



UNIT 2. EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE (E2U)

ELEMENT 5. VISUAL PRESENTATION OF E2U

VISUAL PRESENTATION OF E2U: FORMAT

Video Lecture Transcript

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This is unit 2, Easy-to-understand language, in short E2U, Element 5, Visual presentation of E2U. Video lecture: Visual presentation of E2U: format and paratextual aspects. My name is Sergio Hernández Garrido from the University of Hildesheim.

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In this short video lecture, I will talk about the visual presentation of content in easy-to-understand language, focussing on the format. I will talk about the visual layout formatting of texts in Easy and Plain Language and what should be kept in mind concerning this aspect.

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One sentence per line: Comprehensibility is enhanced if each sentence is put on a new line. This principle makes the single sentences stand out.

The target groups tend to have comprehension difficulties, if sentences are too long and sentence borders are hard to perceive.

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The easy-to-understand varieties have different approaches here: For Easy Language in Germany, one sentence per line is a basic rule. Thus, comprehensibility is maximally enhanced for this aspect. Yet, new research shows that placing each sentence on a new line may represent an acceptability hazard: parts of the primary target groups and the general public tend to look down on Easy Language texts as they are associated with communication impairment. Communication impairment carries a stigma. If each sentence is placed on a new line, it is made very visible that the text is written in Easy Language. This can lead to reduced acceptability of this text.

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Plain Language does not follow this layout rule. Plain Language texts usually have continuous layout across sentence borders, even such Plain Language texts that are quite close to Easy Language. This is a higher effort for the readers and requests more developed reading skills. Plain Language texts might therefore not be easy enough for readers with low reading skills. But as they do not visually stand out from the standard, Plain Language texts are more acceptable for parts of the primary target groups and for the broad public.



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On font size: To use a bigger font size and line spacing increases perceptibility. It also helps users with slighter forms of visual impairments, which is the case more frequently in the primary target groups than in the average population. Therefore, it is a widespread strategy for texts in easy-to-understand language to use a bigger font size than the regular texts. This strategy may be employed to a varying extent. It is very apparent in Easy Language texts. Plain Language may use that strategy to a much lesser extent or not at all, depending on the target groups and target situation.

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On the choice of fonts: Easy Language rulesets prefer sans serif fonts as they are supposed to increase perceptibility and are therefore easier to read. They are thus assumed to increase comprehensibility.

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Serifs is a term from the field of typography that refers to an aesthetic feature of fonts. Serifs are small lines that are attached to the ends of a letter. To people with low reading skills or with visual impairments, serifs can harm the reading process. For that reason, it is recommended to use fonts without serifs. This applies for both Easy and Plain Language.

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On highlighting: Important information in a text should be highlighted, both in Easy and Plain Language. It is recommended to highlight

important information and important words with bold type as this increases perceptibility for target groups. Colours may not be perceptible for all members of the target groups, especially for readers with visual impairments. Not all colours make good contrasts which could represent a hazard to reading. And people might have an impaired colour perception. Therefore, colours should never be the only instrument to highlight important information.

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On using indentations: In previous presentations we have stated that it is important to add information that is supposed to be unknown to the target groups. This is especially important if this information is relevant to understand the text and crucial to fulfil the text's goal in the target situation. A problem is that it is not easy to incorporate this additional information logically into the text. Additional information may render a text less readable; it may be a hazard to comprehension at text level, as the argument line is blurred by information inserts and explanations. On the other hand, the primary target groups will need a certain level of extra information on the subject to compensate for a lack of knowledge on the subject. Comprehensibility-enhanced texts, especially in Easy Language, cannot do without added explanations.

So what can be done? It is possible to make the explanations stand out visually from the rest of the text. In German Easy Language texts, indentations are often used for this purpose. That means, an explanation of a word in the text, for example, is not placed in the same position as the rest of the text, but is layouted with an indent. This way, the translator can make it visually clear that the information is an example or an explanation of a word or aspect of the text.

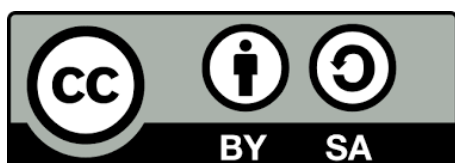


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