

## Easy Language in Spain<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Introduction

Spain has a population of 47.3 million inhabitants. The country is divided into 17 autonomous regions (constitutionally denominated *comunidades autónomas*) and 2 autonomous cities. Spanish is the official language of the country, although there are co-official languages in some autonomous regions. Basque is co-official in the Basque Country and Navarre. Galician is co-official in Galicia. Catalan is co-official in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, and Valencian is co-official in the Valencian Community. Catalan and Valencian are different denominations of different geographical variations of the same language. Finally, Aranese is also co-official in Catalonia. Spanish and Catalan Sign Languages reached official status by law in 2007. Spanish is also official in 19 American countries and in Equatorial Guinea in Africa.

With the exception of the Basque language, the origin of which is still under discussion, the other languages in Spain have evolved from Latin. The main characteristics of Spanish are two genders (masculine and feminine); a wide range of verbal inflections, with three modes (indicative, subjunctive and imperative), 17 tenses (ten for the indicative, six for the subjunctive and one for the imperative) – ten of which are simple and seven of which are compound forms; no cases; and a high correlation between writing and phonetics, with some exceptions such as the *h*, which is silent, and the variety *c/s*. In most parts of Spain, the soft *c* is similar to the soft /*th*/ sound in English (/θ/), while in

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1 The term *Easy Language* is used here for consistency with the rest of the chapters in this volume as a synonym for *Easy-to-Read/Easy Read* (*Lectura fácil* in Spanish). However, in translations of bibliographical references, when referring to the name of certain organizations, and when referring to the Spanish standard, we have kept *Easy Read* as a translation of the Spanish *Lectura fácil* to make the authors' terminological choices visible.

Andalusia, the Canary Islands, and America it is pronounced /s/. This causes confusion in the transcription of many words.

Apart from the official languages, some other languages are spoken in Spain, such as Arabic, Romanian, English, German, the Amazigh languages, and Italian. In the first semester of 2020, the highest numbers of foreign residents in Spain were for citizens from Morocco, Rumania, the UK, Colombia, Italy, Venezuela, China, Germany, Ecuador, Bulgaria, Honduras, France, Peru, Ukraine, and Portugal.

Officially, the illiterate population of Spain is near to zero, but official figures reported 13 000 people in 2018<sup>2</sup>. However, the results of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>3</sup> showed that the mean literacy score in Spain was 14 points below the OECD average (252 vs 266). The difference was higher with older age. For instance, Spain was 19 points below the OECD average for people aged between 55 and 65. In addition, 27.5% of the Spanish PIAAC participants scored low in literacy.

## 2 Historical perspectives

The beginnings of Easy Language in Spain can be traced back to a report by Mayol and Salvador (1999) on Easy Language materials, which analysed the situation in Catalonia and Europe and made some recommendations on how to implement Easy Language in Catalonia. The report includes a translation into Catalan of the guidelines for Easy Language materials by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). This report preceded the creation of the Easy Read Association (*Associació Lectura Fàcil, ALF*). In 2001, a group of professionals linked to the fields of education and libraries created an Easy Language committee as part of the Official College of Librarians and Documentalists of Catalonia (*Col·legi Oficial de Bibliotecaris-Documentalistes de Catalunya, COBDC*). The Easy Read Association was

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2 UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

3 OECD Education GPS, <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/> (Explore Data, PIAAC)

legally founded in 2003, and in 2005 it organized the first international meeting on Easy Language in Spain<sup>4</sup>. Since its beginnings, this association has focused on the adaptation of literary works – reaching over 300 books<sup>5</sup>– as well as informative, administrative and legal content, and has promoted Easy Read Clubs around the country (see Section 6 for further details).

The Easy Read Association has been actively involved in training public administrations, organizations and individuals interested in making information accessible to everyone through Easy Language. Some course participants who share the Easy Read Association's vision have replicated its model and created associations in other areas. In 2012, the Easy Read Basque Country (*Lectura Fácil Euskadi*) was born in the Basque Country, and six more associations were created between 2013 and 2017 in Castile and Leon, Madrid, Aragon, Castile La Mancha, the Balearic Islands, and Extremadura. In 2016, these regional associations created the Easy Read Network (*Red de Lectura Fácil*), which incorporated one association from Colombia and another from Argentina in 2019.

In 2005, the Discourse and Spanish Language Research Group (*Discurso y Lengua Española, DILE*) at the Autonomous University of Madrid adapted *Don Quixote of La Mancha* into Easy Language. The group also published a paper on the procedures and methodology that had been followed for the adaptation (Anula et al. 2006). They not only took into account the writing guidelines, but also checked the comprehensibility of the final document with people with reading difficulties. The project produced some Easy Language criteria on the basis of linguistic and psychological aspects.

The history of Easy Language in Spain is also strongly linked to associations that work with people with intellectual disabilities. The Full Inclusion association (*Plena Inclusión*, known as *FEAPS* until 2015), the main Spanish organization that supports the rights of this group, released its first publication in Easy Language in 2007<sup>6</sup>, namely, its Code of Ethics<sup>7</sup>. In 2010, Full Inclusion attended a training course taught by the Easy Read Association to learn how

4 Cronologia, <https://www.lecturafacil.net/info/1-cronologia/>

5 Llibres de lectura fácil, [http://www.lecturafacil.net/media/Cat%C3%A0leg\\_llibresLF\\_2020\\_web.pdf](http://www.lecturafacil.net/media/Cat%C3%A0leg_llibresLF_2020_web.pdf)

6 Cronología histórica de lectura fácil, [https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/cronologia\\_historica\\_de\\_la\\_lectura\\_facil.pdf](https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/cronologia_historica_de_la_lectura_facil.pdf)

7 FEAPS (2007), [https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/codigo\\_etico\\_lf\\_0.pdf](https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/codigo_etico_lf_0.pdf)

to create its own group of adaptors and trainers, so as to disseminate the use of Easy Language in all organizations federated to Full Inclusion. In 2013, Full Inclusion launched the first company to function as a co-operative dedicated solely to Easy Language and cognitive accessibility in Spain, the Altavoz Cooperative<sup>8</sup>. It was led by people with intellectual disabilities and provided services related to Easy Language publications.

In terms of guidelines and recommendations, the Spanish milestones are the translation of the second edition of the Guidelines for Easy-to-Read Materials in 2012 (*Directrices para materiales de lectura fácil*)<sup>9</sup>, the translation of the Inclusion Europe guidelines Information for All in 2013<sup>10</sup>, and the publication of the handbook Easy Read: Writing and Assessment Methods (*Lectura fácil: métodos de redacción y evaluación*, García 2012), which contains references on Easy Language up to 2013. More recently, Full Inclusion Madrid (*Plena Inclusión Madrid*) published a handbook on how to evaluate Easy Language using people with reading difficulties (Grupo de Expertos de Lectura Fácil de Plena Inclusión Madrid 2019).

Both the Easy Read Network and Full Inclusion have organized many Easy Language events. Since 2010, the Easy Read Network has held seven conferences which have attracted speakers from different countries<sup>11</sup>. Full Inclusion 'Literacy for all' (*Letras para todos*) meetings took place between 2014 and 2016, and in 2017, Full Inclusion held a conference on cognitive accessibility in Cáceres, Spain<sup>12</sup>.

In terms of professional practice, Full Inclusion regional federations have promoted the creation of business services around Easy Language. The first one was *Adapta*, by Full Inclusion Madrid, founded in 2016 (García 2018). This service began with seven associations that offer full Easy Language publication services and training, in which people with intellectual disabilities actively take

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8 Altavoz was closed as a company. Its website does not work anymore.

9 Nomura et al. (2012), <https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/publications/professional-report/120-es.pdf>

10 Inclusion Europe, [https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/informacion\\_todos.pdf](https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/informacion_todos.pdf)

11 7º Encuentro Lectura Fácil: una mirada internacional, <http://www.lecturafacil.net/es/info/jornadas/>

12 Informe de resultados, Congreso estatal de accesibilidad cognitiva, [https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/informe\\_congreso\\_ac-dif.pdf](https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/informe_congreso_ac-dif.pdf)

part. This service was composed of 13 entities in 2020. Private initiatives are currently very limited.

In the field of institutionalization, the region of Extremadura was the first to create a public department specialized in Easy Language and cognitive accessibility in 2017. The Office for Cognitive Accessibility of Extremadura (*Oficina de Accesibilidad Cognitiva de Extremadura, OACEX*)<sup>13</sup> is part of the regional administration, but is managed by Full Inclusion Extremadura (*Plena Inclusión Extremadura*). It employs workers both with and without intellectual disabilities and produces a wide array of Easy Language publications for the region. It also has a committee that supervises private companies and associations providing these services in order to deliver a quality seal acknowledging that their Easy Language productions meet the standard<sup>14</sup>.

Finally, the main milestone in Spain was the approval and publication of the first Easy Read standard in the world: UNE 153101:2018 EX (Delgado and Rodríguez 2018). UNE is the name of the Spanish Association for Standardisation, 153101 refers to the number of the standard, and 2018 indicates the year in which it was published. EX indicates that it is an experimental standard, because it was the first time Easy Read was addressed in standardization. This standard was developed by a task force that brought together producers, universities, and user associations, led by the ONCE Foundation (a foundation that aims, among other endeavours, to promote accessibility projects) and the National Reference Centre for Personal Autonomy and Technical Assistance (*Centro de Referencia Estatal de Autonomía Personal y Ayudas Técnicas, CEAPAT*, a state-owned centre for accessible solutions for the elderly and people with disabilities). This standard, which addresses the creation, adaptation and validation of Easy Read documents, was launched in April 2018.

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 13 OACEX (2019), <https://plenainclusionextremadura.org/plenainclusion/que-ofrecemos/accesibilidad/oacex#:~:text=La%20OACEX%20es%20la%20oficina,este%20tipo%20en%20nuestro%20pa%C3%A9s.&text=Se%20present%C3%B3%20oficialmente%20el%2011,de%20la%20Junta%20de%20Extremadura>.

14 Reconocimiento de entidades de lectura fácil, <https://www.plenainclusionextremadura.org/plenainclusion/reconocimiento-de-entidades-de-lectura-facil>

### 3 Current situation

This section describes how Easy Language is understood in Spain, its societal and legal context, and its main stakeholders.

#### 3.1 Definitions

In Spain, the ‘Easy Language’ concept is broadly known as *lectura fácil*, a direct translation of the English term ‘Easy Read’. Before the Spanish standard was published, the term was defined on the basis of external sources such as the second edition of the IFLA guidelines, published in Spanish in 2012. However, the Education and Diversity (*Educación y Diversidad, EDI*) research group from the University of Zaragoza developed a more specific definition for Easy Read, which they translated as both *fácil lectura* – a term no longer used – and *lectura fácil*. Their definition established a direct relationship between Easy Read, accessibility and target groups:

La fácil lectura (o lectura fácil) es un planteamiento general sobre la accesibilidad a la información y a la comprensión de los mensajes escritos de las personas con diversidades intelectuales y de aprendizaje. También la podemos considerar como un método para hacer entornos psicológicamente comprensibles para todos, eliminando las barreras para la comprensión, el aprendizaje y la participación. (Grupo Educación y Diversidad 2009: 4)

[Easy Read is a general approach to accessibility to information and to the understanding of written content by people with intellectual or learning disabilities. We can also consider it a method for creating psychologically understandable environments for all, removing barriers to understanding, learning and participation.]<sup>15</sup>

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15 Translated by the authors.

These definitions were taken into account when the Spanish standardization body (UNE, formerly AENOR) began working on the first Easy Language standard. The approved standard (UNE 153101 EX) defines *lectura fácil* (literally, ‘Easy Read’) as a ‘method that collects a set of guidelines and recommendations related to text composition, design and layout of documents and the assessment of their understandability, targeted to make information accessible for people with reading difficulties’ (UNE 2018: 7). This definition also views it as a cognitive accessibility tool and considers the final materials to be technical support for people with reading difficulties.

The definition lies on three main pillars. First of all, the consideration of Easy Read as a method for publishing documents, in both writing and design aspects. Secondly, the need for the target group to be involved in the process in order to ensure that the final product caters to their needs. Finally, the inclusion of Easy Read as a specific tool for people with reading difficulties, rather than for all citizens.

The Easy Read Association explains that Easy Language publications are generally classified into three levels of difficulty, with most published books being of the highest level. The criteria for assigning levels are mainly based on the relationship between images and text, and on their syntactical and lexical complexity (Salvador 2009: 14). The Spanish standard does not include a proposal on how to create a scale of comprehension levels for Easy Language texts.

Other types of easy-to-understand languages, such as *lenguaje llano* (Plain Language), *lenguaje claro* (clear language), *comunicación clara* (clear communication) or *lenguaje ciudadano* (citizen language) have also been researched and practised (Cassany 2005, Gelpí 2006, Montolío and Tascón 2017, Carretero 2019), with special focus on legal and administrative texts. However, these are beyond the scope of this article.

### 3.2 Societal and legal context

Spain has a complex legal structure in terms of accessibility, because although each region has competences, the central government also promotes some reg-

ulations. The Royal Decree 366/2007<sup>16</sup> included the prescription of ‘simple and direct language’ for printed administrative documents. A subsequent ministerial order in 2008<sup>17</sup> added some specifications about the size of the typography, line spacing or writing style, although the text did not mention Easy Language at all. Currently, a bill has been proposed to the Spanish Parliament to revise the existing Act on the Rights of Persons with Disability that includes Easy Language as a solution for cognitive accessibility. It specifies the scope of applicability as including, for instance, the communication and information society, public administration, justice, culture, and employment. It adds a specific provision that sets deadlines for implementation and another provision to create a National Reference Centre for Cognitive Accessibility, with competences in research, training, dissemination, and promotion in the field<sup>18</sup>.

As regards regional legislation, Catalonia was the first region to include Easy Language in its Accessibility Act in 2014, and requires it in public administration, education and companies that offer accessible public services (e.g., transport, energy, or telecommunications)<sup>19</sup>. This law adopts a universal design approach: it considers that Easy Language materials follow the IFLA and Inclusion Europe guidelines but aims to make texts accessible to all citizens, which broadens the field to also include Plain Language approaches. Other regions that also mention Easy Language are the Balearic Islands, Navarre, Andalusia, Murcia, and Galicia. However, although legislation exists and efforts are being made to produce more Easy Language content<sup>20</sup>, publications are still limited and public documents in Easy Language remain an exception.

### 3.3 Stakeholders

Spain has no national structure that currently promotes Easy Language. However, the above-mentioned proposed bill includes the creation of a special-

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16 BOE (2007), <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2007-6239>

17 BOE (2008), <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2008-3528>

18 BOCG (2020), [http://www.congreso.es/public\\_oficiales/L14/CONG/BOCG/B/BOCG-14-B-93-1.PDF](http://www.congreso.es/public_oficiales/L14/CONG/BOCG/B/BOCG-14-B-93-1.PDF)

19 BOE (2014), <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2014/BOE-A-2014-11992-consolidado.pdf>

20 Recursos, <https://repositori.lecturafacil.net/>

ized centre for cognitive accessibility. This centre would also promote Easy Language. However, future development will depend on the regulations that implement the content of the bill and the budget. Only the Office for Cognitive Accessibility of Extremadura has what could be considered an official structure, although it is managed by a non-profit organization.

The main producers of Easy Language in Spain today are non-profit organizations and associations. The two main stakeholders are Full Inclusion (*Plena Inclusión*), a social movement that supports people with intellectual disabilities, and the Easy Read Network (*Red de Lectura Fácil*<sup>21</sup>), a network of associations working on Easy Language led by the Catalan organization, the Easy Read Association (*Associació Lectura Fàcil, ALF*)<sup>22</sup> (ILUNION 2019: 8–9). The main financial resources come from public administrations, and publications depend greatly on tenders or specific projects.

The private sector has no industry related to the production of Easy Language, although a few individual freelance initiatives and a few publishing houses are interested in Easy Language literature. Three publishing houses have long-term Easy Language literary collections: *Castellnou/Almadraba* groups them under the brand *Kalafate*; *La Mar de Fàcil* is specialized in this type of book; and *Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat* has a specific collection in Easy Language in Catalan. Other companies have funded Easy Language publications through foundations or corporate social responsibility actions. For instance, the pharma company Sandoz promotes the use of Easy Language in patient information leaflets in Spanish.

When it comes to funding Easy Language work, members of both Full Inclusion and the Easy Read Network offer Easy Language professional services. They also take part in the few tenders on Easy Language run by local or regional administrations. Full Inclusion obtains public resources from the annual national and regional budgets through a specific grant programme. In recent years this programme has funded several social services offered by Full Inclusion, including Easy Language productions. In addition, some foundations from private companies publish public grant tenders for which non-profit

21 Red Lectura Fàcil, <https://www.lecturafacil.net/es/info/red-lectura-facil>

22 Associació Lectura Fàcil, <https://www.lecturafacil.net/eng>

organizations can apply and obtain resources for their Easy Language services. This was, for instance, the origin of *Adapta*, a professional Easy Language service launched by Full Inclusion Madrid in 2016<sup>23</sup>. The funds obtained by a grant from a banking foundation (Montemadrid Foundation) were also invested in this production line.

#### 4 Target groups

The national Easy Language standard mentioned above (UNE 153101:2018 EX, 2018: 7–8) indicates a list of target groups that benefit from Easy Language. It points out that they are all people with reading difficulties related to intellectual disabilities, mental illness, language disorders, brain damage, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit disorder (with or without hyperactivity), deafness, deafblindness, ageing, low literacy and non-native language.

People with disabilities make up around 9% (IMSERSO 2020) of the Spanish population, and the elderly aged over 65 account for more than 18% of the total population. The country also has 1.6 million immigrants from non-native Spanish countries and around 700 000 functional illiterate people. If the figures related to these groups are summed up, the potential population that could benefit from Easy Language and accessible communication is a third of the whole country.

Although demand for Easy Language has increased in the last ten years, the general perception is that it is a specific solution for cognitive accessibility. This is because the presence of Full Inclusion at national and regional levels is strong. However, in Catalonia and the Basque Country, where the Easy Read Network is stronger, the perception is that the target is more wide-ranging. They adopt a universal design approach which also includes recent immigrants or the elderly.

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23 Nace Adapta Plena Inclusión Madrid, que ofrece el servicio de lectura fácil como solución accesible, <https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/noticias/nace-adapta-plena-inclusion-madrid-que-ofrece-el-servicio-de-lectura-facil-como-solucion-accesible/>

## 5 Guidelines

As mentioned before, Spain had the first Easy Read standard in the world: UNE 153101:2018 EX. It comprises three parts: steps to produce documents (whether originals or adaptations), guidelines for writing and designing documents, and guidelines for checking comprehensibility with groups of people with reading difficulties.

The main recommendations, obtained through consensus, take into account the customary international guidelines (logical structure, short sentences, common words), but they include some specificities related to Spanish as a language. For example, the standard proposes avoiding commas, except for certain uses, and avoiding periods, preferring paragraphs. Quotation marks should also be avoided, and an indirect style should be prioritized. Concerning vocabulary, it recommends a clear contextualization of homophone or homograph words, avoiding certain adverbs (with the suffix *-mente*, equal to the English adverbial suffix ‘-ly’), and superlative forms for adjectives. Nominalization is not recommended. Seven of the guidelines are related to numbers. For instance, the use of figures rather than words is recommended for writing numbers, and avoiding ordinal numbers, percentages, and fractions. This information should be provided by alternative texts. Times should avoid the 24-hour format and Roman numerals are also not recommended. Concerning grammar rules, the standard recommends avoiding the least used tenses, the subjunctive and a specific variation of the passive voice in Spanish called the reflexive passive (*pasiva refleja*). The imperative should be used in clear contexts. The preferred tense is the present indicative. Modal verbs (*perífrasis verbales*) are considered acceptable with certain verbs (must, want, can). Spanish can omit the subject in verbal structures, but in Easy Language it is recommended to always use it.

The production process includes a flowchart which indicates that end-user validation should be repeated until users confirm that the content is understandable. It should be highlighted that the standard includes this validation test as a compulsory step in order to consider the result Easy Read. The standard has an annex with strategies on how to develop and facilitate group sessions

and obtain relevant comments that allow authors to improve the texts and check their comprehensibility.

Before April 2018, when the standard was published, the guidelines followed in Spain were from two traditional sources: the IFLA (Guidelines for Easy-to-read Materials) and Inclusion Europe (Information for all). Furthermore, in 2013, the handbook *Easy Read: Writing and Assessment Methods* (*Lectura fácil: métodos de redacción y evaluación*) proposed a collection of guidelines from several sources to develop Easy Language content.

Another publication to take into account in the development of Easy Language is the Easy Read texts assessment: methodological, social and labour aspects (*Validación de textos en lectura fácil: aspectos metodológicos y sociolaborales*), by Full Inclusion Madrid (Grupo de Expertos de Lectura Fácil de Plena Inclusión Madrid 2019). This book displays a list of definitions, procedures, and strategies to develop Easy Language assessment with groups from a practical point of view, because the authors are all experienced facilitators of Easy Language validation groups.

## 6 Practical outcomes

All the official languages in Spain have Easy Language outcomes. The majority of these are in Spanish and Catalan, but some are also in Basque, Galician and Valencian. The first Easy Language book in Aranese was also published in 2020<sup>24</sup>. The following paragraphs focus on media, literature, information texts, and other projects, to provide a global overview of Easy Language in Spain.

### 6.1 Media

Easy Language in the media is extremely limited in Spain and mainly arises from initiatives put forward by associations of people with disabilities. For example, Easy News (*Noticias Fácil*)<sup>25</sup> was the first website devoted to news in

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24 Presentació novetats Lectura Fácil, <https://www.lecturafacil.net/news/presentacio-novetats-lectura-facil/>

25 Noticias Fácil, <http://www.noticiasfacil.es/ES/Paginas/index.aspx>

Easy Language as a result of research developed by the University of Valencia. Recently, Full Inclusion created a website called Easy Planet (*Planeta Fácil*)<sup>26</sup>, a news bulletin and internet portal in Easy Language. One of the members of staff has an intellectual disability and often writes news in Easy Language. News releases in Easy Language have been a regular practice of Full Inclusion Madrid since 2015.

Regarding corporate media, *El País*<sup>27</sup> published a symbolic report on Easy Language in 2019 and *El Periódico de Aragón*<sup>28</sup>, a regional newspaper, has regularly included a page with Easy Language news since 2017. The most recent project is GN News, which has also offered news in Easy Language since its beginning<sup>29</sup>. Some local journals in Catalan also have Easy Language content, such as *Pallars Digital*<sup>30</sup>.

In the field of audiovisual access services, easy subtitles are generally limited to research environments (Bernabé Caro and Orero 2019, Oncins et al. 2020) and pose some challenges, as the requirements of existing subtitling standards (AENOR 2012) may clash with research results and the needs of users with reading difficulties. The Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training (EASIT) project (Matamala and Orero 2018) has also discussed easy audio descriptions (Bernabé Caro and Orero forthcoming). This is covered in the section on research.

## 6.2 Literature

Publishing houses have led limited initiatives to develop a product line in Easy Language. The most relevant is *Almadraba* (*Castellnou* for the Catalan market), which has a collection of around 30 titles called *Kalafate*<sup>31</sup>, all of which

26 Planeta Fácil, <http://planetafacil.plenainclusion.org/>

27 Barrios & Hinojosa (2019), [https://elpais.com/politica/2019/03/28/actualidad/1553771166\\_007481.html](https://elpais.com/politica/2019/03/28/actualidad/1553771166_007481.html)

28 Periodistas Aragón (2017), <https://periodistasdearagon.org/2017/06/26/el-periodico-de-aragon-lanza-la-primera-seccion-de-noticias-en-lectura-facil-para-personas-con-discapacidad-intelectual/>

29 Navas (2020), <https://www.gndiario.com/gndiario-noticias-accesibles>

30 Les notícies més importants de l'1 al 15 de gener en Lectura Fácil, <https://www.naciodigital.cat/pallarsdigital/femhofacil>

31 Kalafate, <https://www.almadrabaeditorial.com/kalafate-68-es>

are classical titles from both Spanish and international literature, available in Catalan and Spanish. Another relevant publishing house, *Santillana*, launched the *Loqueleo*<sup>32</sup> collection in 2018, addressed to children and teenagers, and has already featured two comic books in an Easy Language format. Other small publishing houses have also published Easy Language literature: *La Mar de Fàcil*<sup>33</sup>, the only publishing house specializing in Easy Language originals, has published around 45 works and has specialized in disseminating contemporary writers since 2008. The main promoter in this field is the Easy Read Network, with a book catalogue including both literary works adapted into Easy Language and new works created using Easy Language guidelines. Full Inclusion has also presented some adapted novels and stories in a project that linked literature and technology. The result was Read it Easy (*Léelo Fàcil*)<sup>34</sup> in 2016, a website containing seven novels with texts in Easy Language and digital effects.

Although production is limited, more than 500 clubs (ILUNION 2019: 8) of people with reading difficulties meet to read Easy Language books in libraries, schools, and other locations (for instance, hospitals or nursing homes). These are co-ordinated by a facilitator and their aim is that participants not only enjoy literature and reading but that also their vocabulary improves and they have the opportunity to socialize (Salvador et al. 2019). An interactive map of all Easy Read Clubs linked to the Easy Read Association is available online<sup>35</sup>.

### 6.3 Informative texts

The majority of Easy Language publications are informative and legal documents, generally commissioned by public authorities. The Constitution<sup>36</sup> has two versions, as do several of the highest regional laws (*estatutos de autonomía*). An Act into Easy Language law has also been published in an official journal.

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32 Loqueleo, <https://www.loqueleo.com/es/>

33 La Mar de Fàcil, <https://lamardefacil.com/index.php/es/>

34 Léelofàcil, <http://www.leelofacil.org/es/>

35 Mapa de la lectura fàcil, <http://mapalf.lecturafacil.net/index.php>

36 La Constitución española version fàcil de leer, [https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/la\\_constitucion\\_espanola\\_en\\_lectura\\_facil.pdf](https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/la_constitucion_espanola_en_lectura_facil.pdf), [http://www.lecturafacil.net/media/resources/CONSTITUCION\\_ESPA%C3%91OLA\\_LECTURA\\_FACIL.pdf](http://www.lecturafacil.net/media/resources/CONSTITUCION_ESPA%C3%91OLA_LECTURA_FACIL.pdf)

Both producers (Full Inclusion and the Easy Read Network) have edited a large collection of documents on public services.

Court verdicts and summonses involving people with disabilities have also been adapted into Easy Language. In 2018, Full Inclusion Asturias won a Zero Project Award for its task in this field (Zero Project 2018: 141). The Zero Project is an initiative promoted by the Austrian ESSL Foundation, which supports the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and awards innovative practices and policies related to accessibility, inclusive education, inclusive employment, and independent living<sup>37</sup>. Full Inclusion Madrid and Full Inclusion Asturias have also published some guides on the legal system<sup>38</sup> and prisons<sup>39</sup>, respectively.

Easy Language publications on rights also represent a wide field. The General Act of Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adapted in 2015<sup>40</sup>, and many guides and leaflets are available on gender violence prevention, the legal protection of people with disabilities, or the right to vote. More than 80 political programmes for different elections in Spain<sup>41</sup> have been published in Easy Language. Finally, the Spanish Association of Tutelary Foundations (*Asociación Española de Fundaciones Tutelares*, an association that federates foundations that legally protect people with disabilities), has created a whole website exclusively in Easy Language to explain its purpose and services, and to publish documents<sup>42</sup>.

Other relevant publications are related to health, such as the guides on general illnesses or sexual health published by Full Inclusion. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an increase in the number of Easy Language publications:

37 Zero Project, <https://zeroproject.org/about-us/>

38 Guía de acceso a la justicia, <https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Guia-de-acceso-a-la-justicia-en-lectura-facil.pdf>

39 Primeros pasos en prisión, <https://www.plenainclusionasturias.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Descargar-documento.pdf>

40 García (2015), [https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/ley\\_general\\_de\\_derechos.pdf](https://www.plenainclusion.org/sites/default/files/ley_general_de_derechos.pdf)

41 Mi voto cuenta, <http://mivotocuenta.es/>

42 Asociación Española de Fundaciones Tutelares, <https://fundacionestutelares.org/accesible/>

from legal aspects to health issues, behaviour recommendations, or protection in workplaces, both in Spanish<sup>43</sup> and in other languages<sup>44</sup>.

## 6.4 Other projects

In recent years, some civil service examinations have been offered to people with intellectual disabilities, as by law a certain percentage of public employment posts are reserved for them<sup>45</sup>. The subjects included in the examinations have been adapted into Easy Language. The first took place in 2016<sup>46</sup>, but between 2019 and 2020 at least five examinations were held, with subjects adapted into Easy Language<sup>47</sup>.

Culture is another area in which the presence of Easy Language is increasing, especially in museums. Museums such as the National Museums<sup>48</sup> (*Museos Estatales*), the Prado Museum<sup>49</sup>, and the Thyssen Museum<sup>50</sup> already have Easy Language leaflets on their masterpieces. In the case of the National Museums and the Prado Museum, these leaflets are complemented by an easy-to-follow map that locates each one of the masterpieces. Some local museums offer Easy Language guides, also available in other languages<sup>51</sup>. For instance, the Provincial Museum Network of Lugo, in the north-west of Spain, has Easy Language leaflets in Galician for each room of the museums as well as for

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43 Coronavirus, <http://planetafacil.plenainclusion.org/coronavirus/>

44 Información accesible sobre la Covid-19 i el desconfiament, <https://www.lecturafacil.net/news/informacio-accessible-sobre-la-covid-19-i-el-desco/>

45 Plena Inclusión Extremadura, <https://plenainclusionextremadura.org/plenainclusion/actualidad/noticias/2020/temario-lectura-f%C3%A1cil>

46 Ministerio de Política Territorial y Función Pública, [https://www.mptfp.gob.es/portal/funcionpublica/fucion-publica/ep-pp/empleo\\_publico/procesos-selectivos/laboral\\_fijo/Discapacidad\\_Intelectual\\_2016\\_2017.html](https://www.mptfp.gob.es/portal/funcionpublica/fucion-publica/ep-pp/empleo_publico/procesos-selectivos/laboral_fijo/Discapacidad_Intelectual_2016_2017.html)

47 Oposiciones para auxiliar de información y control, <https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/convocatorias/oposiciones-auxiliar-control-informacion-com-madrid/>

48 Guías y planos, <https://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/cultura/areas/museos/mc/nuestros-museos/guias.html>

49 Guía accesible, 10 obras maestras, [https://content3.cdnprado.net/doclinks/pdf/visita/plano/accesible/Guia\\_accesible\\_MNP.pdf](https://content3.cdnprado.net/doclinks/pdf/visita/plano/accesible/Guia_accesible_MNP.pdf)

50 Qurtuba, <https://imagenes.educathyssen.org/sites/default/files/document/2019-06/MUSEO%20F%C3%81CIL.pdf>

51 La lectura fàcil als museus, <https://www.lecturafacil.net/news/la-lectura-facil-als-museus/>

certain pieces<sup>52</sup>, and different museums in Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and Valencia (the Empordà Museum, the Majorca Maritime Museum, the Maricel Museum, the Manacor History Museum, the Ceramics Museum) offer information in Catalan Easy Language. In the scenic arts, since 2015, the Liceu opera house in Barcelona has published Easy Language synopses of the operas<sup>53</sup> it hosts, within the framework of a wider accessibility plan.

The field of work and training has many publications on health and safety at work<sup>54</sup>, as well as adaptations of training handbooks for specific positions, such as conference assistant or office assistant.

Finally, in 2017, Full Inclusion Madrid launched the first Easy Language Dictionary<sup>55</sup>. It already has 3 000 entries and receives millions of visits, mainly from Latin America<sup>56</sup>. The publication of the dictionary was made possible thanks to the co-operation of Easy Language writers, validation from groups of people with intellectual disabilities, and linguists who checked the accuracy of the definitions (Gallardo and García 2018, García 2019: 337–338).

Educational content for schools is still lacking. A postgraduate course in Navarre usually includes a practical activity on Easy Language for future teachers<sup>57</sup>, but the production of handbooks by publishing houses is currently non-existent.

## 7 Education and research

The Easy Read Network and the organizations associated with Full Inclusion regularly offer **training courses** on Easy Language. These mainly focus on writing at different levels (basic or advanced) and Easy Language promotion in

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52 Rede Museística Provincial de Lugo, <http://redemuseisticalugo.org/documentos.asp?mat=186>

53 Liceu de Barcelona, <https://www.liceubarcelona.cat/es/lectura-facil>

54 La Fundación ONCE crea unas guías sobre seguridad en el trabajo, <http://planetafacil.plenainclusion.org/la-fundacion-once-crea-unas-guias-sobre-seguridad-en-el-trabajo/>

55 Diccionario Fácil, <http://diccionariofacil.org/>

56 El Diccionari Fácil alcanza las 3000 palabras publicadas, <https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/noticias/el-diccionario-facil-alcanza-las-3-000-palabras-publicadas/>

57 Alumnos del Máster en Intervención Educativa y Psicológica (2015), <https://creena.educacion.navarra.es/web/bvirtual/2018/06/08/el-antiguo-egipto/#more-469>

reading clubs. Full Inclusion has also developed specific training for validators, meaning people with intellectual disabilities who check the comprehensibility of the texts adapted into Easy Language and their compliance with existing guidelines. Full Inclusion and the Easy Read Association also offer a few courses for designers, teachers, supporters of Easy Read Clubs, and facilitators of Easy Language validation groups.

People interested in deepening their knowledge of Easy Language at the **higher education** level have few options. Spain used to have a face-to-face postgraduate degree on accessibility at a private university in Madrid that included a session on Easy Language in its last four versions (from 2012 to 2016). Later, an online postgraduate course promoted by the University of Jaen, which is still ongoing, included a lesson on Easy Language in a subject on Culture and Accessibility. In 2018, the private school High Institute of Linguistic Studies and Translation (*Instituto Superior de Estudios Lingüísticos y Traducción, ISTRAD*) in Seville began offering a postgraduate course in accessible communication that includes a specific course on Easy Language. More recently, the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (UAB) has included the concept of easy-to-understand language as part of a course on Audiovisual Translation Theory in its MA in Audiovisual Translation. It is also developing a 12-week online specialization course on accessible communication, which includes Easy Language.

Several **research projects** have focused on technology and on the reception of Easy Language texts by end users. Regarding technological development, Simplext<sup>58</sup> (Bott et al. 2012a, Drndarević and Saggion 2012) was a large research project that aimed to develop an Easy Language automated translator. The project, led by Horacio Saggion from the Pompeu Fabra University, produced a translation engine that applies Easy Language guidelines<sup>59</sup> (Saggion et al. 2015, Bott et al. 2012b, Saggion et al. 2011). The project attempted to combine natural language processing and linguistic research in text simplification. It was followed by Able to Include<sup>60</sup>, in which Spanish technological

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58 Proyecto Simplext, <https://www.fundacionprodis.org/catedra-de-patrocinio/investigacion/id/proyecto-simplext/>

59 Simplext, <http://simplext.taln.upf.edu/>

60 Able to Include, <http://able-to-include.com/>

companies took part, and the aim of which was to produce a text simplifier, a text-to-pictogram translator, and a text-to-speech programme.

Another similar research project was the Flexible Interactive Reading Support Tool (FIRST)<sup>61</sup>, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, with the Spanish University of Jaen and the University of Alicante as partners. In this case, the result was an Open Book tool (Barbu et al. 2015), a similar tool to that produced by Simplext.

Finally, the University of Alicante ran another research project linked to text simplification and technology, although their main interest was deaf people. The system recognizes named entities and links them to a definition from Simple Wikipedia and to three images from Google Images. It also automatically detects time expressions and converts them into a specific date or time period (Saquete et al. 2013).

Regarding research that includes end users, the already mentioned Discourse and Spanish Language Research Group (*Discurso y Lengua Española, DILE*) at the Autonomous University of Madrid, with a focus on linguistic accessibility, involved readers with intellectual disabilities in an adaptation of *Don Quixote of La Mancha*, which allowed them to publish not only the adaptation of this literary work but also a report with readability parameters to accurately analyse the Easy Language content (Anula et al. 2006). More recently, Vived and Molina (2012), from the University of Zaragoza, researched the application of Easy Language content with people with Down's syndrome. In addition to this, the Interdisciplinary Research Structure for Reading (ERI-Reading) research group from the University of Valencia also worked on the adaptation of texts into Easy Language and the results from readers with intellectual disabilities (Fajardo et al. 2014, Fajardo et al. 2015). Their conclusions were based on news published by Easy News (*Noticias Fácil*).

One of the first investigations to include end users was led by secondary school teacher Jaume Serra Milà (2008a, 2008b), who adapted a novel and some communications from the school into Easy Language and tested them with

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61 First project, <http://www.first-asd.eu/>

Chinese and Moroccan students. This research allowed Serra Milà to propose some improvements to the existing guidelines.

Between 2017 and 2019, a large research project with users led by José Antonio León (León et al. 2017, 2019) from the Autonomous University of Madrid, studied how people with intellectual disabilities understand what they read and the impact of Easy Language texts. The test materials for this project were organized in adherence with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Finally, at the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*, the Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training (EASIT) project (Matamala and Orero 2018), a European Commission-funded Erasmus + Strategic partnership, is researching whether easy-to-understand language in a broad sense, including both Easy Language and Plain Language, could be transferred to audiovisual media. The focus is on access services such as subtitles and audio description, and on audiovisual content such as online news, moving away from printed written text. The project has mapped out the practice and training of easy-to-understand language in Europe through a survey with 128 participants (Perego 2020). It has also organized 3 focus groups and 23 interviews to discuss how easy-to-understand language could be transferred into the audiovisual world. The project has also discussed how to train new professionals in the fields, and has produced skills cards and two curriculum proposals, one for a vocational course and one for an academic course. The EASIT project is currently creating open access educational materials to train experts in easy-to-understand subtitles, experts in easy-to-understand audio description, and experts in easy-to-understand audiovisual journalism. Bernabé Caro and Orero (2019) have also discussed Easy Language as a multimode accessibility service and the concept of easier audio descriptions (Bernabé Caro and Orero forthcoming), and Bernabé Caro and García (2020) and Bernabé et al. (2020) have researched the validation of easy subtitles. Prior to the Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training project, Bernabé Caro (2017) developed a methodological proposal for a user-centric design of Easy Language.

## 8 Future perspectives

The establishment of the Spanish standard was a seminal moment for Easy Language in Spain. The market can now benchmark its performance against a methodology and a series of guidelines which have been developed through the consensus of all the interested stakeholders (ILUNION 2019: 33). However, several issues remain unresolved. First of all, research on the actual reception of the different parameters established in the standard is lacking. Some guidelines have been drafted through a process of reader observation, but scientific investigations that follow established research methodologies are much needed. Special emphasis should be placed on analysing how validation sessions involving end users are performed and how these sessions could be improved in order to obtain more effective results.

Another critical issue concerns certification. The Easy Read Association uses a logo in its adaptations which guarantees that the international Easy Language guidelines of IFLA and Inclusion Europe have been followed. Inclusion Europe also has a copyrighted logo which anyone fulfilling a series of pre-established conditions can use. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no clear external procedure to ensure that the guidelines have actually been followed.

Training is another relevant subject in which further work is needed. Although some non-formal training courses are on offer, currently no formal or certified ones exist. As already mentioned, the EASIT project is working on defining a curriculum that can be applied in both vocational and academic environments. The current Erasmus project, Professional Training for Easy Read Facilitators and Validators (TRAIN2VALIDATE) will also provide a similar solution for validators and facilitators. Another training gap that must be covered concerns designers and illustrators. A multimedia perspective would also be welcome, as this is not included in the Spanish Easy Read standard.

Creating new business models, attracting new audiences, avoiding stigmatization, and increasing awareness of easy content are essential in order to increase the demand for and supply of accessible content for all. Although the potential market is wide, Easy Language in Spain is highly dependent on public administrations and the demand from private companies is scarce. An economy (market, demand, offer) around Easy Language, similar to that devel-

oping in the field of physical, visual, or hearing accessibility, would be needed to spread this service.

Finally, there is also a need to move beyond the written word and start researching and offering other services in a multimodal context. Previous experiences such as simultaneous simplification at the 2019 Eurovision song contest in Israel (Nahón Guillén 2020), the *audiofáciles* (easy audios) offered in some theatre plays in Spanish cultural venues<sup>62</sup>, or Eugeni's (2020) simplified live subtitles could pave the way towards innovation in this field.

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62 Grupo Amás (2017), <https://www.grupoamas.org/amas-facil-adapta-los-audios-explicativos-de-la-obra-la-autora-de-las-menas-que-teatro-accesible-pone-en-escena-el-14-de-mayo-en-barcelona/>

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## Appendix 1. An illustration of guidelines for Easy Spanish.

Easy Spanish
<p><b>¿Cómo debes caminar por una carretera de forma segura?</b>          Debes ir por el arcén de tu izquierda cuando camines por una carretera.          Así verás a los vehículos venir de frente.          En las carreteras sin arcén, colócate lo más cerca del borde de la carretera.          Los grupos de personas deben ir en fila india, es decir, uno detrás de otro sin formar grupos.</p> <p>Ten cuidado cuando cruces una carretera.          Cruza siempre por un lugar sin curvas y sin cuestas.          Cruza por un lugar donde los conductores te puedan ver bien, por ejemplo, una carretera llana y recta.</p> <p>Source: Plena Inclusión Madrid. <i>Guía básica de educación vial</i>. Madrid: Alsa Grupo, 2017. Web. &lt; <a href="https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Guia-Educacion-Vial.pdf">https://plenainclusionmadrid.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Guia-Educacion-Vial.pdf</a>&gt;</p>
<p><b>[How to walk down a road in a safe way?</b>          You must walk on the left-hand side when you walk down a road.          This way, you can see cars coming towards you.          On roads without a pavement, walk as close as you can to the edge of the road.          Groups of people must go in single file, that is, one after another without forming groups.</p> <p>Be careful when you cross a road.          Always cross at a place without curves and without slopes.          Cross at a place where drivers can see you, for example, a flat and straight road.]</p>