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Simplifying is essential for language justice and language access

2 messages

Lee Shainis <lee@simplifylanguage.com>

Wed, Oct 16, 2024 at 7:00 AM

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It's awesome that governments, schools, and other institutions are talking about language justice and language access. Many are investing a lot of time and \$\$\$!

The [Metropolitan Planning Area Council](#) has extensive definitions for both.

Here's how I summarize them:

- **Language Justice** is the right to understand and be understood in the language you prefer.
- **Language Access** is ensuring that your audience can communicate with you and fully understand your written and spoken communication, whether it's in English or translated.

Here are two things we need to discuss more:

1. **Impact of simplifying language on the effectiveness and costs of translations.**

More people are talking about simplifying language, but many don't understand how to do it well and how significantly it impacts translation and interpretation.

Translators have shared many horror stories about long documents or complex language they had to translate. If it isn't easy for your audience to understand in English, it won't be simple in other languages either.

Translators often don't feel empowered to return a document to the writer and say:
"If you remove all the unnecessary text, more people will read the translation."

OR

"If you use simpler language, I will be able to translate it more accurately."

Translating can expand access, or it can be a waste of resources. If you reduce the English version by 50% without removing anything important, you **save time and create more accessible translations.**

A simpler English version can also increase accessibility for people with hearing or vision impairment, or who are neurodivergent.

2. English speakers often don't understand your English.

I've been surprised that many **highly educated native English speakers admitted that they often do not understand their colleagues.** I'm talking about professors, nurses, program directors, etc. They usually don't admit that to many people, but in my training the honesty comes out.

Language justice is about communicating in ways that people can understand and feel included, in English or in any language!

You can only be great at language justice and language access if you are great at simplifying communication. And becoming great at simplifying isn't easy!

To transform language access at your place of work, email me or schedule a time to talk at www.simplifylanguage.com. You can see my past newsletters there too.

If you've already had a training, do a refresher! Simplifying requires ongoing practice, and I have many more tips you didn't learn in the 1st training. Thanks!

-Lee Shainis

President, Simplify Language

I welcome feedback and thoughts about my newsletters!

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Mon, Oct 21, 2024 at 3:45 PM

To: Panna Jarussi <ldmare1@gmail.com>, Jarussi_Panna <Jarussi_Panna@asdk12.org>, Joan Ryan <joanryanestay@gmail.com>

I love this blog post and think it might be great to include in our presentation on Thursday.

[Quoted text hidden]

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