Easy-to-understand language beyond the written wor(l)d: the challenges of making audiovisual media easy to understand

Anna Matamala
Anna.matamala@uab.cat
TransMedia Catalonia
Departament de Traducció, d’Interpretació i d’Estudis de l’Àsia Oriental
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Background
Making audiovisual content accessible

- linguistic
- sensorial
- social
- ...

TRANSMEDIA CATALUNYA
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Making audiovisual content accessible

Audio
- Subtitling
- SDH
- Sign language

Visuals
- Audio description
- Audio introduction
- Touch tours

Visuals / written
- Audio subtitling
TMC research

Analogue > Digital > HBBTV > immersive

Subtitling parameters: questionnaires and eyetracking research


“Listening to subtitles”, edited by Matamala & Orero.
Previous research

Subtitling parameters in terms of:

• preferences
• comprehension
• viewing patterns

(See Arnáiz-Uzquiza’s PhD and DTV4ALL deliverable)
Parameters

- character identification
- position on screen
- alignment
- emotions
- sounds
- boxes
- borders
- shadows
- verbatim/standard/edited
Previous research

Further work in HBBTV

• Accessibility guidelines: https://pagines.uab.cat/hbb4all/content/accessibility-guidelines

Innovative work in 360º videos – ImAc (Agulló’s PhD)

Personalisation / Customisation
Previous research

• Position of the signer
• Shape and size of the SL interpreter on screen
• Colour and lightining

(Bosch-Baliarda’s PhD)

• Accessibility guidelines (HBB4ALL)
• Challenges in 360º (ImAc)
Previous research

Audio description:

• Reading speed, intonation, explicitation (Cabeza)
• Information load and distribution (Fresno)
• Text-to-speech versus human-voiced (Fernández-Torné)
• AD in immersive environments, ImAc (Fidyka)
Previous research

Audio subtitling:

• Gonzalo Iturregui-Gallardo (NEA project): dubbing effect versus voice-over effect
Previous research
Knowledge about strategies that enhance:

• subtitling reading and comprehension while enjoying the visuals

• sign language comprehension

• AD comprehension, recall and immersion (presence)

• audio subtitling emotional impact
Beyond the services

How are these access services **created**?

How are these access services **accessed** and **displayed**?
Why this research?

Making content accessible (access, understand, enjoy, feel present/immersed).

Fulfilling user needs (user-centric approach)
Who are the users?

From a medical model...

...to a capability-based model

Agulló, Matamala, Orero (2018)
Into (relatively) new grounds

Easy-to-Read

Pilar Orero: PhD supervision Rocío Bernabé-Caro

Orero & Matamala: collaboration with Spanish standard on Easy-to-Read
Questions

Can we **create** audiovisual content that is easier to understand...

Can we **adapt** audiovisual content so that it is easier to understand...

Can we create **audiovisual access services** that are easier to understand...

...using Easy-to-Read concepts?
A project proposal
A project proposal: educational approach

Erasmus + Strategic Partnerships in Higher Education.

2018-1-ES01-KA203-05275

September 2018-August 2021
Main aims: educational

• Define new professional profiles ("easy reading" and audiovisual content)

• Define their skills.

• Develop training materials.
Challenge 1. Terminology

- Easy-to-Read
- Easy Reading
- Easy Language
- Plain Language
- Simple (English)
- Basic (English)
- Learning/Special English
- Globish
- Clear communication
- Clear writing
## EASIT research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Easy-to-Read</th>
<th>Plain Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lectura fàcil</td>
<td>Llenguatge Planer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leichte Sprache</td>
<td>Einfache Sprache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectura fácil</td>
<td>Lenguaje llano/ lenguaje claro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lingua facile da leggere e da capire</td>
<td>Plain Language / Semplificazione lingüística/ linguaggio chiaro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letura doada</td>
<td>Linguaxe sinxela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lahko branje</td>
<td>Preprost jezik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lättläst språk</td>
<td>Klarspråk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IELD 2021 (paper titles)

Easy language
Easy German/German Easy Language
Simple Russian
Easy to read language / materials
easy-to-read validators
Easy-to-Understand language (“Leichte Sprache”)
Plain language
Easy read texts
The EASIT approach (2018)

“easy-to-understand language”, which includes different levels of simplification

Maass talks about a continuum of “easy-to-understand languages”, ranging from Easy Language (Easy-to-Read) to Plain Language

Do we need an umbrella term for this language variety?
Challenge 2. Website

Multilingual

Easy to understand

Multimodal

pagines.uab.cat/easit
EASIT is a project on making information **easy to understand**.

You can make information easy to understand using Easy-to-Read language and Plain Language.

EASIT is the short form for **Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training**.

The project started on 1 September 2018 and will finish on 31 August 2021.
The EASIT project will produce results. The results are called **outputs**.

These outputs are very important for the project. They can be many different things. For example, outputs can be:

- documents
- videos
- learning materials

The partners of the project create the outputs. Everybody can use the outputs. The outputs are for free.

There are 6 outputs in the EASIT project:

- **Practice and training**
- **Recommendations for audio-visual information**
- **What experts must know**
- **What experts must study**
- **Teaching materials**
- **Certification**
Data policy
If you contact us,
Anna Matemala will keep your personal data
to inform you about the EASIT project.

Personal data is your name and your e-mail address.

We will not give your personal data
to other people, companies or organisations.
You can ask us:
- for a copy of your personal data
- to delete your personal data
- to change your personal data

If you have any complaints,
you can contact the Catalan Authority for Data Protection.

The EASIT website belongs to Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
If you have any questions,
you can email the person
in charge of personal data at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

✉️ The e-mail is: proteccio.dades@uab.cat

You can also find more information on this website.
This website explains how we protect your personal data.
Book on Easy Language in Europe

Date: Mon, 19/04/2021 - 12:15

A book on Easy Language in Europe will be published soon.

Different EASIT partner and Advisory Board members took part today in a meeting with the authors of the book.
Challenge 3. What is the situation in Europe?

• Online questionnaire (PL, 7 languages) for:
  
  • trainers,
  • producers/creators/writers,
  • translators/adapters, and
  • validators/advisors.

• Work led by University of Trieste (Elisa Perego).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td>41-60 years old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>BA/MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Translators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td>NGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
<td>ER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td>ER and PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Format</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Printed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Digital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td>AV/Interpreting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public administration, education, culture and media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
59% one-off workshops
42% in-house
93% printed
65% digital content
40% based on language specific guidelines

Needed skills: grammar, design and layout, vocabulary, clear organisation, multimodality.
Results

• Report led by UNITS (Elisa Perego): https://ddd.uab.cat/record/203967

Conclusion

• Broad (but still incomplete) overview of easy-to-understand language in Europe.

• Importance of networks and sharing.

• C. Lindholm & U. Vantahalo (eds.). *Handbook of Easy Languages in Europe*. Frank & Timme.
Conclusion

• Audiovisual content (search for “audiovisual” in the report):
  
  • “the audiovisual sector still lacks experts in E2U”
  • some audiovisual translators work also in the field
  • the audiovisual format (including interpreting) is mentioned by 13% of participants
  • the audiovisual format is addressed in training (12%)
EASIT focus

E2U audio descriptions (AD)
E2U audiovisual news
E2U subtitles
Challenge 4. Is it at all possible?

- 23 interviews and 4 focus groups. Total: 41 persons.
  - Is E2U audiovisual content needed?
  - Applicable genres?
  - How to implement it?
  - Skills of the new expert?
  - Quality assurance?
  - Terminology?

- Knowledge transferred into the EASIT videos.
- Work led by SDI (Rocío Bernabé-Caro).
EASIT focus

E2U audio descriptions (AD)

E2U audiovisual news

E2U subtitles
E2U subtitles: results

- Subtitles already follow simplification rules.
- What about existing rules?
- What about reading speed and line lengths? Impact on synchrony and acceptability.
E2U subtitles: results

• Inclusion Europe:
  
  • Subtitles should follow the standards for written information: easy to read, larger writing than usual.
  • Viewers should have enough time to read the subtitles.
  • Subtitles should be on the screen as long as possible.
  • Strong contrast between subtitles and the background.
  • In the same position throughout the video.
  • Possibility to hide them.
  • Document with all the text.
E2U subtitles: results

- Multimodality, interaction, and customisation.
- Genres: educational and informative.
- Skills: accessibility, linguistic, IT, personal skills, subtitling-related skills.
E2U subtitles: results

- Opening new possibilities.
- Evaluation during creation and after.
- Not an established name for this new professional profile.
Hildesheim Event example

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=do_n0Ikdzsg&list=PLZttiMCeHvvubCQ4SBDX2DT-SddYxA-S9&index=27&t=1s
ImAc example

E2R subtitles

• Subtitles following Inclusion Europe by Bernabé-Caro.

• Validated by users at Plena Inclusión (see video by SDI https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FwkY0e0xFhk)

• Simplified vocabulary.

• Extralinguistic information removed.

• Exposition time and colours kept.
Results

• Pilot + main test (36 participants in Spain) by Oncins.

• 19 female, 17 male, 62-79 (mean age = 69.4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General presence</th>
<th>Spatial presence</th>
<th>Involvement</th>
<th>Experienced realism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E2R</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDH</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>E2R</th>
<th>SDH</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: D.5.4 IMAC
E2U subtitles: examples

EASIT video by SDI: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzsmHxkpEn0

EASIT video by RTVSLO: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jd8aoNL_iqU
E2U subtitles: examples

• Lower bottom, solid-black background, 2 lines, 32 characters per line.

• Colours for speakers, good contrast, Verdana size, left alignment, 12 cps (average: 10.5 cps)

• Simple sentence, S-V-O order, active voice, common and concrete vocabulary.

• One sentence = one idea (reduction/synchrony).
E2U subtitles: examples

Carlo Eugeni:

- Verbatim live subtitling are not always understood
- Sensatim live subtitling
  - Plain language, text reduction
  - Block subtitles, left aligned
  - This also makes machine translation easier into other languages

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06vnk9x_0-I
EASIT focus

- E2U audio descriptions (AD)
- E2U audiovisual news
- E2U subtitles
E2U audio descriptions: results

- Space constraints.
- Standard AD vs simplified AD (adaptation on streaming).
- Genres: feasibility?
- Audio guides with additional information (extended AD).
E2U audio descriptions: results

• Skills: linguistic, personal, AD-related, IT.

• Validation by
  • end users and audio describers,
  • by a single person or a group,
  • during and afterwards (surveys, comments, etc.).

• Terminological variation in the name of the expert.
E2U audio descriptions: examples

Examples from Elisa Perego (2020) Accessible Communication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original AD</th>
<th>Easy English AD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This grand entrance is reserved for when visitors such as HM The Queen attend the cathedral</td>
<td>Only visitors like Her Majesty The Queen use these doors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The book symbolises the “Word” of God, demonstrating the Cathedral’s Protestant emphasis on preaching rather than elaborate ritual.</td>
<td>It is a symbol for the “Word” of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crown is three times life-sized, with golden spheres the size of oranges adorning the outside.</td>
<td>The crown is big. It has golden spheres that decorate the outside.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E2U audio descriptions: examples

EASIT examples and recommendations by UNITS:

Easy to understand explorations in touch tours:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69k46USDkzs&feature=youtu.be

Recommendations:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2507tzBi9o&feature=youtu.be
EASIT focus

E2U audio descriptions (AD)

E2U audiovisual news

E2U subtitles
E2U audiovisual news: results

• Challenges: news are summarised and previous knowledge is taken for granted.

• E2U news as an alternative to standard news, either in PL or E2R, not both.

• Daily news, most relevant genre, already existent.
E2U audiovisual news: results

- Preferred distribution over the Internet on an easy to find and use platform.

- Skills: linguistic, personal, writing.

- Validation: end user and professionals.

- Name: not established, not needed.
E2U audiovisual news: examples
EASIT examples from ORF Austria by RTVSLO:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c1LPOowQZyI

Editing the news:
• Slower cuts
• Fewer pictures
• No pictures in the figurative sense
E2U audiovisual news: examples

Written easy news:
• NDR
• Easy News
• Planeta fácil

With audiovisual content:
• GN Diario
• YLE uutiset selkosuomeksi (YLE news in Easy Finnish)
• SVT news
Results

• Report led by SDI München (Rocío Bernabé-Caro): https://ddd.uab.cat/record/204739

• The report includes recommendations.
More research is needed

- Arias-Badia, Blanca; Matamala, Anna (2020) "Audio description meets Easy-to-Read and Plain Language: results from a questionnaire and a focus group in Catalonia". Zeitschrift für Katalanistik, 33, 251-270.
Challenge 5. How do we train them?

- **Skills** cards for each of the professional profiles: expert in
  - E2U subtitles
  - E2U audio description
  - E2U audiovisual journalism

- Shared units plus specific content.
- Already trained in subtitling, AD, and journalism.

Report led by UVIGO: https://ddd.uab.cat/record/213085
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Accessibility</th>
<th>Easy-to-Understand</th>
<th>E2U and</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Human diversity</td>
<td>• Understanding E2U</td>
<td>a) Subtitling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is accessibility?</td>
<td>• Legislation, standards and guidelines</td>
<td>b) Audio description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is universal design?</td>
<td>• Processes</td>
<td>c) Audiovisual journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is media accessibility?</td>
<td>• Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Media accessibility services</td>
<td>• Visual presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Personal skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interpersonal skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenge 5. How do we train them?

• **Course** organisation

  • Modular *university* curriculum, 6 months, 30 ECTS.

  • Vocational training: MOOC

• Report led by SUH: https://ddd.uab.cat/record/222184
Challenge 5. How do we train them?

Video lectures
- Video
- Slides
- Audio
- Transcript
- Subtitles

Other videos
- Transcript
- Subtitles

Tasks (assessment)
- Questionnaire
- Suggested activities

Reading lists & additional materials
Results: free online materials (beta)

Unit 1. Media accessibility

The EASIT project

Output 3
3 professional profiles

- expert on E2U subtitles
- expert on E2U audio description
- expert on E2U audiovisual journalism
Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training (EASIT)

UNIT 1.
MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY

UNIT 2.
EASY-TO-UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE

UNIT 3A.
E2U AND SUBTITLING

UNIT 3B.
E2U AND AUDIO DESCRIPTION

UNIT 3C.
E2U AND AUDIOVISUAL JOURNALISM

UNIT 4.
THE PROFESSION

ELEMENT 1.
HUMAN DIVERSITY

1.1. HUMAN DIVERSITY
1.1.1. HUMAN DIVERSITY
1.1.2. DISABILITY MODELS
1.1.3. LANGUAGE ON DISABILITY
1.1.4. TASKS

ELEMENT 2.
WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY?

ELEMENT 3.
WHAT IS UNIVERSAL DESIGN?

ELEMENT 4.
WHAT IS MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY?

ELEMENT 5.
MEDIA ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

QUESTIONNAIRE

WATCH THE VIDEO

DOWNLOAD TRANSCRIPT [pdf]

DOWNLOAD PRESENTATION [pptx]

DOWNLOAD SUBTITLES [srt]
1.1.1. Human diversity

DOWNLOAD AUDIO [mp3]
DOWNLOAD VIDEO [mp4]
DOWNLOAD TRANSCRIPT [pdf]
DOWNLOAD PRESENTATION [pptx]
DOWNLOAD SUBTITLES [srt]

ENGLISH SPANISH CATALAN SWEDISH GALICIAN ITALIAN
Use it... and let us know

Online specialisation courses at UAB:

- Accessibility Management and Promotion: Accessible Services, Information and Communication
  - September
  - 12 weeks, 6 ECTS

- Accessible Digital Communication: Easy-to-Understand Language
  - January
  - 12 weeks, 6 ECTS

https://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/transmedia/training
Some final thoughts
We have gone a long way BUT...

More research is needed (EASIT = educational project)

• Standards
  • UNE 153101:2018 EX Easy to read. Guidelines and recommendations for the elaboration of documents.
  • ISO/IEC CD 23859-1 Guidance on making written text easy to read and easy to understand.
  • ISO/WD 24491-1 Plain language – Part 1: Governing principles and guidelines

• Research to support practices is needed.
We have gone a long way BUT...

- What happens in audio and audiovisual contexts?
- Multimodality, personalisation/customisation.
- New formats and forms.
- The role of the user: evaluation/validation?
- Accessible content and accessible interaction/access.
Importance of sharing information: networks
Media Accessibility Platform

http://mapaccess.org
Welcome to MAP
Welcome to MAP, the Media Accessibility Platform, a unified atlas charting the worldwide landscape of research, policies, training and practices in this field. MAP aims to make media accessible to all, regardless of sensorial and linguistic barriers.

PROJECTS
Personalised content creation for the deaf community in a connected digital single market
Project duration: 09/2017-11/2020
Leading Institution: Fincom Group
Funding bodies: European Commission
Modalities: Sign Language, Interpreting, Media Accessibility

LATEST NEWS
14/05/2021: Launch of the stable release of the Media Accessibility Platform to celebrate GAAD 2021
11/11/2020: Online free EASIT event
11/11/2020: ARSAD programme published
11/11/2020: MAALL 9 programme published
21/01/2020: MAALL and ARSAD 2021 call for papers out

PUBLICATIONS
Reception of game subtitles. An empirical study
Type: Journal article Year: 2016
Authors: Carme Mangiron
Modalities: Localization, Subtitling, Subtitling for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

TRAINING COURSES
An advanced introduction to interlingual rephrasing
Course Type: Professional training course Institution: Shaping Multilingual Access Through Repealing Technology (SMART) project
Modalities: Repealing

EVENTS
From access to inclusion
Type: Conference City: Dublin
Date: 09/03/2021, 16/03/2021, 23/03/2021
Modalities: Media Accessibility

LEGISLATION, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES
Provisions of Access Services Code
Code: BC 01/17
Type: Guidelines Year: 2017
Authoring: Gibraltar Regulatory Authority
Broadcasting Division
Country: United Kingdom

Richtlinie för understöd i Sverige
Type: Guidelines Year: 2020
Authoring: Medierätten
Country: Sweden
EASIT multiplier event

http://pagines.uab.cat/easit/

Free online Multiplier Event
14 June 2021

@EASITproject
#EASITproject
Disclaimer

TransMedia Catalonia is a research group funded by Secretaria d’Universitats i Recerca del Departament d’Empresa i Coneixement de la Generalitat de Catalunya, under the SGR funding scheme (ref. code 2017SGR113).

The project **EASIT** has received funding from the Erasmus + Programme of the EU under the call Strategic partnerships for higher education, grant agreement No 2018-1-ES01-KA203-05275. The project **RAD** is funded by the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades (PGC2018-096566-B-I100, MCIU/AEI/FEDER, UE). The project **NEA** was funded by the Spanish Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (FFI2015-64038-P, MINECO/FEDER, UE). The project **IMAC** was funded by European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 761974.

Texts, marks, logos, names, graphics, images, photographs, illustrations, artwork, audio clips, video clips, and software copyrighted by their respective owners are used on these slides for personal, educational and non-commercial purposes only. Use of any copyrighted material is not authorized without the written consent of the copyright holder. Every effort has been made to respect the copyrights of other parties. If you believe that your copyright has been misused, please direct your correspondence to anna.matamala@uab.cat stating your position and we shall endeavour to correct any misuse as early as possible.

This document and its contents reflect the views only of the authors. TransMedia Catalonia and the funding organisms referred to in this presentation cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.
Easy-to-understand language beyond the written wor(l)d: the challenges of making audiovisual media easy to understand

Anna Matamala
Anna.matamala@uab.cat
TransMedia Catalonia
Departament de Traducció, d’Interpretació i d’Estudis de l’Àsia Oriental
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona