



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

ELEMENT 1. UNDERSTANDING E2U

BASIC RULES OF E2U

Video Lecture Transcript

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This is unit 2, Easy-to-understand language, in short E2U, Element 1, Understanding Easy-to-understand language. Video lecture: Basic rules of E2U. My name is Sergio Hernández Garrido from the University of Hildesheim.

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In this short video lecture, we will talk about the basic rules of E2U, focusing on Easy Language and Plain Language. We will look into the basic rules on the lexical, the syntactic and the textual level. We will then go into more detail in other videos in this unit in Element 4.

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In the first video lecture of this unit, we pointed out that there is a continuum of ever more comprehensible and less complex renderings.



Within this continuum, there are two poles: Easy Language on the one side, and expert language on the other. On the left pole we have Easy Language, including Easy-to-Read, with the highest comprehensibility level.

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In order to reach this level of comprehensibility, Easy Language is strictly normed. Lexical and grammatical features are strictly limited and only little previous knowledge is to be presupposed, considering the needs of the target groups.

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Right of Easy Language we have Plain Language,

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that is still comprehensibility-enhanced, but allows more grammatical and lexical complexity than Easy Language.

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Plain Language can vary in complexity: It depends on the target groups and the target situation, how close Plain Language is to Easy Language in a given text. Creating content in Plain Language can therefore be described as a movement to the right within the continuum. For the basic rules of easy-to-understand language, we will therefore start with Easy Language and then gradually move towards Plain Language.

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First of all and most generally, content in Easy Language has to be perceptible and comprehensible. The rulesets are partly language-specific and partly non language-specific. For example, for German, there are rules on the segmentation of compound nouns. This rule is a language specific rule for German. In this presentation, we focus on non-language specific rules. Those rules tend to apply generally for comprehensibility-enhancement. We will go into more detail in Element 4 “The language of E2U” in this same unit.

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On lexical level, these are the basic common rules of Easy Language in a nutshell:

- Use short, morphologically simple words that are well-known to the target groups.
- Try to avoid foreign words if you assume that they are not known to the target groups or not regularly used by them in a situational context.
- Explain expert language terminology that you need in your Easy Language text.
- Abstain from lexical variation and use the same word for the same concept all through your text.
- Try to avoid abbreviations. Common short words that are used on a regular basis and are assumed to be known by the target groups can be used.

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On the syntactic level, we can name following rules:

- Use only independent clauses and not compound clauses.
- Transform compound sentences into independent clauses.
- Transform complex nominal structures into verbal structures, that is, more generally, use verbal style and not nominal style.

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- Keep negation markers to a minimum. Use independent negation markers like “no” or “not” and avoid negation markers that are bound morphemes like in words like “unbreakable” and “irresponsible”. Use bold type to highlight the negation marker.
- Use active voice and not passive voice.

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Rules on lexical and syntactic level may be partially language-specific. The rules we just presented may be valid across languages, but we recommend that you look into the rulesets for your own language as well. In this unit, we give some information on Easy-to-understand language in the different countries and languages that are part of the EASIT project.

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Rules on the text level are related to text types and tend to apply across languages.



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Basic rules on the text level are for instance:

- 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.
- Choose a media realisation that is functional and useful for the target groups and the target situation.

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- Address the target groups directly.
- Use advance organisers. Advance organisers are short texts in advance that introduce the main ideas of a text.
- Use subheadings and marginal notes.
- Use lists for enumerations or information on the same level.

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- Use indentations for explanations and examples.
- Highlight important information.
- Use images and visual guidance systems, but adjust them to the needs of the target groups.

These were the basic rules of EL in a nutshell.



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Plain Language is not as strictly normed as Easy Language. It is somewhat more complex with regard to vocabulary and grammar. So to create content in Plain Language, we depart from Easy Language and enrich the linguistic means that can be used:

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Somewhat more complexity in the vocabulary, somewhat more syntactic variety, for example, simple compound sentences, somewhat less explanations of words and issues in the text.

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By doing so, we move to the right within the language complexity continuum. How far right we move in the continuum depends on the target groups that is being addressed and the target situation for which the content is being created.

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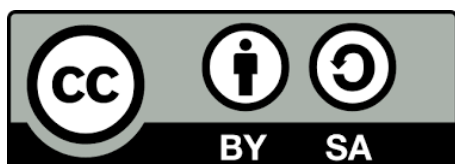
More information about the language of E2U and its rules will be presented in the video lectures in Element 4. There, we will also give examples.

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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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