Producing Easy Language for different target groups
– the art of compromise

Utiliser le langage simplifié pour différents publics – l’art du compromis

Workshop Easy language: linguistic criteria and target group
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Participation can be defined e.g. as person's experience of themself as an influential part of a community or a society and as their connection to meaningful relationships and sources of well-being.

(Leemann, Kuusio & Hämäläinen 2015, Isola et al. 2017)

Linguistic accessibility means the opportunity to use language in various situations, get information, express oneself, participate in community activities, and get linguistic support for doing all this, if necessary.

(Leskelä 2019, Leskelä & Lindholm, forthcoming)
Language varieties

Complex, abstract use of language

LSP – Standard language – Plain language – Easy language

Simple, concrete use of language

(Leskelä 2019; Leskelä, Mustajoki & Piehl, forthcoming)
Language varieties and recipients

Restricted recipient groups

Linguistic and conceptual simplicity

LSP

Standard Language

Easy Language

Linguistic and conceptual complexity

Plain Language

General audiences

(Leskelä 2019; Leskelä, Mustajoki & Piehl, forthcoming)
Promoting Easy Language in Finland
Groups of people needing Easy Language (in Finland)

1) Persons who have an innate and probably a lifelong need for Easy Language due to their neuro-biologically different language processing capacities (e.g. persons with intellectual disability, persons on the autism spectrum, persons with severe difficulties in reading, concentration and perception).

2) Persons whose linguistic capacities are impaired due to an injury, illness or trauma acquired during their lifetime (e.g. persons with aphasia, persons with memory-related illnesses), and

3) Persons who need Easy Language probably temporarily and possess another language or means of communication (e.g. persons learning Finnish or Swedish as a second language, sign language natives).

(Leskelä & Lindholm 2012)
Diverse but equally compelling needs

- People with congenitally and permanently reduced language processing capacities
- People who have lost (or are losing) their linguistic capacities during their life-time
- People who do not (yet) master the majority languages of the society
stigma

- disability \textit{an sich}
- self-inflictedness, origin
- duration
- disruptiveness
- aesthetic qualities
- peril

Orig. by Jones 1984, in the context of Easy Language, see e.g. Bredel & Maaß 2016; 2019; Leskelä, Mustajoki & Piehl, forthcoming 2022)
Being part of the reading world

Leskelä & Kulkki-Nieminen 2015; EL books, see selkokeskus.fi/selkokirjallisuus/
Easy Finnish books for readers with immigrant background

Common worries:
★★ Not linguistically challenging enough?
★★ No need for simplified contents?
★★ Embarassing to read?

High quality of EL literature has to be guaranteed.
Having an access to what’s going on in the world

A chance
★ to have an opinion on current issues
★ to take part in everyday-life’s discussions.

Diversity and high quality of EL news production needed.

(Easy Language Magazine Leija for readers with learning disabilities, 2014)
Exercising one’s democratic rights

A chance

❖ to participate in social and political discussions
❖ to be heard and taken into account

Worries:

★ EL target groups do not vote

General information in EL about the society and services (in multiple formats) is needed. Also concrete information about elections and voting has to be available.
Information in an attractive format

Worries:
★ EL layout looks too boring
★ EL information materials are too difficult to read

Visually interesting, inspiring and compelling EL information materials are needed.
Contexts of Easy Language

Written language

Spoken language
What is spoken Easy Language?

DELIVERING INFORMATION IN COMMUNICATION

Focus (usually) on
- simplest vocabulary
- frequent linguistic structures
- explaining difficult terms
- clear and comprehensible use of voice, speech tempo etc.

INTERACTING

Focus (usually) on
- negotiating
- repairing understanding troubles
- taking turns
- “face work”
- inspiring confidence,
- encouraging participation etc.
Kiitos!
Thank you!
Merci!
References


Easy Language books: https://selkokeskus.fi/selkokirjallisuus/


Leskelä, Mustajoki & Piehl (forthcoming). Easy and plain languages as special cases of linguistic tailoring and standard language varieties. Accepted to be published in Nordic Journal of Linguistics.