time, Minimal Scandinavian builds on the principle of tolerance towards formal lexical diversity, and embeds in its agenda, an element of cross-Scandinavian language awareness.

The paper concludes by discussing challenges and obstacles in the creation of a viable “Minimal Scandinavian”, including the richness of regional varieties, the written/spoken continuum, the importance of non-Scandinavian Nordic languages (e.g. Finnish, Saami, Greenlandic), insular Scandinavian languages (Faroese, Icelandic), and the major migrant languages in Mainland Scandinavia (e.g. Arabic, Somali). It is argued that the language ideologies that undergird current intra-Scandinavian communicative practices are stuck partly in nationalism, and partly in Anglocentrism, and that conscious attempts to create better intra-Scandinavian communication relies crucially on shared lexicons and innovative literacies.

References


CANCELLED

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Simplifying Italian institutional texts for migrants: an experimentation

Too often, the Italian administrative language tends to be unnecessarily difficult for all those who are L2 beginners in Italian language skills and yet need to deal with various red tape and formalities to become resident in Italy, as the asylum seekers or migrants and their families. Aware of this problem, we decided to test the migrants’ comprehension on different Italian institutional texts in order to define all the objective and subjective difficulties. We computationally analyzed a corpus of Institutional texts addressed to migrants (ISTR) with a comparative approach retrieved from Biber (Biber, D. (1995), Dimensions of register variation: A cross-linguistic comparison. Cambridge University Press). We compared the ISTR corpus with two corpora representative of the legal (AMB, Venturi 2012) and bureaucratic (BUR_orig, Brunato 2013) Italian language and two corpora representative of a plain and controlled Italian language (2par and A2). Analyzing both the lexical and the morphosyntactic features of our corpus, we calculated a very low readability score. Then, with a methodology retrieved from De Mauro (De Mauro, T., & Vedovelli, M. (1999). Dante, il gendarme e la bolletta: la comunicazione pubblica in Italia e la nuova bolletta Enel, GLF editori Laterza), we tested 103 students of Italian as a second language with a A2 linguistic proficiency level, through a multiple-choice reading comprehension test; the questions concerned their orientative, informative and pragmatic reading skills applied to the Institutional texts. All the students had to fill a socio-cultural questionnaire. Schooling years, age, years of permanence in Italy and the proficiency level in Italian correlate with the final scores of the tests. We collected all the data and we decided to simplify different types of institutional texts with different strategies:

- a form, manually reformulated, following the simplifying guidelines in the Italian Guide to the preparation of institutional texts and looking at the data spoken above.

- an application, in which we glossed all the words not belonging to the A2 lexical list with words belonging to it.

- an application, in which we glossed all the words identified as rare by the authoring tool Sympatico, with the most frequent words suggested by the same tool.

- a judgement from a Territorial Commission, manually reformulated, following the simplifying guidelines in the Italian Guide and looking at the data spoken above.

We are now testing 110 students of Italian as a second language with an A2 linguistic proficiency level, on the reading comprehension of the Institutional authentic texts and the simplified ones. The questions and the texts content are the same. We are now running the last tests and we will retrieve the final results in the end of May. The aim is to identify the most performative and economic simplifying strategy, analyzing the deviation between the comprehension of the authentic texts and the simplified ones.
Arto Mustajoki  
University of Helsinki

The “easy to read” concept as a special case of accommodation of speech

One of the central features of the communicative (or pragmatic) competence of people is the capability to adjust one’s speech to the recipient. A well-known manifestation of this skill, usually called recipient design, audience design or accommodation, is the situation where an adult speaks to small children (baby talk). Most people are also able to conduct recipient design when they are in contact with foreigners (foreigner talk). Similarly, experienced teachers and public speakers try to take their audiences into consideration. Accommodation of speech is not always successful. Speakers can overaccommodate their speech, i.e. make it too simple, which may irritate the audience. The opposite, a total lack of accommodation or underaccommodation, takes place much more often. It is caused by a variety of factors: the speaker may think that accommodation is not necessary, he or she is not able to conduct recipient design in a proper way, or he or she is simply unwilling to use cognitive energy for this. English as a lingua franca (ELF), the most spoken language of the world, is also an example of a simplified language. It differs substantially from British and American English or other varieties of English. In ELF, we often meet “mistakes” from the point of view of standard Englishes, e.g. the s-ending may be absent in the third person (He want to go), singularia tantum can be used in the plural form (furnitures), easy prepositions are overused (comment about), and the relative pronouns ‘who’ and ‘which’ are mixed up with each other. In fact, when people use ELF, they usually simplify not only the form but also the content of the speech by avoiding difficult topics. In spite of (or thanks to) simplification, ELF seems to be a very effective tool of communication.

Traditionally, there are also some rather stable forms of simplified written texts, e.g. textbooks for schoolchildren and students at different levels, and books for the public. Here again simplification concerns both the form and the content. One of the implementations of the “easy to read” concept is official documents issued by authorities and directed to citizens. They differ from textbooks as to the choice of the content of the texts. As a rule, these documents are translations of original documents, i.e. the content is fixed beforehand. In such circumstances, it is also possible to create a standardised language, a version of a literary language. The official character of the texts and the special readership set high standards for the texts. In conducting recipient design, one must take into consideration, besides linguistic features, the cultural background and the level of knowledge of the target group. If we widen the “easy to read” concept towards the “easy to understand” communication format and look at oral interaction, the situation is quite different. It is impossible to establish a strict norm for such contexts. This kind of language usage resembles baby talk, foreigner talk or even ELF.
Simo Määttä
University of Helsinki

The issue of not-easy-to-read language in public service interpreting and translation

Complicated language use is a major problem in public-service interpreting, especially when there is a significant mismatch between the interpreter’s and the migrant’s linguistic resources. In fact, while language interpretation is by definition an oral activity, written language is directly or indirectly present in practically all interpreter-mediated encounters in public-service settings. Thus, these encounters are based on written texts such as laws and regulations, and the goal of the encounter is almost invariably the production of a written report. Besides, written texts are often sight-translated orally in these encounters. Thus, while the communication is predominantly oral, lexical and syntactic features typical of complex written language in specific domains such as law, social work, or psychology are present in all public service interpreting.

Extreme cases of communication problems caused by complex written language in public service interpreting include situations involving a migrant who does not know how to read or write. In addition, severe problems arise when the interpreter and the migrant communicate in a vehicular language that is not their first language, i.e. in lingua franca interpreting. English and French are typical examples of such lingua francas in Finland and most European countries. Problems also arise in public-service translation, for example when decisions made by social workers are translated for clients whose proficiency in the target language of the translation is unknown.

In this talk, I will analyze examples of problems caused by not-easy-to-read language in community interpreting. The data include interpreter diaries, recordings and transcripts of telephone-interpreted interviews, and written translations of decisions made by child-protection agents regarding taking into care and foster care. The goal is to identify specific issues that may help to design better practices ensuring the achievement of linguistic rights for all.
Anne Parpan-Blaser  
School of Social Work, UAS Northwestern Switzerland

Easy-to-Read texts: reading situations, text functions and comprehensibility

The project "Einfach leicht verständlich" (Simple and easy to understand) aimed to increase participation of persons with learning disability in adult protection law procedures in Switzerland. For this reason several official documents of an adult protection authority were translated in E2R and a new information brochure was created. The project also examined the impact and perception of the documents in practice. In the oral presentation we will concentrate on the information brochure and on results and questions concerning reading situations and comprehensibility.

The function of the brochure is to inform persons with learning disability about the procedures in adult protection. It was meant to accompany other official documents or the official decision with explanations about the proceedings, so that they can be better understood and situated. Thus, the brochure was developed for a specific reading situation, more precisely the assumption was, that the addressees would read the document alone. The results showed, however, that the reading situations on the part of the persons concerned and in the context of their contact with the adult protection authority were more heterogeneous.

"Creating comprehensible texts requires weighing up the adequate linguistic and typographical means in relation to a number of contextual factors (addressee, reading situation, content, text function, station, etc.) with regard to a particular (understanding) goal" (Bock 2015). Different studies highlight (e.g. Lutz 2017) that the reading situation has an important impact on the reception (acceptance, comprehensibility) of a text. The fact that an addressee is reading a text alone, together with relatives, or in a difficult emotional situation, makes a difference on the reading process and the understanding of the texts content. Accordingly, the reading situation as active involvement with text (Saurer 2007) can contain supporting or hindering factors relating to comprehensibility. Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that a text with its inherent function may be used meaningfully in a different communication situation and with a different function, thus extending its intended use (Wiesmann 2004).

On the basis of our own results and references from the literature, we discuss - the connection between reading situation, text function and comprehensibility - to what extent demands on comprehensibility require and enable anticipation of the reading situation - the inner- and extra-linguistic contexts of easy-to-read. In addition, we try to formulate questions that arise from this for the development of LS texts.
Agnieszka Przybyła-Wilkin  
University of Warsaw

## Complex Sentences in Polish Easy-to-Read Texts: A Corpus Analysis

Despite Poland’s signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012, the number of Polish easy-to-read texts available remains scarce and their quality (in terms of accessibility to the target group) disputable. One of the reasons for this may be the existence of only one set of guidelines for authors (published by Inclusion Europe). These guidelines outline the constructions to avoid, albeit without offering feasible alternatives. As a result, the authors frequently either fail to stick to the rules or replace the problematic constructions with equally or even more incomprehensible ones.

This contribution will address the following questions:

- How is sentence complexity handled in the current Polish easy-to-read practice?
- How can the syntax of Polish easy-to-read text be further simplified?
- How would the proposed simplification affect the overall readability of existing texts?

The presentation will be based on an analysis of a corpus of 41,268 tokens, compiled by the author from texts available on the Internet. The corpus comprises 23 Polish easy-to-read texts (informative booklets, brochures, websites) published between 2006 and 2016. All texts chosen for the analysis were declared tekst łatwy do czytania (Polish for easy-to-read) by their publishers and/or marked with the Inclusion Europe logo. For the texts written before the publication of the Inclusion Europe guidelines, the presence of the easy-to-read logo was the main criterion of inclusion. The analysis encompasses identification of the most common coordinating and subordinating connectors and other morphosyntactic phenomena related to sentence complexity. Additionally, automatic examination of the texts was conducted using the application Jasnopis, dedicated to measuring the readability of Polish non-literary texts (Gruszczyński & Ogrodniczuk 2015).

The author will discuss the occurrence of different types of complex sentences containing two or more clauses as well as the strategies used, to a varying degree of success, by the easy-to-read authors in order to avoid sentence complexity: from participle usage to verb-derived nouns, to comma omission. These will be contrasted with the guidelines proposed for German by Maaß & Bredel (2016) and the author’s ideas of amendments to the Polish guidelines, inspired by the German ones and supported by her ongoing empirical research on complex sentence comprehension by readers with Down’s syndrome. A brief discussion of the empirical study will be included.

## References


Easy-to-listen automatic messages for angry clients of a telephone company

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) delivers pre-recorded messages to clients experiencing troubles or in need of specific information. IVR navigate customers down a decision tree until they get the desired answer. For many categories of people (e.g. elders, illiterate or low-literacy people, people with auditory or motory impairments), IVR inhibits their access to the most essential and basic services.

The Italian branch of an international phone company commissioned a pilot-study for increasing the comprehensibility of IVR messages. Under the guide of a linguist, the personnel on customer care office re-wrote IVR messages according to ten rules. These pertained discourse (information structure), pragmatics (illocutionary force), syntax (argument structure) and the lexicon: (a) never distinatiate the verb and its main arguments; (b) avoid allonymy and use repetitions; (c) do not exceed the limit of 12 words for utterance; (d) choose “strong verbs” (indicative) rather than “weak verbs” (gerund, infinitive); (e) choose concrete verbs; (f) avoid nominalizations; (g) when ordering the information, follow rigidly the “topic-comment” principle; (h) whenever possible, use words belonging to the basic vocabulary of Italian) (e.g. say la linea di casa ‘home line’ instead of utenza telefonica ‘phone utility’); (i) remove uninformative routines (e.g. nel minor tempo possibile ‘within the shortest possible time’) and performatives (l) remove both explicit and implicit ads.

45 adults (17 men and 18 women, aged between 20-50, with no previous history of cognitive or language specific impairment) took part in this experiment. Participants were recruited randomly from a panel of clients of the telephone company. Participants simulated to call the company in order to fix a problem or to request an urgent information. They read a pre-determined customer template they had to adhere along the trial (e.g. “I never go abroad and never send SMS only to Italian numbers”) and the reason for calling the company (e.g. “is product X convenient for me?”). Then participants listen to the IVR message. The message can be either OLD (identical to already existing IVR messages on that topic) or NEW (rewritten according to the rules). 1) After listening to new messages, participants were 25% more accurate in choosing the right option than after listening old messages (Ç2 = 24.0239, df = 2, p-value***) 2) Participants listening to new messages were 28.8% faster (-3623 ms) than participants who listened to old messages (Df 2; F = 40.414; p = 0.015) 3) The probability of playbacks (request of second listening) was reduced three times when participants listened to new messages with respect to old ones (Ç2 = 6.5145, df = 4, p-value = 0.016).

I will also describe the first results from an ongoing experiment with eye-tracking demonstrating the validity of combined top-down and bottom-up approaches for increasing the language usability of oral messages.
Alessandra Rossetti, Patrick Cadwell, Sharon O’Brien
Dublin City University

Accessibility of financial texts for ageing communities: An exploratory study

The number of older adults is growing faster than any other age group, and is expected to more than double by 2050 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2017). This demographic transformation has implications for numerous sectors of society, including the financial sector (Gunther 2016; Lee and Mason 2017). Ageing communities are likely to face more (complex) challenges when using financial services as a result of: a decline in financial literacy (Finke et al. 2017); reduced cognitive abilities that might impact on their comprehension of texts (Johnson 2003; De Beni et al. 2007); or vision and hearing loss (Abou-Zahra et al. 2008; Brown and Barrett 2011). With banks gradually transferring their products and services online, additional challenges might emerge for older people, caused by general lack of familiarity with computers (Chang et al. 2015), or by changes in manual dexterity (Jastrzembski et al. 2005).

Previous research has focused on: design guidelines or success criteria to make websites accessible for ageing communities (Milne et al. 2005; Lara et al. 2010); the impact of voice augmentation on the behaviour of older adults interacting with online banking applications (Sato et al. 2011); or the acceptance of web interaction aids developed to enhance the accessibility and usability of (e-banking) websites for elderly users (Lara et al. 2016). However, less attention has been dedicated to the impact of plain language on the accessibility or comprehensibility of online financial content among older people. Against this background, we conducted an exploratory study addressing the following research questions:

1. How accessible are online financial texts according to older bank customers?

2. Does plain language increase the accessibility of online financial texts for older bank customers?

In order to answer the first question, we conducted a focus group with older bank customers with a view to collecting data on: potential comprehension issues when reading financial information online; types of content that are particularly inaccessible/difficult to comprehend; reasons and consequences of the perceived (in)accessibility of financial content. Subsequently, for the second research question, we conducted an experimental study in which we tested and compared the comprehension of two financial texts (one text written in plain language vs a non-simplified text) by using multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

We expect that our findings might provide empirical evidence to inform and guide the accessibility strategies currently adopted by banks and other financial institutions when addressing the communication needs of their older customers (Age UK 2016). Ensuring that older adults can easily comprehend the financial information provided to them online can make them more independent in managing their wealth and less exposed to the risk of exploitation/fraud (Holtfreter et al. 2014; Gatsou et al. 2018).
Teacher and student responses to using Minimal English in language classrooms

Culturally-mediated ways of interacting are challenging for language learners to grasp, in part because they are often invisible and therefore not articulated explicitly in language learning contexts (Lo Bianco & Crozet, 2003), and in part because they are often explained using culturally-specific and difficult-to-understand words. Minimal English, derived from the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (Goddard, 2017), has the potential to provide students and teachers with a framework and a language to explain these concepts, but the success of a new pedagogical tool is dependent on the responses of students and teachers. This presentation reports on the findings of three projects which explored the usability and clarity of Minimal English for adult students and language teachers.

Minimal English is uniquely suited to the task of describing culture because it can break down the concept into easily understandable components using translatable language (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004). Then, these explanations can cross language boundaries and demystify some of the invisible aspects of communicating in another language (Sadow, 2018).

The first of the three projects tested Minimal English in classroom contexts for English language students and found that students of all levels felt they were able to understand pragmatic intention in utterances better once those intentions had been explained in Minimal English.

The second project involved training workshops and user needs research with English language teachers to develop materials to help them explain these concepts to their students. The teachers expressed that Minimal English supported them to think more clearly about the concepts they were trying to explain and that they were better prepared to address these topics in classes when needed.

The third project used Minimal English to explore ideas and ways of thinking in academic English for ESL students who were undertaking a specialized postgraduate degree. While these students were already proficient in English, Minimal English was a useful tool to unpack some of the assumed knowledge in academic English which they had yet to acquire.

For each of these three diverse groups, Minimal English was able to reveal embedded culture and attitudes and provide an entry point to discussing how these concepts influenced interaction, whether in spoken language or writing. Cross-translatable and easy-to-understand concepts can unpack the complexity of invisible culture to the benefit of all participants.

References


Explaining things in easy-to-read news

The aim of this presentation is to map ways of explaining in easy-to-read news context. The study is based on a pilot data gathered from Finnish EtR news (Finnish broadcasting company YLE, Selkosanomat newspaper) and YLE standard language news from the same time frame. This data is used to analyse how explaining differs in these language forms in the same news context. Explaining means here for example using synonyms and paraphrases, defining concepts and giving background information.

In this presentation I give examples and preliminary results of this study. This study is a part of my PhD studies concerning explaining in easy-to-read. Explaining things or giving more background information is commonly seen as a big part of making EtR texts. The research of these explanations and the way they’re construed to the text can help us understand better their impact on text’s understandability and readability as a whole. The main research questions are 1) How explanations are made in easy-to-read Finnish? 2) What kind of a reader is construed by these explanations to the text? PhD study is in the field of cognitive linguistics.

References


Idastiina Valtasalmi
University of Tampere

Adults with intellectual disabilities as readers of easy-to-read

People with intellectual disabilities are identified as one of the primary target groups for easy-to-read (EtR) as they are likely to benefit from it for their entire life. However, this widely varied group consists of people with different kinds of skills and abilities, which gives reason to assume that EtR alone might not be enough to convey information to as many people as possible. Even though EtR is widely used in Finland, there is very little evidence on its effectiveness for readers with intellectual disabilities. Nonetheless, it is generally accepted that people with intellectual disabilities benefit from EtR, but there is also contradictory evidence that leaves many questions to be answered (Sutherland & Isherwood 2016; Chinn & Homeyard 2017).

Accessibility of EtR for people with intellectual disabilities is addressed in my dissertation [in progress], because having access to written information is in key position when it comes to participation in society. In my research, accessibility is approached from three perspectives: 1) linguistic characteristics of EtR, 2) language skills of readers with intellectual disabilities, and 3) readers’ experiences. Accordingly, three studies of my dissertation include people with intellectual disabilities as participants [appr. 30–40 each]. As this research aims to reach the readers of EtR, the criteria for participation are based on reading habits rather than medical diagnoses. All participants are Finnish-speaking adults with intellectual disabilities, who read EtR texts either occasionally or on a regular basis.

In my presentation, I focus on the background questionnaire that is used to collect information on reading habits. At the beginning of the first study, the participants filled in a background questionnaire to describe what kinds of texts they read in standard Finnish and EtR. In addition to collecting demographic data, a four-point scale was used to measure how often the participants read. In my presentation, I discuss using the data obtained from this questionnaire and present the preliminary results. All in all, the questionnaire will bring forward new information that can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of Finnish adults with intellectual disabilities as a target group for EtR.

References


Workshops

Silvia Hansen-Schirra, Silke Gutermuth
Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

Eyetracking for Easy-to-read

Easy-to-read is a language variety, which helps people with intellectual disabilities to understand texts in many different settings (e.g. administrative-juristic or medical texts). Existing sets of rules suggest how language can be formulated in order to improve readability and comprehensibility (e.g. Inclusion Europe; Bredel/Maaß 2016 for German). However, some of these rules are in conflict with one another, for instance reducing morphological complexity may increase phrasal complexity. Moreover, we do not know whether reduced textual complexity effectively leads to reduced processing and inference costs. This research gap can only be tested on the basis of empirical data.

In order to empirically investigate perception and comprehension of easy-to-read texts, several methods come into play (Hansen-Schirra/Gutermuth 2019, 2015): Eyetracking, for instance helps testing the readability of easy-to-read (Hansen-Schirra/Gutermuth 2018). Ratings and comprehensibility tests shed light on how well readers comprehend easy-to-read texts, whereas recall tasks show how much information can be memorized. Applying a mixed method approach, the efficiency of easy-to-read texts can be tested with respect to different target groups.

The workshop focuses on testing the readability of easy-to-read compared to plain or standard language by recording and quantifying eye movements, such as fixations (areas the eye stops on), saccades (jumps between fixations), and regressions (jumps back to previous text). Based on the eye-mind hypothesis (Just/Carpenter 1980), we correlate the eyetracking metrics with processing effort. This enables us to evaluate existing rules for easy-to-read and formulate suggestions for optimizations.

Program

The workshop includes three different parts:

1. Theoretical session: Introduction to Eyetracking (1 hour)

We will give an introduction into the underlying theory and technology of eyetracking. We will explain eyetracking metrics, the visualization of results (e.g. heatmaps, gaze plots) and analysis methods based on Areas of Interest (AOIs). We will discuss the do’s and don’ts concerning stimulus development and the competing demands of ecological validity and experimental control.

2. Practical session: Hands-on (2 hours)

Here, we will work with our eyetracker SMI RED 250 and design a real experiment, calibrate our own participants, collect data, define AOIs and calculate results for first fixation durations, total reading times etc. We will compare different text variants (easy-to-read vs. plain vs. standard language) and test text-image integration for easy-to-read texts. We will show how other methods, e.g. questionnaires or retrospective interviews can be integrated into the experimental setup.

3. Research session: Eyetracking research with Easy-to-read (0,5 hour)

In this session, we will present first eyetracking results on the readability and comprehensibility of easy-to-read German concerning which rules work well and which ones have to be refined on the basis of the empirical data. Finally, we will discuss the limitations of the eyetracking method.
References


Inclusion Europe: https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read/

Anne Parpan-Blaser, Gabriela Antener
School of Social Work, UAS Northwestern Switzerland

Proceedings around addressee-oriented communication: Roles of the addressed persons

There are different groups of people for whom the use of easy-to-read is profitable and has a positive effect on participation opportunities. The persons addressed with easy-to-read then have various important roles to play in the adaptation and design of texts.

The assessment of their language and reading skills, for example, is decisive for the choice of an appropriate language level and terminology. It is also necessary to assess their previous knowledge of the topic in order to take it up in the text. Inclusion Europe’s first standard points on this issue: «Always find out as much as you can about the people who will use your information and about their needs». Another role of the addressed persons is to contribute with their feedback to further differentiate the principles of easy-to-read language. On another level they are among the ones to claim for inclusion and demand easy-to-read language in different areas of society to create opportunities to participate for underprivileged groups. So far, however, there has been little research on the addressees of easy-to-read and their roles in the proceedings surrounding this language version. This is where the present workshop has its starting point.

Program

After an introduction to the subject of "addressee orientation" from a social science perspective (input by Gabriela Antener and Anne Parpan-Blaser), the workshop will lead an interdisciplinary discussion on the basis of various key questions. Summary and outlook open up the possibility of identifying research gaps in this subject area more precisely and of networking among experts (with regard to possible future projects).
**Eeva Rantamo**  
Kulturprojekte - Inklusive Kulturarbeit, Köln

**Easy to understand guided tours on arts and culture – The development of methods in a German-Finnish co-operation**

How do you plan a guided tour on art or cultural history for people with limited linguistic skills or learning disabilities? Together with the leisure club of a local care facility we developed in practice some basic approaches for easy-to-understand tours for people with learning disabilities. We benefitted decisively from the practical experience of the Finnish Centre of Easy to Read (Selkokeskus). This co-operation produced important results for the preparation and the course of a tour. These results are now serving to the further education of professionals of several cultural branches like in museums, libraries and tourism in Germany.

The focus here is on bridging the gap between different linguistic abilities. The designed methods cover the preparation of a tour by a suited grouping of participants and by providing advance information, as well as a precise, but flexibly performed planning or choice of demonstrative objects or illustrations. The most important tool however is the permanent dialogue with the participants.

**Program**

- Presentation of the results and experiences in Germany since 2015
- Discussion with the participants: challenges, practical tips and further development opportunities.

**Eeva Rantamo** is an ethnologist and works as a freelance accessibility consultant, trainer and project coordinator in Cologne, Germany. After her studies at the University of Turku in Finland and in Kiel in Germany in 1994 she has gained a wide experience as well in heritage-related institutions, tourism and education as in work with people with disabilities and immigrants in Germany. She specializes in subjects that examine and facilitate access to culture, inclusion and equality in cultural education. She works in close co-operation with experts in her home country, Finland. www.inklusive-kulturarbeit.de
CANCELLED

Laia Vidal, Elisabet Serra
Associació Lectura Fàcil (ETR Association)

How to write cultural ETR documents

The Easy-to-read Association is a non-profit organization. We work to make reading accessible to people with reading difficulties. Born in 2002, the ETR Association has become established as an information and reference centre for easy-to-read projects in Spain and South America. In 2005 we joined the International Easy-to-Read Network. From ETR Association we want to explain the importance of writing in a clear and easy way, to be close to all kind of audience. ETR has been introduced in different areas, like culture: museums, theatres, books, etc. With this workshop we want to explain and talk about: How to write ETR materials for cultural events? How to introduce ETR in a cultural project? What kind of materials and topics can be adapted? We will show some own experience and others that we have found all over the world.

In this video we explain (in English) part of our workday: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=4&v=PGfSX4_qco8. In this link we show some ETR adapted documents: https://list.ly/list/wMh-documents-adaptats-slash-documentos-adaptados

The workshop is a combination of theory and practical exercises.

Program

- What is ETR and how to arrive to public destination
- Guidelines to write and adapt ETR documents – IFLA (International Association of Library Associations and Institutions) and Inclusion Europe guidelines – Content, language and format – Adaptation process
- Examples of ETR cultural documents
- Practice exercises: about real documents (museums, theatres, books)

Elisabet Serra studied Journalism at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) and a Masters Degree in Publishing at IDEC – Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF). Following that, she worked in the press and in a number of communication departments. Since 2008, she has been responsible for coordinating the publishing projects of Associació Lectura Fàcil (Easy-to-Read Association) and adapting a wide range of texts for people with reading difficulties. She is currently Codirector of the Association with Eugènia Salvador.

Laia Vidal studied Journalism at the International University of Catalunya (UIC) and a Masters Degree in Comunication in Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). Following that, she worked in different communication departments. Since 2009, she has been responsible for communication department of Associació Lectura Fàcil (Easy-to-Read Association) and adapting a wide range of texts for people with reading difficulties.
As stipulated in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), people with disabilities have a right to education and to “reasonable accommodation of the individual’s requirements” (CRPD 2006).

The Department of Translation Technologies at the University of Geneva is collaborating with Handi-Capable, a Swiss association that supports the families of children with Cerebral Palsy (CP), on a project which aims to enhance inclusive education in Switzerland.

Easy-to-Read (EtR) language research has resulted in (a) the development of guidelines concerning the adaptation of texts and (b) its potential for various target groups with reading difficulties being demonstrated, i.e., dyslexia, learning disabilities, dementia, low literacy, non-native speakers etc. (Tronbacke, Nomura, and Nielsen 2010).

In view of this versatility, one of the goals of our project is to determine whether such guidelines can be applied to the learning material adapted for children with cognitive impairment, as the proportion of children with CP and intellectual impairment has been reported to vary between 40% and 65% (Dalvand et al. 2012).

For this purpose, a questionnaire will be sent to the specialised teachers in the French-speaking Canton of Vaud, in Switzerland. This exploratory study will enable us to collect data on current practices, the level of adaptation of the materials and the technology used in class. This data will underpin the design of a further study to test EtR content in a real-life scenario.

We expect that the above-mentioned studies will contribute to the development of a new set of methods and best practices designed to improve inclusive education and success for children with Special Needs.

References


Can you find Easy-to-Read materials in the library catalogue?

The format for entering and storing bibliographic metadata on library items provides codes that help to identify certain types of materials. The codes exist, among others, for large print books and for Braille. However, the format does not offer any way of storing information about the difficulty level of the language in a library item. This creates a considerable obstacle for finding easy-to-read materials at library systems, for customers as well as for the library staff.

Thanks to the codes in the MARC21 format, library systems can be built to filter the search results based on a wide range of criteria. Those include e.g. tactile materials, Braille music, and projected graphics. However, a customer searching for a text or for an audio book in easy-to-read language relies solely on the information added into the item’s metadata in the library catalogue records, in addition to the obligatory format data.

Adding this voluntary metadata is currently done through a nonunified and generally much less structured process than for most other format or content criteria, and a high level of variety exists in the practice between libraries. Neither has it been standardised in the internationally obeyed Resource Description and Access (RDA) instructions. Selecting physical easy-to-read books for a specific library shelf is a manual process as there’s no fully reliable method for identifying them in the library catalogue. The limitation demonstrates itself even clearer in electronic libraries where the records often need to be retrieved by the customer, without professional library training or advanced information searching skills.

The poster highlights the problem with the MARC21 bibliographic data format and the RDA cataloguing standard, its implications, and makes some preliminary suggestions to solve the problem.
Eliisa Uotila
University of Helsinki

Easy-to-read in Finland

The aim of easy-to-read is to prevent language-based exclusion and provide more equal and independent life for people to whom standard language is too difficult. Easy-to-read language has been developed in Finland since the 1980, following the example of Sweden, where the first easy-to-read materials had been published already a couple of decades earlier.

At first easy-to-read language was developed to serve the needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The essential idea was to produce easy-to-understand materials that would make different texts and literature accessible also to these people. It soon turned out that also other groups could benefit from easy-to-read language. For several decades, news, literature and various informative materials (e.g. voting, Kela benefits) have been published in EtR in Finland.

Testing and developing easy-to-read language with target groups has been the driving force in Finland but developers also relied on theoretical background from research i.e. special education, communications and memory research. Linguistic research concerning EtR is relatively scarce, but Klaara network has brought new enthusiasm to it.

This poster presentation sums up milestones of developing easy-to-read language and presents Finnish EtR materials as well as Finnish research on easy-to-read. Poster focuses on written easy-to-read, but other forms of EtR are mentioned briefly.

References


