# Creation and translation of audiovisual content in oral Easy-to-Understand Language: insights from interviews with professionals[*]

# Creación y traducción de contenidos audiovisuales en lenguaje fácil de comprender oral: resultados de entrevistas con profesionales

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**Abstract**: This article discusses findings from eleven semi-structured interviews with experts who use oral Easy-to-Understand (E2U) Language in audiovisual content. Our research, grounded in audiovisual translation and accessibility studies, maps current practices concerning linguistic and prosodic aspects, paratextual elements, and validation processes. The contents follow written E2U Language linguistic recommendations. Prosodic features, like slower speech, pauses, and clear pronunciation are crucial, and content duration varies, but generally does not exceed the maximum recommended by Inclusion Europe. Use of subtitles and validation practices also vary depending on the content. This article highlights potential areas for future research, including speech speed, pause length, emphasis, emotivity, and sentence structure.

**Keywords**: Oral E2U Language; audiovisual translation; accessibility; recommendations; interviews.

**Resumen**: | Este artículo analiza los resultados de once entrevistas semiestructuradas con expertos que utilizan lenguaje fácil de comprender oral en contenidos audiovisuales. Se enmarca en los estudios de traducción audiovisual y accesibilidad. El estudio muestra las prácticas actuales en cuanto a aspectos lingüísticos y prosódicos, elementos paratextuales y validación del contenido. En general se siguen las recomendaciones lingüísticas escritas del lenguaje fácil de comprender y en la prosodia, un habla más lenta, pausas y una pronunciación clara son cruciales. La duración del contenido varía, pero generalmente no excede el máximo recomendado por Inclusion Europe. Tanto el uso de subtítulos como las prácticas de validación también varían. Este artículo destaca áreas potenciales para futura investigación, incluida la velocidad del habla, la duración de las pausas, el énfasis, la emotividad y la estructura de las oraciones.

**Palabras clave:** Lenguaje fácil de comprender oral; traducción audiovisual; accesibilidad; recomendaciones; entrevistas.

## INTRODUCTION

Easy-to-Understand (E2U) Language refers to any language variety which enhances comprehensibility. Until now, research and practice in this area have focused mostly on written texts (Matamala, 2022, 2023). Guidelines and standards on E2U Language have few recommendations regarding audiovisual content in which oral E2U Language is used and, even then, suggestions are rather vague (Accessible Information Working Group, 2011; ILSMH-EA, 1998; Inclusion Europe, 2009; ISO, 2023). The impact of different prosodic aspects on comprehension has been studied, although not focusing on E2U contexts (Blau, 1990; Brookshire and

Nicholas, 1984; Henderson and He, 2022; Pashek and Brookshire, 1982; Reid, 2003; Schaeffer et al., 2022; Schafer, 1997; Yoon et al., 2016). There has also been research in how to apply E2U Language in audiovisual content (Bernabé-Caro, 2020a, 2020b; Bernabé-Caro and Orero, 2020; Maaß and Hernández Garrido, 2020; Matamala, 2023). However, this research is still limited. Our investigation aims to partially fill this gap and tries to give an answer to the following research question: What are the current practices and challenges when using oral E2U Language in audiovisual content? To answer the research question, the article reports on interviews with professionals experienced in creating audiovisual content in oral E2U Language. The interviews aim to shed light on the specificities of oral E2U Language and its relationship with written E2U Language. To narrow down our research, the focus will be exclusively on one-way communication settings.

To begin with, the article defines key concepts and provides an overview of existing recommendations and research on oral E2U Language. It then presents the methodology and discusses the results. The article concludes with a summary of our main findings and suggestions for future research. Our research is grounded in audiovisual translation studies (AVT) and accessibility studies.

## 1. EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE

The ISO/IEC 23859:2023 standard defines E2U Language as "any language variety which enhances comprehensibility". Two well-established varieties are Easy Language (EL) and Plain Language (PL), but there can be intermediate varieties such as Easy Language Plus (EL+) (Maaß, 2020, p. 232).

EL (also known as Easy-to-Read) is a language variety that aims to facilitate reading and comprehension, following specific guidelines for wording, structure, design, and evaluation (ISO, 2023; Lindholm and Vanhatalo, 2021, p. 11). While traditionally targeted towards persons with cognitive disabilities, EL can also address persons with learning disabilities, functional illiteracy, and non-native speakers (Centre for Inclusive Design, 2020; Lindholm and Vanhatalo, 2021, p. 14). The ISO standard prioritises user needs instead of adopting a medical approach and considers EL to address persons with reading comprehension difficulties for any reason.

Conversely, PL uses clear wording, structure, and design to ensure users can easily understand and use the information the first time they read or hear it (Centre for Inclusive Design, 2020; ISO, 2023). The target users are the general public (Centre for Inclusive Design, 2020). EL+ is an intermediate variety of EL and PL. It has a "high level of perceptibility and comprehensibility", although not as high as EL, while the layout is closer to standard language (Maaß, 2020, p. 232).

In this article we will refer to "Easy Language", "Plain Language" and "Easy Language Plus" as "EL", "PL" and "EL+", but we will use "Easy Read", "ER", in direct quotations or when referring to terminology used by certain authors.

## 1. 1. Oral E2U Language recommendations

Some EL (UK Department of Health, 2009, 2010; García Muñoz, 2012; IFLA, 2010; NHS England, 2018; AENOR, 2018) and PL (Cutts, 2020; Health Service Executive, Health Promotion Unit and National Adult Literacy Agency, 2010) guidelines and recommendations suggest audio or video as alternatives or complements to written language but lack specific recommendations on oral aspects. A few provide recommendations regarding voice with slightly different approaches, as described next.

In EL, some guidelines recommend using low-pitched voices (Accessible Information Working Group, 2011), voices that are neither too high nor too low (Inclusion Europe, 2009) and allowing to choose the timbre if text-to-speech is used (ISO, 2023). Speakers should speak clearly (Inclusion Europe, 2009; ISO, 2023; North Yorkshire County Council, 2014) and make pauses (ILSMH-EA, 1998; Inclusion Europe, 2009; ISO, 2023). Speech speed should be suitable (ISO, 2023) and speaking slower is recommended (Inclusion Europe, 2009; North Yorkshire County Council, 2014), but not too slowly (ILSMH-EA, 1998). The voice should not be strongly accented, and it should express emotions (Inclusion Europe, 2009), while ISO/IEC 23859:2023 states that users should be able to choose their preferences. Voices should match on-screen characters (i.e. a male voice for a male character) (Inclusion Europe, 2009) and, for longer audios, multiple voices are recommended (ILSMH-EA, 1998). Content duration should be 20-30 minutes maximum (Inclusion Europe, 2009).

The guidelines recommend using precise and relevant visual elements (Accessible Information Working Group, 2011; Inclusion Europe, 2009)

and allowing sufficient processing time (ILSMH-EA, 1998; Inclusion Europe, 2009; UK Disability Unit, 2021). Explanations should be given for charts, graphs, and drawings, and on-screen text may be used to provide supplementary information (Accessible Information Working Group, 2011).

Finally, the script should be clear and logical (Accessible Information Working Group, 2011; ILSMH-EA, 1998; UK Disability Unit, 2021), the audio should be high quality (Accessible Information Working Group, 2011; Inclusion Europe, 2009; ISO, 2023), and long words should be explained (North Yorkshire County Council, 2014). Background noise and music should be avoided as well (UK Disability Unit, 2021).

PL recommendations are to keep the content short and to clearly indicate the audio ending. Numbers should be pronounced consistently (i.e. "zero" and not "oh") (MENCAP, 2000) and acronyms should be spelled out (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Beyond E2U, but related to a better comprehension, there are recommendations on improving "listenability", which aims to reduce cognitive demands on listeners and enhance comprehension. The Listenability Scale Guide (Rubin, 2012) recommends using simple language, repetition, and clear messaging. It also suggests using coordinating conjunctions instead of subordination, moderate clause length, verb forms to express actions, common words and contractions, and signalling transitions between topics. Additionally, it advises to tell listeners what will be discussed, using internal summaries.

## 1. 2. E2U in AVT and accessibility

Bernabé-Caro (2020b), Bernabé-Caro and Orero (2019), Maaß and Hernández Garrido (2020), and Matamala (2023) have explored the relationship between E2U Language and AVT and accessibility. Bernabé-Caro and Orero (2019) and Bernabé-Caro (2020b) propose hybrid accessibility services that merge E2U Language with existing services, including E2U audio comment, audio description (AD), audio explanation, audio intertitles, audio introduction, audio subtitles, audio summary, audio surtitles, remake, sight translation, voice-over, and consecutive and simultaneous interpreting. These new easy access services should follow text simplification recommendations, recommendations governing the access service (e.g. audio description guidelines), and digital accessibility guidelines.

Matamala (2022, 2023) presents an overview of E2U Language in AVT and accessibility, focusing on oral easy access services. These include easy AD, audio introductions and audio guides, audio subtitling, interpreting, voice-over and off-screen dubbing, and audio explanations or easy audios.

Maaß and Hernández Garrido (2020) explore the integration of E2U Language in different AVT modalities, finding EL and PL unsuitable for dubbing, as they would change the original language variety and make synchronisation more challenging. In voice-over, PL would be acceptable if the content is originally accessible, and it is also a more appropriate variety for film interpreting. Although E2U film interpreting has not been attempted yet (Matamala, 2023), EL simultaneous interpreting has been already performed (Nahón Guillén, 2020; Schulz et al., 2020; Yalon-Chamovitz and Avidan-Ziv, 2016). These studies suggest that, despite the name, the results are closer to PL, which Maaß and Hernández Garrido (2020) support by noting that PL is easier to produce spontaneously as it is less rule-governed than EL. However, it is unclear if EL cannot be produced spontaneously because interpreting samples in Nahón Guillén (2020) are closer to EL.

Concerning AD, Maaß and Hernández Garrido (2020) consider EL/PL AD useful only if the entire audio track is in those language varieties; otherwise, the final product would have different language difficulties. While Matamala (2023) proposes extended AD, in which visuals could be paused to provide longer explanations and potentially make the AD more acceptable to users, the issue of differing language difficulties is not addressed. Arias-Badia and Matamala (2020) also note that users may be reluctant to use simplified AD, finding it patronising and a hindrance to the imaginative process. They propose offering "audio adaptation" apart from standard AD and note that theatre plays, opera, dance, or museum AD could incorporate E2U Language more easily. Taylor and Perego (2020) support this by stating that ER could enhance museum accessibility by reducing the complexity and volume of information in AD. Bernabé-Caro and Orero (2020) observe that simplified AD should follow EL, AD, WCAG 2.1 (W3C, 2018), and sound mixing guidelines.

Finally, Bernabé-Caro and Orero (2019) mention "easy listening" or "easy to listen", which considers the choice of vocabulary, syntax, rhythm, and intonation, but it has yet to be researched. This concept is complementary to clean audio, which improves speech intelligibility by reducing the ambient noise, music, and sound effects. It can also be linked

to the concept of "listenability", which has not been studied with persons with cognitive disabilities, although there are studies regarding the effects of prosodic elements in comprehension (Blau, 1990; Brookshire and Nicholas, 1984; de-la-Mota and Rodero, 2011; Henderson and He, 2022; Kotani et al., 2014; Pashek and Brookshire, 1982; Prafiyanto, 2020; Prafiyanto et al., 2018; Reid, 2003; Schaeffer et al., 2022; Schafer, 1997; Yoon et al., 2016).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This paper discusses the results of eleven individual semi-structured interviews, one of which was a group interview with two participants who create content together. The interviews were conducted online in September and October 2022, with a maximum duration of 1 hour each. After a brief presentation by the researcher, participants signed informed consent forms. The interviews followed the schedule outlined in Table 1 and concluded with the researcher thanking the interviewees for their participation.

Given the limited existing research on easy audiovisual content creation, the selected interview questions aimed to map current practices concerning linguistic and prosodic aspects, paratextual elements, and validation processes. This approach provided a holistic view of current practices across various content types. Additionally, employing semi-structured interviews allowed interviewees the flexibility to introduce other relevant topics beyond the initial questions.

1. What background or experience do you have creating easy audiovisual content?
2. What type of content do you simplify?
3. Who is this simplified content, this xxxx [term they use], addressed to?
4. Where is this simplified content, this xxxx [term they use], offered?
5. When did this simplified content, this xxxx [term they use], start to be offered (in your country, if necessary)?
6. I would like to learn more about how this simplified content, this xxxx [term they use], is done. I would also like to focus on four aspects: creation/translation, language, content, and other elements.
   a. Do you create easy content, or do you translate already existing easy content?
   b. How do you simplify the language (vocabulary, grammar)?
   c. Some people say that there are different levels of simplification: from Easy Language (what was traditionally called easy-to-read) to Plain

Language, closer to standard language. Is your simplification closer to Easy or Plain Language?

d.  In terms of prosody (speed, pronunciation, etc.), do you take any specific aspect into account?

e.  How does the genre/content type influence the production of your easy content?

f.  Are there any time restrictions and, if so, how do you deal with them?

g.  How do you use other additional elements, if any: visuals, supplementary materials, etc.?

h.  Do you follow any existing guidelines, recommendations, or standards, if available?

i.  Do you take any other aspects that we have not mentioned into account when creating or translating easy content?

7.  Do you involve end users in the evaluation of the easy content? If so, how?

8.  Is there anything else you would like to add?

*Table 1*. Interview Schedule.

## 2. 1. Participants

Research and recommendations on oral E2U Language are scarce. To provide a broader view of how different easy content types are created, participants experienced in a wide range of content were targeted: E2U news, conference interpreting, educational material, and AD were some of the areas identified in the literature as current practices (Arias-Badia and Matamala, 2020; Maaß and Hernández Garrido, 2020; Matamala, 2023; Schulz et al., 2020). In line with the qualitative nature of this study, purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants with expertise covering the different areas identified in the literature review. The decision to interview a smaller number of participants (12 interviewees) was deliberate, aimed at facilitating in-depth and detailed interviews, as well as thorough subsequent analysis. The interviewees' profiles are presented in detail in the background subsection. The participants are anonymised using codes (P1, P2, P3, etc.).

## 2. 2. Analysis of the interviews

The interviews were transcribed using Teams' automatic transcription feature and later postedited. However, in two cases the transcript was done manually due to technical problems. The transcripts were coded with

Atlas.ti through a deductive process by using a premade code list, and an inductive process by modifying the list while examining the materials (Ballestín González and Fàbregues, 2018). The final list of codes is detailed in Figure 1:
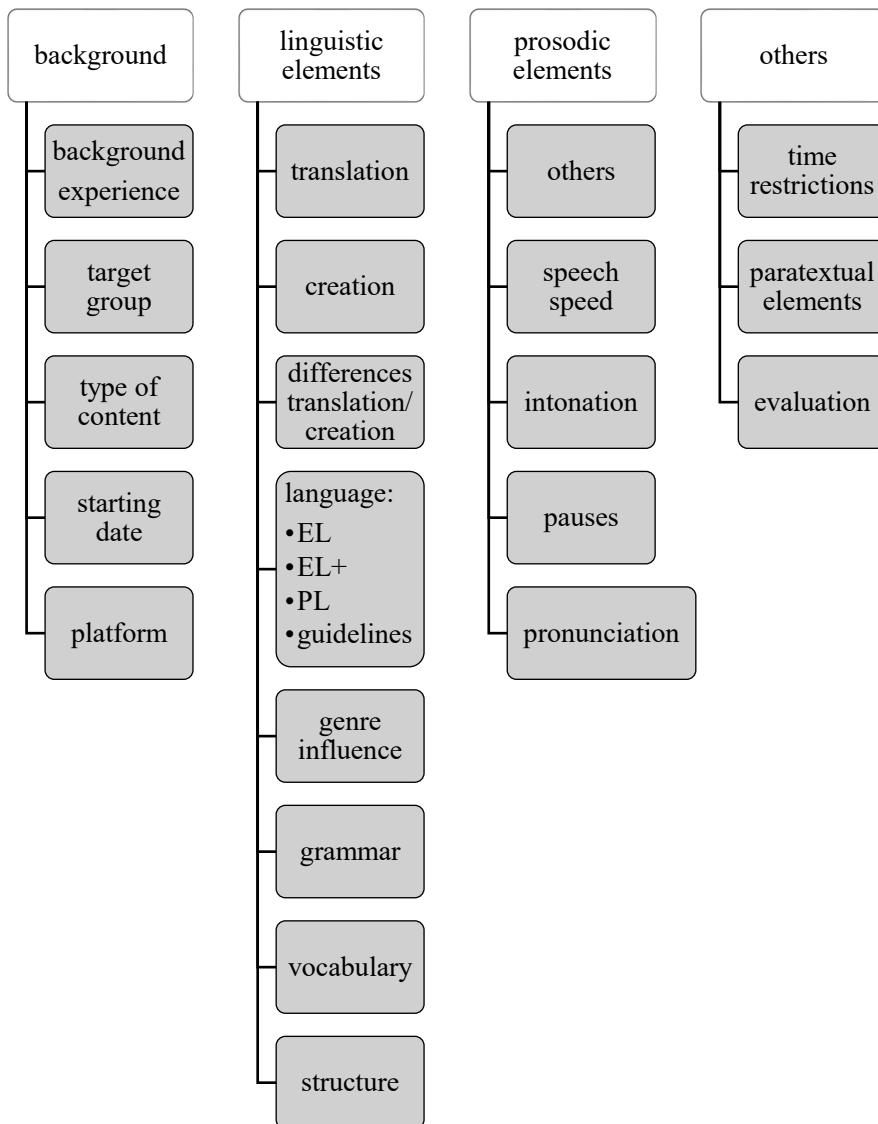


Figure 1. *Code list.*

Twenty-five codes were used, divided into four categories: "background", "linguistic elements", "prosodic elements", and "others". "Background" includes interviewee experience, basic parameters of content, and when content creation started. Interviewees were also asked when the type of content started being offered in their country. "Linguistic elements" covers vocabulary and grammar simplification, structure, genre influence on simplified content, language variety (EL, EL+, PL), and guidelines used.

It also has codes for creation and translation processes, although parameters such as time restriction may also be influenced by these processes. "Prosodic elements" encompasses relevant prosodic features, such as speech speed, intonation, pauses, and pronunciation. Finally, the "others" category includes other less common features such as time restrictions, paratextual elements, and evaluation processes.

After coding, the information was compared to identify patterns and similarities across different types of content.

### 3. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section contains six subsections:

> 1) background and context (covering background, target groups, content type, starting date, precedents, country, and platform),
> 2) linguistic elements (including grammar, vocabulary, guidelines, and content simplification)
> 3) prosodic elements,
> 4) time restrictions,
> 5) paratextual elements
> 6) validation and evaluation.

### 3. 1. Background and context

Table 2 provides a summary of each participant's background, detailing the type of easy audiovisual content they create or have created, along with information on their target audience, start date, and language variety.
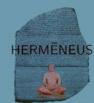
| Participant code | Content | Target users | Starting date | Platform | Country/ language/ variety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | News interpreting | adults with a low or medium level of intellectual disability with schooling | 2009 | Television | Argentina / Spanish<br><br>EL+ |
| P2 and P3 | Easy news | people with intellectual disabilities | 2020 | News web portal (enostavno.info) | Slovenia / Slovenian<br><br>EL+ |
| P4 | News interpreting | adults with a low or medium level of intellectual disability with schooling | 2009 | Television | Argentina / Spanish<br><br>EL+ |
| P5 | Educative course for validators | people with reading disabilities | 2020 | Google Classroom | Romania, Austria, Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Spain / English (and will be translated into national languages)<br><br>EL |
| P6 | Mediation | people with intellectual disabilities | 2020 | Online | Argentina / Spanish<br><br>EL |

| Participant code | Content | Target users | Starting date | Platform | Country/ language/ variety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P7 | Informative and institutional videos | non-native Finnish and Swedish speakers, people with loss of cognitive abilities and neurobiological linguistic difficulties | 2007-12 | Institutional webpages | Finland / Finnish and Swedish<br><br>EL |
| P8 | Films AD | people with intellectual disabilities | 2005-7 | Live sessions at the cinema | Brazil / Portuguese<br><br>EL and PL |
| P9 | Easy Swedish newscast | originally non-native Swedish speakers, later people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities as well | 2016 | Television and online | Sweden / Swedish<br><br>EL |
| P10 | Informative and institutional videos | people with intellectual and reading disabilities, and non-native Swedish speakers | 2010 | Websites | Sweden / Swedish<br><br>EL |
|  | Training for EL interaction | people with intellectual disabilities | 2022 | Workshop |  |
| P11 | Conference interpreting | people with cognitive disabilities | 2016 | Online and in-person | Germany and Austria / German<br><br>EL |

| Participant code | Content | Target users | Starting date | Platform | Country/ language/ variety |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P12 | Informative video | people with intellectual disabilities or cognitive decline, prelingual hearing loss, low literacy level and non-native speakers | 2016 | Asociación Española de Fundaciones Tutelares web page | Spain / Spanish |
| | Audio explanation | | 2011 | | EL |

*Table 2*. Summary of background information.

Looking at the type of content created by the interviewees, four main areas can be identified: news contents, informative and educative content, conferences and meetings interpreting and mediation, and AD and audio explanations.

Starting with news contents, P1 and P4, from Argentina, participate in live news intralingual interpreting addressed to adults with a low or medium intellectual disability who have been through the education system. This service started in response to a 2009 law requiring television content to be accessible to individuals with hearing, visual, and intellectual disabilities. P2 and P3 are Slovenian journalists who produced an easy news video pilot in 2020 that is available online. In their interview, they stated they would start translating audiovisual content into EL in 2023, being the first to produce such content for national TV and radio in Slovenia, despite the existence of other organisations working with EL in the country. Finally, P9's master's thesis focused on Sveriges Television's Easy Swedish newscast, which launched in 2016. The programme reuses news videos and adds a voice-over to make them more accessible to non-Swedish speakers, including refugees and immigrants, and people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities.

Regarding informative and educative content, P5 from Spain was developing an educational course for validators with reading disabilities under the Train to Validate project (2020-2023), parallel to a course for facilitators. At the time of the interview, it was said that the course would

be available on Google Classroom after the project's completion. Currently, it can be found on the webpage of Plena Inclusión Madrid[1]. A precedent in Spain for this type of content could be the programme Planeta Fácil TV. P7 from Finland has also created institutional and informative videos in EL for municipalities, organisations, and enterprises, available on their websites, targeting non-native Finnish or Swedish speakers and people with cognitive impairment and neurobiological linguistic difficulties.

This type of content started being created around 2007-2012. In addition, P10 in Sweden creates and translates institutional videos into EL since 2010, available on institutional websites. Furthermore, they conducted workshops for politicians in 2022 under the My Choice project, led by an NGO study organization since 2014, teaching politicians to speak in EL so that people with intellectual disabilities could vote confidently. An important difference P10 notes between translated and created content is that translated content often lacks a clear target group, as translation is often an afterthought. Finally, P12 from Spain translated a short video into EL in 2016 on establishing guardianship for adults, available on the webpage of the Asociación Española de Fundaciones Tutelares.

Turning to conferences and meetings interpreting and mediation, P6 offers online intralinguistic mediation into EL for persons with intellectual disabilities in both national and international meetings since 2020, being the sole provider of this service in Argentina. Additionally, P11 provides simultaneous conference interpreting in EL for people with cognitive disabilities in Germany and Austria since 2016, both online and in-person. They often have familiarity with their users' education level and the subject they will interpret. Similar services have been offered in Germany since 2010-2013.

Finally, P8 initiated Brazil's International Disability Film Festival in 2003. Around 2005-2007, they introduced special sessions for people with intellectual disabilities with live AD translated into EL and PL, depending on the film. This was unprecedented in Brazil. P12 also created EL audio explanations for theatre plays as part of an accessible theatre project that started in 2011. This content targets people with intellectual disabilities, cognitive decline, prelingual hearing loss, low literacy levels, and non-native speakers.

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[1] See https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/train2validate/easy-to-read-academy/

## 3. 2. Linguistic elements

Table 3 summarises the content types, language variety, and guidelines followed by the interviewees, which will be explained in this section.

| Participant code | Content | Language variety | Guidelines | Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | News interpreting | EL+ | Internal guidelines UNE standards | Spanish |
| P2 and P3 | Easy news | EL+ | Inclusion Europe Zavod Risa | Slovenian |
| P4 | News interpreting | EL+ | Internal guidelines UNE standards | Spanish |
| P5 | Educative course for validators | EL | Internal guidelines Plena Inclusión | English (national languages in the future) |
| P6 | Mediation | EL | Easy-to-read Fundación Visibilia IFLA guidelines UNE standards | Spanish |
| P7 | Informative and institutional videos | EL | Easy Finnish Indicator 2.0 Instructions for interaction in oral PL | Finnish and Swedish |
| P8 | Films AD | EL, PL | --- | Portuguese |
| P9 | Easy Swedish newscast | EL | IFLA guidelines Inclusion Europe | Swedish |
| P10 | Informative and institutional videos | EL | Swedish Centre for Easy-to-Read | Swedish |

| Participant code | Content | Language variety | Guidelines | Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Training for EL interaction |  |  |  |
| P11 | Conference interpreting | EL | Capito<br><br>Netzwerk Leichte Sprache<br><br>University of Hildesheim | German |
| P12 | Informative video<br><br>Audio explanation | EL | Inclusion Europe | Spanish |

*Table 3.* Summary of linguistic elements.

While all interviewees simplify language by following basic recommendations for written EL, such as using short sentences, common vocabulary, and avoiding subordination, they each mentioned specific strategies tailored to their content.

Starting with P1 and P4, they simplify live news for two channels using "simplified PL", which we classify as EL+. In one TV channel, they simplify all content by following a subject-verb-complement sentence structure, avoiding technicisms or abstract concepts but explaining them when necessary. They avoid foreign words, abbreviations and acronyms, as well as childish vocabulary, and use repetition to reinforce ideas. However, in the other channel, they only provide an oral explanation for difficult words or concepts and allow users to hear journalists speaking in standard language when they do not speak. Although the interpreters follow an internal guideline based on UNE standards (AENOR, 2018), the specific interpreting styles were chosen by the TV channels.

In contrast, in P2 and P3's easy news pilot the information is already given in EL+, following the Inclusion Europe (2009) and Zavod Risa's guidelines (Haramija and Knapp, 2019) for Slovenian, thereby eliminating the need of interpretation. Their aim is to convey "one or two [pieces of] information per sentence" and "maintain [their] standards" as journalists for accuracy, which means they cannot change certain difficult words or expressions. Instead, they use precise words, numbers, and quantities, while explaining them as simply as possible.

Similarly to P1 and P4, P5 also uses internal project guidelines to create educational videos for validators in EL, although they use Plena Inclusión (2018) for validation. According to P5, structuring and planning the content to be read aloud is key. For example, subordinate sentences should be avoided, as P5 considers them more difficult to understand orally than in written texts. As complex vocabulary cannot always be avoided or adapted in educational contents, it is important to contextualise and explain it without using vulgar or colloquial language.

P6 mediates in conferences and meetings following EL guidelines from Fundación Visibilia, IFLA (2010), and UNE (AENOR, 2018). Their mediation strategies are similar to P1 and P4's interpreting approaches, as P6 may choose to explain or contextualize difficult concepts in some meetings while completely simplifying the entire speech in others. They also adjust their vocabulary depending on the context of the meeting, using common Argentinian Spanish words in regional meetings, and finding a common word across dialects in Latin American meetings.

P7 follows the Easy Finnish Indicator (Finnish Centre for Easy Language, 2022) and recommendations for interaction in oral PL that have been recently revised. Most recommendations align with basic written EL ones, with specific guidelines for Finnish, such as avoiding non-finite clauses and structures. They mention that since EL videos can be "of different kinds", the EL guidelines they follow are more "loose". Furthermore, P7 also observes that "in the videos, you can be more compact with the language than in a text" because an image "can carry the understanding".

In contrast to other interviewees, P8 did not know about EL or PL and AD when they started translating film AD into E2U Language, so they do not follow any specific guidelines or recommendations. To make an easy AD, they use shorter sentences than in standard AD, although P8 also mentions that in standard AD they usually avoid "difficult, rare language" due to time restrictions and aim for precise language because "[the] audience has to understand in a few words", which aligns with basic EL recommendations.

According to P9, the Easy Swedish newscast mostly follows IFLA (2010) and Inclusion Europe (2009) guidelines. Although the programme tries to follow basic recommendations, as with P5, it is not always possible to use common vocabulary due to the topic of the news. Like P7, images in the news programme are used to help explain the content and avoid time constraints. However, P9 found no significant differences when comparing

easy and standard news, possibly because standard news are generally reported in PL.

Turning to P10, they follow the Swedish Centre for Easy-to-Read's guidelines when creating informative and institutional videos and training for politicians. Besides basic EL recommendations, they pay special attention to numbers and statistics, as those can be difficult to understand. As an example, P10 says that "80 million is a lot, but if it's 80 million out of 300 billion, it's very little". Furthermore, when training politicians, they also advise using synonymous words if they have different political nuances, such as "globalisation" and "internationalisation", while explaining them. Finally, P10 also refers to the structure of ER translations, which often must be changed substantially and end up being longer.

Regarding P11, they are familiar with the three main schools of easy German (Capito, Netzwerk Leichte Sprache, and the University of Hildesheim) to provide easy interpreting. Since P11 considers grammar the main comprehension barrier in oral German, they use short, clear sentences, minimise subordinate clauses, and use a more verbal language instead of substantivised words. In terms of vocabulary, they consider the target users' level of education and knowledge when selecting it. For instance, at the Special Olympics, P11 does not explain specific terminology like acronyms because the users understand them.

They also avoid foreign words or explain them if they are widely used. Finally, they avoid compound words by saying "the x of the..." since, although in written Easy German, compound words can be separated with a dash (-) or a middle dot (·), this approach cannot be transferred to oral Easy Language.

Lastly, P12 follows Inclusion Europe guidelines (2009) to create their EL content. As happens with easy AD for P8, audio explanations must be very short due to time constraints. They also avoid using literary techniques typical of theatre plays.

As mentioned as well by P5 and P9, in informative videos, technical terms that cannot be replaced by an easier synonym must be explained, described, or used in a context that makes the meaning obvious. P12 also notes that prosodic elements make it easier to "control the length of the sentences".

As seen, linguistic aspects in oral EL language do not vary much from written recommendations, with a preference for using short and clear sentences with common vocabulary when possible.

### 3. 3. Prosodic elements

Regardless of content type, most participants agree that a slower speech speed is crucial. However, among the twelve interviewees, only P1 mentions a specific speed, around 125 words per minute in Spanish. P2 and P3 are less specific, aiming to use a speed that is a quarter of the standard Slovenian speed, while P12 recommends a speed that allows the content to be listened to "comfortably" and without "an excessive effort". P5 also notices the importance of using cadence "in a way that attracts attention" and warns against slowing speech in an unnatural or robotic way. P6 mentions the need to anticipate speech while mediating if the speakers are too fast to not lose information.

Speed also impacts modulation and pronunciation, something that is important to keep in mind, as interviewees also agree that pronunciation must be clear. For instance, P1 highlights the impact a faster speed has, as "you can't modulate the words properly", reducing comprehension. Similarly, P12 comments that "you can't speak too fast" because "pronunciation must be very clear". Furthermore, the Easy Swedish newscast aims for an "easier" pronunciation according to P9, while P2, P3, and P12 believe that it should be "more eloquent" and clear than standard speech, though this is already the practice in audio and television content in their countries.

Several interviewees also use intonation to highlight key information to make the content easier, which aligns with the observation put forth by Yoon et al. (2016) that stress and intonation aid in interpreting information. P8 highlights meanings in easy AD by "exaggerating more" to help understand character emotions. In easy interpreting, P11 adopts the speaker's voice and highlights information with intonation, while using less emphasis in standard interpreting. In contrast, P2, P3, and P12 follow existing intonation standards for standard content.

Pauses are another prosodic element noted in reviewed standards and guidelines (ILSMH-EA, 1998; Inclusion Europe, 2009; ISO, 2023) and by interviewees. Moreover, research by Blau (1990), Prafiyanto et al. (2018), and Yoon et al. (2016) also emphasises that pauses are crucial for higher comprehension. This is echoed by P10 and P11, who note that pauses help users process information. Concerning the use of pauses, P5 employs them to mark "when you change from one topic to the other" to show "progression". Similarly, P7 suggests making longer pauses "between the

so-called prosodic contents", but not between individual words. In easy interpreting, P11 also observes that pausing is encouraged, unlike in standard interpreting.

The use of expressivity and emotivity differs depending on the content. For news programmes, P4 mentions the simplified version should follow the standard version to help users identify with the speaker. However, both P5 and P6, working on educational video content and mediation respectively, consider important not to be "boring", and P6 explains that the speech should be more like "storytelling" instead of monotonous.

Finally, live interpreter P11 mentions that users prefer a "deeper voice" than a very high one, aligning with the Accessible Information Working Group's (2011) recommendation and the findings in an AD study done by (Machuca and Matamala, 2022, pp. 684, 685). P12, who works with theatre and video content, also adds that voices should match characters on screen. For example, a female character should have a female voice.

## 3. 4. Time restrictions

Strategies for managing time constraints vary based on content type and whether it is live or pre-recorded.

During live news interpretation, users rely on the images, which must align with the discourse. Because of this, P1 notes that if the news item changes, the interpreters must switch as well, even if the previous interpretation was unfinished. However, P1 observes that journalists often repeat themselves in standard language, allowing interpreters to convey all the necessary information.

For easy AD, P8 considers the length of the films (30 minutes or less) and the gaps for AD between dialogues. Furthermore, the narrators are actors who can improvise if necessary. In "quick and difficult scenes", narrators "simplify more" depending on temporal and contextual requirements.

In conference and meetings interpreting and mediation, P6 and P11 agree that summarising is key. For example, if a speaker talks too fast or provides too much information, P11 may only provide key points or just explain some of the examples given to avoid overwhelming users. Conversely, P6 sometimes waits for the speaker to complete an idea before summarising everything.

Finally, P12 explains that the audio explanations for a theatre play were created considering the time available. A sound technician was present during the play to ensure timing, and the actors tried to not take too many "licenses" to avoid overlaps.

Regarding pre-recorded content, P9 explains that in the Easy Swedish newscast, which lasts 5 minutes, there are two or three in-depth news items and some shorter ones lasting 15 seconds. However, this occasionally results in complex news items that are not easier than the standard due to insufficient time for detailed explanations. P9 also notes that "it's also difficult to just have five minutes when you are targeting groups that need more time". Similarly, P2 and P3's easy news pilot has a duration of around 1 minute to 1 minute and a half, following news and informative programme standards. However, they mention that their content might be "longer", but they will "test it".

P5 educational videos are also around 5-6 minutes long so as not to overwhelm users, compared to the 8-10 minutes for standard users. Additionally, P5 mentions that the content "needs to be shorter" than the standard version or else users may become distracted. As videos are mostly created from scratch, there are fewer time restrictions, but when standard videos must be translated, P5 relies on summarising information. P7 also creates informative videos and prefers to make them "short", although they do not have time restrictions nor duration limits.

Finally, P10 does not report any time constraints in their informative videos.

To summarise, two main discussion areas emerge: the maximum duration of simplified E2U content and the synchronisation of the simplified audio with the visuals, which is especially challenging in translated content. Time constraints are solved by summarising information and, where possible, preselecting the content to be translated.

## 3. 5. Paratextual elements

Table 4 summarises the paratextual elements used by the interviewees, which will be explained in this section.

| Participant code | Content type | Images and video | Subtitles or transcripts | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | News interpreting | standard video | | |
| P2 and P3 | Easy news | -adapted<br><br>-must be concrete<br><br>-correlation between audio and image | closed captions | news article |
| P4 | News interpreting | | | |
| P5 | Educative course for validators | -the speaker is visible<br>-images strengthen comprehension | | transcription, bibliography, teacher guides and exercises |
| P6 | Mediation | the mediator is invisible | | |
| P7 | Informative and institutional videos | images help explain and shorten narration | | |
| P8 | Films AD | film video | untranslated subtitles | untranslated voice-over, discussion session |
| P9 | Easy Swedish newscast | -standard video<br>-correlation between all content elements | -for foreign languages, strong dialects, and bad audio quality<br><br>-audio subtitles on the website | |
| P10 | Informative and institutional videos | | -subtitles with text-to-speech<br><br>-translated and untranslated | |
| | Training for EL interaction | | | |

| Participant code | Content type | Images and video | Subtitles or transcripts | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P11 | Conference interpreting | | | brief summary, red card |
| P12 | Informative video | correlation between audio and image | untranslated subtitles | |
| | Audio explanation | | | |

*Table 4*. Summary of paratextual elements.

Most of the content the interviewees work with include videos and/or images. In news content, the interviewees report different practices regarding this visual support. P1 and P4 cannot change the images in their live news interpreting, while P2 and P3 can modify the standard content for their easy news. P2 and P3 try to use "concrete" photos or "the best approximation possible" to correspond with the audio elements. However, ensuring a "balance" between being concrete and not repetitive is difficult since using the same image repeatedly can make the content less dynamic. P9 also emphasises the importance of all content elements, "verbal, non-verbal, visual, and non-visual", cooperating to create the news, which is challenging to achieve. P9 notes that in easy news, this cooperation is sometimes lacking, and the video is not as integrated in the narration as in standard news.

To create informative and educative videos, P12 collaborated with an illustrator who was "knowledgeable about facilitating comprehension" to create an informative video where the images closely followed the audio steps. Regarding this, P7 and P9 also acknowledge that images can be used to explain information and reduce narration. However, P5 and P6 disagree on whether the speaker should appear on screen. P5 adds a small window for a "human connection", while P6 believes a mediator should be "hidden" unless requested. P5 also incorporates PowerPoint presentations, often with images to enhance comprehension and make the information more appealing.

Subtitles and transcripts are another support element present. P2 and P3 use closed captions for the whole video, but not transcripts, which they find "not so easy to read". On the other hand, P9 says the Easy Swedish

newscast only uses subtitles for foreign languages, strong dialects, or bad audio quality. Furthermore, although they mention that there are audio subtitles on the website, these do not work well as users hear the easy narration and the audio subtitle simultaneously. For institutional videos, P10 uses subtitles with a text-to-speech function that are either a "shortened version" of the audio or untranslated, while P12's subtitles for informative videos are untranslated. Finally, P5 prefers transcripts instead of subtitles, as they find them "easier" for users.

As a final point, several of the interviewees mentioned other elements they use as support for users. For example, P5 offers further bibliography on the topic of the videos, teacher guides, and exercises for the students to supplement the educative videos, while P2 and P3 have considered using easy news articles to supplement the easy news videos. The dialogues in P8's films are also voiced-over live, but not translated into E2U Language as is the case with the AD.

However, despite potential mixed language difficulties (Maaß & Hernández Garrido, 2020, p. 151), P8 does not report such problems. They add that a post-film debate session can clarify any confusion, and P8 can provide additional information about the film and plot upon request before the screening. In conference interpreting, P11 comments that sometimes a brief summary of the ideas discussed is offered every half an hour or hour to reinforce them. Furthermore, for in-person interpreting, P11 gives users a red card they can raise to signal they need further clarification or contextualisation.

## 3. 6. Validation and evaluation

Validation is a crucial element in the Spanish UNE standard (AENOR, 2018), where a group of validators collaborates with a facilitator to "evaluate the comprehensibility of a document" in EL. The ISO/IEC 23859:2023 standard (ISO, 2023) broadens this concept and refers to "evaluation", which includes expert and user evaluations "to determine whether content is easy to read and easy to understand". However, the ISO standard acknowledges that it may not always be possible to evaluate content with users before its release, so expert evaluation may be relied upon. User feedback can still be gathered after publication to improve existing practices and evaluate content.

Three different validation/evaluation processes were identified among the interviewees.

Firstly, there are the cases in which some content is not validated due to time constraints but can receive feedback for future improvement. For instance, P1 and P4 do not validate their live news interpreting due to the lack of a unified organisation representing people with intellectual disabilities in their country. P1 and P4 can receive "comments" through television channels and the organisation Defensoría del Público; however, not many are received due to the service being unknown to the target group.

Although P2 and P3's content is not live, they also mention that they cannot wait to make the easy news available to users, so they cannot validate the content before publishing it. Nonetheless, they plan to receive "feedback" with questionnaires through user organisations, as they do in easy news articles, to improve future content.

In simultaneous conference interpreting, P11 uses a red card system for "pseudo-verification" during the conference and afterwards, if possible, speaks to users "to receive feedback". They also use users' expressions to gauge comprehension when possible.

Finally, although P8 works with visually impaired "validators" for the standard AD, they do not do the same yet with the easy AD. However, they mention that they receive feedback for the easy AD after the screening sessions and they plan to work with "persons with intellectual disabilities" to validate the easy AD in the future.

Secondly, validation is part of the creation process in some instances. P9 notes the Easy Swedish newscast "evaluates" the content with Swedish language learners but not with additional target users, although P9 is not aware of what the evaluation entails. P5's educational course will also be "evaluated" in each of the local languages with a "facilitator" who will go through a "battery of common questions" with validators. P10's training workshop "works closely" with the Swedish Association for Children, Youth and Adults with Intellectual Disabilities, with whom they hold focus groups. Finally, P12 usually works with 3-8 validators who "review" the content with a facilitator but, in the past, they have also worked with a person with an intellectual disability during production.

Thirdly, some content is not validated nor receives feedback. P7 notes that while they recommend using "test users" or involving users in production, it is not required, and it is often not done. P10 is also unsure if institutional and informative videos are validated.

| Participant code | Content type | No validation, but feedback | Validation or inclusion of target group | No validation nor feedback |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | News interpreting | X | | |
| P2 and P3 | Easy news | X | | |
| P4 | News interpreting | X | | |
| P5 | Educative course for validators | | X | |
| P6 | Mediation | | | |
| P7 | Informative and institutional videos | | | X |
| P8 | Films AD | X | | |
| P9 | Easy Swedish newscast | | X | |
| P10 | Informative and institutional videos | | | X |
| | Training for EL interaction | | X | |
| P11 | Conference interpreting | X | | |
| P12 | Informative video Audio explanation | | X | |

*Table 5*. Summary of validation and evaluation procedures.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

This article reports on data obtained from eleven semi-structured interviews with experts who use oral E2U Language in audiovisual content. This has allowed us to address our research question and map current practices and challenges regarding linguistic and prosodic aspects, paratextual elements, and validation processes.

The results show that most interviewees find written E2U Language recommendations (such as using short and active sentences, common vocabulary, and avoiding subordination, metaphors, and abstract concepts) appropriate for oral content, although they note that technical or complex concepts may be difficult to avoid. Prosodic features like slower speech speed, pauses, and good pronunciation are important regardless of content type. However, only two specific speed rates are mentioned: 125 words per minute for Spanish, and a quarter of the standard speed in Slovenian. Intonation is used to highlight information, and naturalness is also important, according to the interviewees. Time constraints in translated content is mostly managed through summarisation. Easy news, educational and informative videos, and live easy AD do not exceed the recommended maximum of 30 minutes (Inclusion Europe, 2009), while the duration of news and conference interpreting, mediation, and theatre audio explanation is unknown. Images and videos must be precise and correlate with the audio, in line with existing guidelines (Accessible Information Working Group, 2011; Inclusion Europe, 2009). However, research on enhancing comprehension in written content with images shows unclear results (Rivero-Contreras et al., 2021; Schatz et al., 2017; Sutherland and Isherwood, 2016). Interviewees' opinions differ on using transcriptions or translated or untranslated subtitles. More research is needed in this area, in line with the studies by Bernabé-Caro et al. (2020), Bernabé-Caro and Cavallo (2021), and Oncins et al. (2020). Finally, validation and evaluation practices vary, but interviewees stress time constraints that impede or difficult this process before publication.

According to the interviewees, genre affects linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary and word precision, content narration, and emotivity. The Slovenian easy news follows journalistic standards for accuracy in vocabulary and expressions. Similarly, educative and informative videos sometimes must use complex terminology. During training for politicians, using different synonyms for political terms is suggested, if they are well explained. Simplification strategies vary: news interpreting and mediation involve either complete simplification of speech or contextualisation of complex concepts depending on the TV channel or meeting. Conversely, in live easy film AD, the simplification level is adjusted based on time restrictions. Finally, in news interpreting, emotivity should match the standard, but in educational videos and mediations, it is important to avoid being boring.

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the focus is mainly on EL or EL+ since only one interviewee reports using PL. Secondly, rather than focusing on one genre or country, the research has looked at diverging types of content which nonetheless share one key aspect: the use of oral E2U Language in audiovisual one-way communication settings. Each content has its own specificity and would merit independent research, but this article provides a first contrastive approach and serves as a basis to understand how oral E2U Language is currently being used in audiovisual settings.

New research directions have also been identified in relation to oral E2U Language. In prosodic aspects, research is needed to determine the optimal speech speed, keeping in mind that it may vary between languages. Additionally, pauses should be studied to determine their effectiveness, as well as their optimal length and position. Researching the preferred type of emphasis could also be studied. Finally, emotivity also requires further research, as the interviewees have diverging views. Research like Blau (1990), de-la-Mota and Rodero (2011), Prafiyanto et al. (2018), or Yoon et al. (2016) could be used as a basis to expand into research with people with cognitive disabilities as a target group. Effectiveness of transcriptions versus translated or untranslated subtitles remains uncertain as well. Investigating the impact of orality on the efficacy of shorter sentences would be valuable. This is particularly relevant, as an interviewee mentioned using prosodic elements to control sentence length, and Kotani et al. (2014) discovered that sentence length had no significant influence on listenability, in contrast to written texts.

Additionally, it is worth exploring whether the favoured grammatical structures in written language are equally understandable in oral texts. All in all, research possibilities are manifold because, as indicated in the introduction, investigations in this field are still limited.

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