

Spoken Easy Language for Social Inclusion (SELSI)

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Work package (WP) 2 – Needs and resource mapping

Multiplier Event 1

Spoken easy language: Harmonising voices from complementary worlds

Book of abstracts

SELSI: Project overview

Tatjana Knapp, Zavod Risa

Project SELSI, which is short for Spoken Easy Language for Social Inclusion, is a project on how to speak in a way people can understand us well. This is especially important, for example, for teachers or educators who work with people who need extra communication support.

Seven partner organizations from five countries work together in the project.

Our first step was to ask people who need Easy Language and professionals who work with them what is important if people want to understand each other. Almost five hundred people from many countries answered our questions.

In the next step, we will make guidelines or recommendations on how to speak in Easy Language. We will test the recommendations and make them available online.

Through the whole project, we will have support from advisors from different countries.

Project SELSI is a part of the Erasmus+ program. European Commission co-finances the project, meaning they help pay for the expenses. SELSI started in November 2022 and will end in October 2024.

Work Package 2: Needs and resource mapping

Elisa Perego and Piergiorgio Trevisan, University of Trieste

In collaboration with all the SELSI partners

In an Erasmus+ project, a “work package” is a specific project phase, or a group of related tasks within a project. Work packages look like projects themselves, and they are often thought of as sub-projects within a larger project. They imply research activities, have a specific aim, and work to tight deadlines.

Work package 2, entitled “Needs and resource mapping”, is being coordinated by the University of Trieste, and it will end on the 31st of April, 2023. Its aim was to map the needs and resources for spoken easy language (SEL) communication in the partner and associate countries, and to set the basis for the development of SEL recommendations and strategies.

To fulfil this aim, we created a multilingual online questionnaire and we administered the questionnaire to both professionals who produce language for people who need linguistic support, and to users. In this talk, we will present a selection of the results achieved, and we will focus on what seem to be the preferred strategies to ensure a really accessible oral setting for all.

A brief overview of results will be followed by the illustration of specificities found in the SELSI project countries: Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Sweden.

Language simplification and the SSLMIT: Multiple challenges, multiple initiatives

Katia Peruzzo, University of Trieste

Language simplification has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years. Linguists working in this field are interested in understanding how, where, when, for whom and by whom language is or should be simplified. At the Section of Studies in Modern Languages for Interpreting and Translation (SSLMIT) of the University of Trieste, numerous scholars have carried out studies in the field of language simplification in its various forms, such as plain language and easy-to-read language. These studies focus on a wide range of domains, settings, modes, end users, etc. This paper will present two initiatives promoted by SSLMIT scholars in 2022. These initiatives had written language at their core, but the results may also be of interest for scholars and practitioners working with spoken language. The first initiative is the special issue of *Treccani's* magazine on the Italian language titled "La comunicazione semplificata per una vera inclusione sociale: le esperienze in italiano" ("Simplified communication for true social inclusion: experiences with the Italian language"). This issue collects six case studies on different forms of language simplification for Italian speakers. The second initiative is the special issue of the *Rivista Internazionale di Tecnica della*

Traduzione/International Journal of Translation devoted to language simplification and intralingual translation. Thirteen authors contributed to the journal with their reflections and case studies, which reflect the multifaceted nature and complexity of language simplification.

Easy and spoken language: What can we learn from research?

Floriana Sciumbata, University of Trieste

During my presentation, I will talk about what we can learn from research when comparing written easy language and spoken language. By “easy language” I mean the language that we speak everyday with other people. Indeed, several guidelines to write in easy language suggest imitating the spoken language and some of its structures. However, do easy and spoken language really share some traits? What can we learn from research to improve easy spoken language?

I will present results of a study that I have carried out comparing a collection of texts in easy-to-read Italian, newspapers, and spoken Italian. The Italian association called ANFFAS wrote most of the texts in easy-to-read Italian, while the spoken Italian texts come from a collection called LIP (*Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato*, “Spoken language word frequency list”), which transcribes conversations recorded in Italy in the 90s. According to the results of my research, easy language shares features with both written and spoken language, and lies halfway. Easy language, both written and spoken, can therefore take inspiration from spoken language, with some caveats that we should keep in mind and that I will

discuss. Indeed, I will list some traits, with a focus on Italian, that can be useful or harmful to write or speak in easy language.

Points arising on Easy Language

Simone Belci, OKAY – Ufficio per la lingua facile, Lebenshilfe ONLUS

An informal working group on easy language has existed for about a year now. The group, which does not have a name yet, is moderated by the OKAY Office and the association 'Pro Infirmis' and includes scholars and practitioners in the field of easy language. The group aims to share knowledge and methods and to raise awareness of easy language. During the meetings made so far, the topics of the creations of an easy language text and the need to offer different levels of language simplification have been discussed. In addition, the components and members of the group translated Article 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities into easy language.

What's in a name? A speech pathologist perspective

Cathy Basterfield, Access Easy English Australia

Communication is about interaction. Behaviour is communication. It does not require language. Not everyone develops language, yet that person can communicate.

Does spoken language require the same skills as communication?
What about written language?

Speech pathology expertise include assessing and remediating all aspects of a persons' communication including spoken communication, comprehension, reading and writing.

It may be working with an individual or it may be communication partners that need to modify what they are doing to enhance an individual's communication.

Communication is more than language. It requires a range of skills including, but not limited to

- understanding or comprehending words, sentences and conversations
- knowing how words are put together in phrases and sentences for meaning
- body language and facial expression

- natural gesture and sign
- the environment you are in, and the objects around you
- pictures and words around you
- voice
- planning
- memory
- reasoning
- your life experiences
- your previous success in communicating.

You need to know and use a range of different social functions, called pragmatics.

To use spoken words, you have developed skills in how to make sounds and combine them to make words and sentences. But if you are not able to communicate effectively or all the time with speech, there are a range of other tools called augmentative and alternative communication or AAC you can use to develop your language. This is supporting a person to communicate in their best way. It is not a separate entity to easy spoken language.

This paper will challenge you to consider what is already in the literature about language and communication. What conceptual ideas does spoken language need to or want to address?

Keynote Speech

Easy spoken language: Recommendations in Finnish

Leealaura Leskelä, Selkokeskus, Finnish Centre for Easy Language

Where can Easy Language be used? Who actually needs Easy Language? What kind of principles we have for Easy Language? In many European countries, these questions have been asked and studied recently, but mainly in regard to written language.

There is, however, a growing interest to apply the idea of Easy Language to spoken contexts. In Finland, we have developed Guidelines for spoken Easy Language. They aim to help interactants who do not share the same language skills to talk with each other.

The 45 guidelines are divided into five sections:

1) Orientation to the situation; 2) Encountering with a person, being present; 3) Reciprocity and taking turns; 4) Speaking Easy Language and 5) Checking and repairing. (Leskelä 2021; 2022.)

The list shows that it is not just language, that needs to be simplified, when we use Easy Language in conversations. We need to simplify the interactional moment as a whole and consider, what kind of actions are natural and available to the interactants. This is especially important in informal situations, such as when chatting with friends and family members.

We can also use spoken Easy Language in more official situations, such as when teaching in a classroom, working at the customer service or producing Easy Language news in mass media. In these situations, the goal is to use simplest possible language.

In this presentation, I will tell you about my research on spoken Easy Finnish, which is based on a data of conversations between people with learning disabilities and professionals working with them.

From artifacts to storytelling

Cristina Gazzola, Muve Education – Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

The workshop "From artifacts to storytelling" is held in cooperation with the "Servizio Pronto intervento sociale inclusione e mediazione" of the City of Venice.

It is addressed to students, particularly foreign native speakers, who need to prepare for the secondary school state exam.

It provides museum visits, guided conversations, map-making collectives and oral and written exercises on works chosen by the participants.

Students will be able to develop language, communication and interpersonal skills, acquire new historical and artistic knowledge of the Venetian heritage and enhance their expressive and creative skills.

The workshop consists of eight meetings: four at the International Gallery of Modern Art of Ca' Pesaro and four at the Afterschool in Via Andrea Costa in Mestre.

At school, children learn about culture and religions, how to overcome mutual distrust, and how to feel part of society.

The museum comes into play in this task of "active citizenship" as a place for listening, creating stories and relationships, but also as a 'tool' for learning or improving a foreign language.

Supporting the participation of people with intellectual disabilities

Stefania Span, ANFASS Trieste

To implement the current approach to disability, based on the recognition of human rights, it is necessary to break down those barriers in the environment that create discrimination. Among them are barriers to information and communication, which are also present in oral contexts. What are the barriers that people with intellectual disabilities encounter in traditional oral contexts? What are the implications of the distance created between the sender and the receiver in ineffective communication? What strategies should be adopted for successful oral communication? What can be done to enable people with disabilities to participate in various life contexts? An attempt to answer these questions will be made through the testimony of some people with disabilities, offering a new perspective on the issues of communication in oral contexts. Their words may help us joining the debate with respect to a truly inclusive use of simplified language.

Real life experiences

Maurizio Sorbola and Marco Alprinci, ANFASS Trieste

Stefania Span will coordinate an informal and interactive session with the participation of some members of ANFASS Trieste (National Association of Families of People with Intellectual and/or rational disabilities). The focus will be on the point of view of end-users.

Mapping the use of (Spoken) Easy Language in European public broadcasting

Veronika Rot and Andrej Tomažin, Radiotelevizija Slovenija

In recent years, many European media organizations started adapting news in Easy and Plain Language. According to the Handbook of Easy Language in Europe, there are a few countries that offer news articles in different media formats in Europe. These countries are: Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom. The news are produced by the public broadcasters, the commercial media, or self-advocacy organizations.

Not only in written format, but also audiovisual content is being produced in accessible ways. According to European Broadcasting Union (EBU), almost 9 out of 10 European citizens are reached by TV every week. This makes adapting audiovisual content in Easy Language an important step towards producing more accessible information. In the talk Simplification in one-way communication: Mapping the use of (Spoken) Easy Language in European public broadcasting we will explore the audiovisual news in Easy Language in Europe. The presentation will combine the findings with the information that we gathered from the questionnaire responses by the people who need simplified content and people who produce simplified content.