



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

ELEMENT 2. LEGISLATION, STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

E2U IN GERMANY: EASY AND PLAIN LANGUAGE RESEARCH AND RULESETS

Video Lecture Transcript

Slide 1

This is unit 2, Easy-to-understand language, in short E2U, Element 2, Legislation, standards, and guidelines. Video lecture: Easy-to-understand language in Germany: Easy and Plain Language research and rulesets. My name is Christiane Maaß from the University of Hildesheim.

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In this first video, we gave an overview about the German concept of easy-to-understand language. We also gave insight into the fields where easy-to-understand language is already used and where more Easy Language material is needed. The first video ended with an overview on important legal milestones.



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In the second video, we will talk about the German situation in research. We will talk about the existing practical and scientific guidelines. Then we will go into more detail with regard to the German easy-to-understand language rules. This topic covers more aspects than the other videos and treats the situation of easy-to-understand language in Germany from different viewpoints. Therefore, we have created two videos to cover this topic.

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Research on Easy and Plain Language in Germany has considerably stepped up in the last 10 years. Meanwhile, Accessible communication and Easy as well as Plain Language, have become multidisciplinary research topics and we have a rich publication landscape. This very active landscape has contributed to the development of Easy Language.

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A major promoter of Easy and Plain Language Research in Germany is the Research Centre for Easy Language that is situated at the University of Hildesheim. This Research Centre is also part of the EASIT consortium. It has put forward research results with focus on Easy and Plain Language, among which scientifically founded Easy and Plain Language rules.

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Other research groups are the LeiSa team around Prof. Bettina Bock with an inclusive approach and the TracoLab of Prof. Silvia Hansen-Schirra with a user centred approach.

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More research is being done for example in the area of psychology, second language acquisition, and educational studies. Plain Language is being researched primarily from the perspective of specialised communication and translation studies.

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And so, we move into the next topic: guidelines. In Germany, there are practical guidelines as well as scientifically founded rulebooks.

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On the side of the practical guidelines there is the German version of the Inclusion Europe guidelines, the rules from the empowerment movement Netzwerk Leichte Sprache, which is Network Easy Language, and the rules from the Accessible Information Technology Regulation we already talked about.

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The scientifically founded rulebooks are "Leichte Sprache. Das Regelbuch" (Easy Language. The rulebook) and the three volumes of the Duden

Leichte Sprache. The Duden is a publisher that is perceived to be most influential and standard-setting publisher with regard to the German language. It provides sets of rules on German grammar, spelling, and language use. With the Duden Easy Language, this institution has positioned as a supporter of Easy language. Both materials, the rulebook as well as the Duden Easy Language, were drafted at the University of Hildesheim.

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In 2020-21, the German Institute for Standardisation is developing a norm to harmonise the different rulesets.

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In the following, we will focus on the scientific rules developed by the Research Centre for Easy Language published by Duden.

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Concerning the rules for Easy German, the basic rules on easy-to-understand already presented in the video lecture also apply to the German language. Therefore, we will not repeat them in this presentation. You can access this information in the presentation of Unit 2 "Easy-to-understand" Element 1 "Understanding Easy-to-understand language" Video Lecture: Basic rules of Easy-to-understand language". But there is one rule on the word level that especially applies for the German language and it concerns the German compound nouns.



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The German Language is famous for its long compound nouns. Theoretically, they can expand indefinitely. Here is the example of such a long compound noun: Tageskurbeitragsautomat meaning “one-day spa tax (ticket) vending machine”.

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These very long compounds are difficult for the target groups to process, especially if the compound consists of more than two of these lexical items as is the case in our example. Easy Language rules propose to separate long words in order to make them easier to process. For the separation, hyphens and the mediopoint may be used.

“Tageskurbeitragsautomat” using the mediopoint would look like this: Tages.kurbeitrags.automat. This separation makes the single compounds stand out so that they can be perceived more easily.

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Plain Language is not strictly normed in the German context. Translators can depart from Easy Language and enrich the Easy Language rule set according to the users and the target situation.

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For example, if the subject is situated in an expert context with many new concepts that are introduced in the text, the syntactic structures should remain very simple. On the contrary, if the subject of the text is very down-to-earth and well-known to the readers, the syntactic structure may

be a little more complex with simple compound sentences and longer stretches of text.

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An example of the first case is the Apotheken Umschau, a widely known offer in the field of public health communication. They inform on health issues that may well be somewhat technical. Accordingly, the syntactic structure remains very simple.

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as we can see in the example. I read the English translation of the German example:

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“What is an acute middle ear infection?

In the case of an acute middle ear infection, the affected person has a severe ear ache. This is because the middle ear is inflamed. The middle ear is behind the eardrum inside the ear. Persons affected by a middle ear infection often have a cold. Small children are particularly frequently affected by a middle ear infection.”

This is the end of the section about easy-to-understand language in Germany.

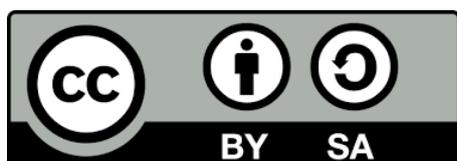


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