



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

ELEMENT 4. THE LANGUAGE OF E2U

TEXTUAL ASPECTS OF E2U

Video Lecture Transcript

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This is unit 2, Easy-to-understand language, in short E2U, Element 4, The language of E2U. Video lecture: Textual aspects of E2U. My name is Christiane Maaß from the University of Hildesheim.

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In this short video lecture, I will talk about the textual aspects of easy-to-understand language, focusing once again on Easy and Plain Language. In this unit, we already had a presentation about the basic rules of easy-to-understand in Element 1. There we covered some rules on the textual level. In this presentation, we will go more into detail.



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First of all, rules related to the textual level may apply across languages. Unlike some aspects on the lexical or syntactic level, textual aspects of easy-to-understand language are not language specific.

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The first aspect we list on the textual level is that the content should be adjusted to the target groups. Information should not only be perceptible and comprehensible, but also useful for the target groups. In our presentation about the process of translating into easy-to-understand language, we talked about the addition and reduction processes that occur when translating. Information that is not explicitly mentioned in the source text has to be made explicit. This is an example of adapting the content to the target groups.

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The text should also take into consideration for which target situation it is intended. Textual content is always part of a communicative situation. The texts have to be adjusted to their function in the target situation. This function is linked to the text type of the source text. It is a challenge to keep the Easy Language target texts related to the text type they belong to. We will give more information on text types in the video lecture about the discourse of easy-to-understand language within this element.



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The information structure has to be appropriate for the target groups and the target situation. Usually it is a good strategy to place the most relevant bits of information at the beginning of a text. This strategy depends on the media realisation of the Easy or Plain Language text. For instance, we have more freedom to follow this rule in written communication. But this strategy does not always work. This may be the case if the Easy or Plain Language texts become part of the source text. This applies to formats of audiovisual translation, where for instance the order of the information delivered cannot be changed in the subtitles and the subtitles complement the source text.

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The chosen media realisation should be useful to the target groups in the target situation. The first question is whether it is retrievable for target groups. This may seem trivial, but it is the first step for accessible communication. For instance, the information is not accessible if the target groups have limited access to the internet and the text is only offered online. This is an aspect that is rarely taken into consideration as of now.

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In texts written in easy-to-understand language, the target groups are addressed directly, if possible. This contributes to comprehensibility, as they understand more easily how the content relates to them. It is also beneficial for the action-enabling potential of a text offer. If a certain action is expected from the target groups, it is helpful the target groups



are addressed directly and instructed on their possibilities for action. You can find more information about this topic in the presentation about pragmatic aspects of easy-to-understand language in this unit.

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Texts are more comprehensible for the target groups if these texts use advance organisers, subheadings and marginal notes. Therefore, these tools are widely used in texts written in easy-to-understand language. Advanced organisers are introductions into the text that give a short summary on the main content and the text function. Advance organisers help the target groups understand what to expect from a text. They help them grasp the macro-proposition of a text.

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Subheadings are helpful to organise information and make it more retrievable. Marginal notes may offer additional information or highlight information.

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When listing items in a text, a list with numbers or bullet points is more comprehensible than using commas in a sentence. This textual feature makes the list more perceptible for the target groups. The single items of the enumeration can be more easily distinguished and recalled.



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Another textual feature of easy-to-understand language is that important information is highlighted. Normally, through the use of bold type.

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Texts in easy-to-understand language also use images and visual guidance systems according to the target groups. More information about the visual components of Easy and Plain Language can be found in Element 5 of this unit.

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To summarize, these are the textual features of easy-to-understand language:

Adjust the content to the target groups

Adjust texts to the target situation.

Adjust the information structure according to the target groups and target situation.

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Choose a medial realization that is functional and useful for the target groups and the target situation.

Address the target groups directly.

Use advance organisers (introduction with the main ideas), subheadings and marginal notes.



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Use lists (not comma) and indentations for additional information.

Highlight important information.

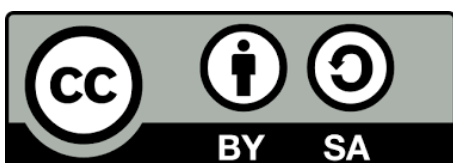
Use images and visual guidance systems accordingly to the target groups.

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This video lecture has been prepared by Sergio Hernández and Christiane Maaß from the University of Hildesheim. You can reach us at easit@uni-hildesheim.de.

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