



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

### **ELEMENT 1. UNDERSTANDING E2U**

#### **TARGET AUDIENCES OF E2U AND THEIR NEEDS**

##### **Video Lecture Transcript**

### **Slide 1**

This is unit 2, Easy-to-understand language, in short E2U, Element 1, Understanding Easy-to-understand language. Video lecture: Target groups of E2U and their needs. My name is Sergio Hernández from the University of Hildesheim.

### **Slide 2**

In this short video lecture, I will talk about the target groups of E2U. I will focus on Easy Language, including Easy-to-Read, and Plain Language. I will also deliver an insight into the needs of the target groups in regard to the communication barriers they may face.

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First of all, the target groups of Easy Language are considerably diverse. We talk about primary and secondary groups, according to the 2016 book "Easy Language" (in German Leichte Sprache) by Bredel and Maaß.

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The primary groups are groups that have problems reading texts in standard or expert language. Therefore, they are addressed in Easy Language.

## **Slide 5**

The secondary groups are those groups that are confronted with content in Easy Language, even if they could be addressed with standard or expert language. In this video lecture, we will focus on primary groups of EL.

## **Slide 6**

The primary groups of EL are persons with cognitive disabilities, with learning difficulties, dementia,

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prelingual hearing impairment, aphasia, functional illiterates, and language learners.



## Slide 8

They are confronted with different kinds of problems. Rink's (2020) barrier index will help to understand the issue. The primary target groups are faced with communication barriers they cannot overcome. It is helpful to understand which communication barriers they are confronted with in order to find the right strategy to make texts accessible. Easy Language is one of the tools to overcome communication barriers.

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Rink proposes her barrier index based on these seven communication barriers:

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- A text may represent a **sensory barrier**, for instance, if the communication is oral and the group addressed cannot hear. Or if the communication has to be perceived via the visual channel and the group addressed cannot see. There are different forms of accessible communication to address the sensory barrier, for example, subtitles or audio description.

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- A text may represent a **cognitive barrier**, for instance, if the content is too complex and abstract for the addressed group to process. This may be the case because the cognitive capacities of the target group are reduced, for example because of cognitive impairment. The cognitive barrier is a considerable obstacle. Not



every content can be made accessible for each group or individual. They might not understand because of a cognitive barrier, no matter how easy the linguistic form of what is said.

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- A text may represent a **motoric barrier**, if the physical presentation is not appropriate for the group addressed. For example, if a person cannot use a mouse, but an online page cannot be navigated without the mouse. Or if the paper quality of a brochure is not good for persons with a motoric impairment and they cannot turn the pages.

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- A text may represent a **language barrier**, if the content is in a language that the group addressed does not understand. This may be because they do not know this language because it is foreign to them. If they do know the language, it may be that the variety of the language used in the text is not familiar to them: too high in style, perhaps a local dialect or belonging to a group that cultivates a certain language fashion.

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- A text may represent an **expert knowledge barrier or expert language barrier**, if special knowledge is needed in order to understand the content or the content is written in expert language.



## Slide 15

- A text may also represent a **cultural barrier**, if special knowledge or attitudes are presupposed that belong to a certain culture.

## Slide 16

- And finally, a text may represent a **media barrier**, if the media format is not appropriate for the addressed group or if they do not have access to the gadgets and tools necessary to retrieve a text. For example, many individuals among the primary target groups of Easy Language do not have access to the internet.

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So what barriers do the Easy Language target groups face? Practically all of them may be confronted with **expert knowledge and expert language barriers**. In this context, EL can be helpful, because expert knowledge is presented in a comprehensible way and knowledge on the subject is not presupposed; it is explicitly introduced. The language variety is also reduced to a minimum. You will learn more about this in our lecture about lexical aspects of easy-to-understand language.

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The **cognitive barrier** poses an obstacle for persons with cognitive disability and dementia-type illnesses. Content in EL tackles this barrier: it brings presuppositions and implicatures to the surfaces and explains them. The amount of information is reduced to avoid information



overload. You will learn more about this in our lecture about textual aspects of easy-to-understand language.

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The **language barrier** may be an obstacle for persons with prelingual hearing impairment, cognitive disability, dementia-type illnesses, aphasia, and language learners.

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This barrier is tackled by using only a central vocabulary and basic grammatical structures. You will learn more about this in our lectures about lexical aspects and syntactic aspects of easy-to-understand language.

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Persons with prelingual hearing impairment and language learners are also confronted with **cultural barriers**. EL addresses this barrier by making knowledge explicit that is presupposed within a specific culture.

## Slide 22

Persons with sensory impairments also face a **sensory barrier**. A sensory impairment may come in addition to another impairment, for example a hearing and or visual impairment in addition to a cognitive impairment.



## Slide 23

A good way to work on communication barriers is to consider other media formats, for example audiovisual formats. Or audio formats in addition to the written version of a text. For instance, people with dyslexia can be addressed through audio or audiovisual formats, because their primary problem is not in the field of comprehending but rather in using written formats.

## Slide 24

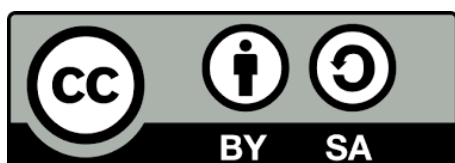
Plain Language addresses persons that do not need the maximum comprehensibility level to understand a specific content. The Plain Language texts might not be perceptible and comprehensible enough for persons with communication impairments. Plain Language is for persons that do not understand a specific content due to language complexity or expert content. This is very typical in expert-lay-communication. If Plain Language is not comprehensible enough for a specific group, translators and authors should consider using Easy Language instead of Plain Language.

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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](mailto:easit@uni-hildesheim.de).

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