PEREGO, ELISA. ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION: A CROSS-COUNTRY JOURNEY. BERLIN, FRANK & TIMME, 2020, 195 PP., ISBN 978-3-7329-0654-3

We are surrounded by information transferred via a variety of media. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes everyone's right to «receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers» (United Nations, 1948). Yet, to this day, as we are aware, information is not always made accessible to all. Persons with disabilities often encounter barriers in a society that is still inaccessible, e.g. images without alternative text on social media, uncaptioned videos, public transport with no passenger alert systems, among others. These examples show how accessibility services are key to granting everyone's autonomy to partake in all life experiences in equal conditions.

Perego's book, *Accessible Communication: A Cross-country Journey* (2020), focuses on an emerging access service: Easy-to-Understand (E2U) language. This is aimed at making content more accessible to a wide range of potential users, such as persons with reading difficulties and/or cognitive disabilities, migrants, and foreign-language learners. Writing in E2U language or adapting texts to this language mode entails not only phrasing texts in a clear(er) manner, taking into consideration both the lexical and the morphosyntactic levels of language, but also formatting information by following specific guidelines that facilitate communication, i. e. making it accessible.

E2U language may be understood as an umbrella term encompassing features of both Plain Language and Easy-to-Read language. The Plain Language movement started in the 70s and was originally a response to the language used in legislation and jurisprudence, although its scope was later expanded into other fields. The Plain Writing Act of 2010 defines Plain Language as «writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience» (US Public Law 111-174, 2010). Easy-to-Read language started as a way of adapting content to persons with cognitive disabilities and reading difficulties. From the start, Easy-to-Read was found in different types of texts, including non-specialised texts such as literature or the press. Among other organisations, Inclusion Europe (2020) has provided guidelines and even a checklist to make sure that documentation follows the principles of Easy-to-Read language. Writing or adapting content to Easy-to-Read language means using frequent lexicon, avoiding words which include difficult syllables, avoiding abstract or foreign words, as well as metaphors, irony, proverbs, or idioms (Bernabé & Orero, 2019). As for syntax, Easy-to-Read language

prioritises short, non-complex sentences that avoid the passive voice and progressive constructions, as well as verbal periphrases, whenever possible, among other features (*ibid.*).

Perego's book is structured with six chapters accompanied by an introduction and conclusions. Chapter 1 defines accessible communication and delves into the notions of Plain Language and Easy-to-Read Language, presenting their target audiences, areas of application and guidelines currently available. The chapter illustrates the linguistic and textual features of E2U language. As it stands, the main limitation of the chapter is the fact that English is the only language considered in the examples, even though some of the measures proposed to assess readability are language-dependent—the lack of literature dealing with these aspects in depth, however, makes this limitation understandable in a first approach to the matter. Likewise, some language- and content-independent strategies are also presented by drawing on previous research (p.49). In the last part of the chapter, the combination of E2U with other access services is considered, namely subtitling for the D/deaf and the hard of hearing and audio description. This is in line with the fact that the book is part of an innovation project aiming to apply E2U language to audiovisual access services, called the Easy Access for Social Inclusion Training (EASIT) project[1].

Chapter 2 is devoted to the EASIT project. This was a three-year (2018–2021) Erasmus+ Programme led by Anna Matamala, from the TransMedia Catalonia research group, at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain). The consortium included eight partners from both academia and the media industry, as well as third sector organisations working with persons with disabilities and reading difficulties. The project's main output was the launch of a platform of open-access educational materials to contribute to the training of professionals working with E2U in combination with subtitling, audio description, and audiovisual journalism. These materials can be consulted on the project's website.

Chapter 3 explains that «a crucial stage of the [EASIT] project was to obtain information on the current European scenario regarding general E2U training and practice» (p. 93). To pursue this aim, a questionnaire following E2U guidelines was designed and distributed by EASIT researchers. This project phase was led by Elisa Perego at the University of Trieste, one of the EASIT academic partners. In Chapter 3, the author reports on sampling and other methodological considerations taken into account in the design of the questionnaire. The transparency with which methodological steps are

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[1] <https://pagines.uab.cat/easit>.

presented in the book makes this chapter extremely helpful for any researcher interested in using E2U questionnaires as a research instrument. The final questionnaire is also available on the project's website in Catalan, Galician, German, Italian, Spanish, Slovene, and Swedish.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the questionnaire results, which received answers from 128 professionals working in European countries. The results are presented globally in these chapters. In other words, answers from all languages and countries involved are discussed together. Other research publications derived from the EASIT project have discussed the results obtained for specific languages, such as Catalan (Arias-Badia and Matamala, 2020) and Spanish (Arias-Badia and Fernández-Torné, 2020), among others. Chapter 4 focuses on the professionals' profiles. What follows is a summary of the most frequent profiles found when analysing the results: most of the participants were women (over 70 %) aged 41–50. The three languages in which E2U seems to have spread the most are German, Spanish, and Swedish. Experts typically hold a postgraduate degree in Languages, Communication or related areas, and have followed extracurricular workshops on E2U language. They have between three and six years of experience in E2U language and mainly work as freelancers, which is telling about the emerging nature of this access service. The most frequent areas of application of E2U language are public administration and education. They do not typically work on audiovisual media. Respondents were also asked to provide their insights on prospective training for E2U experts. Their answers on the matter are included in chapter 5. They discussed the activities they had found most valuable in their training to become accessibility experts, the theoretical background needed, and how to improve their own skills, among other aspects. A result worth highlighting is that some professionals are seldom in touch with end-users to gather feedback on their text production or adaptation, whereas they believe that a deep knowledge of users is an indispensable skill for prospective professionals.

Chapter 6 introduces the course curricula developed in response to the EASIT project. Courses were informed by the results of the survey presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The chapter describes the skills that trainees should possess upon finishing an educational programme, the elements composing the unit devoted to E2U language, and shows how the approach to course design was connected to the results obtained.

Getting to know current professional practices, as achieved in the survey conducted in the EASIT project, is an essential first step to understanding where we stand now and how we want to train future accessibility experts. The book opens new research avenues and calls for future studies to account for the training needs connected to E2U in different

languages. While the monograph focuses on training and the profession, some of the results derived from the EASIT project also demonstrate the need to further explore the reception of E2U texts with end-users. Do different approaches, adopted in different settings, result in better or worse results in terms of reception? What is «accessible communication», from the users' perspective?

Perego's book demonstrates the potential of E2U language as an emerging service that will likely be increasingly applied to multiple formats very soon. The author's clarity in describing the work process entailed in the initial stages of a teaching innovation project funded by the EU is also one of the main strengths of the monograph. The book is, therefore, an invaluable contribution to the fields of audiovisual translation and media accessibility and would be a useful read for researchers, students, and practitioners alike.

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