

# Spoken Easy Finnish

in linguistically asymmetric communication

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# Definition of Easy Language

“Easy Language is a language variety in which vocabulary, language structures and contents are modified to be more readable and understandable than in Standard Language.

It is intended for people who have difficulties in reading or understanding Standard Language.”

(e.g. Kulkki-Nieminen 2010; Leskelä 2021)

- Includes spoken language.
- Guidelines for Easy Language in spoken interaction are under construction (e.g. Leskelä 2012; 2022; SELSI).

# Linguistically asymmetric communication

- may occur between speakers who do not share same linguistic abilities:
  - a linguistically more competent speaker
  - a speaker, who needs linguistic support
- may occur in different communicative situations:
  - in institutional interaction
  - in free conversations
  - in group conversations
  - in dyadic conversations



# Challenges of giving guidelines for spoken language

- Speakers have limited time to consider language usage; is it possible at all to speak easy language?
- Who is responsible for understandability in spoken situations, in which communication is based on reciprocity?
- Could following the guidelines unsensitize the linguistically more competent speaker to the individuality of the co-participant?

# Research Data

| INTERACTION TYPES            | PARTICIPANTS  | DURATION |
|------------------------------|---|----------|
| Free conversations (6)       | Participants with intellectual disabilities (6)<br>Professional participants (5)                            | 1:45:47  |
| Task guidance situations (4) | Employees with intellectual disabilities (4)<br>Job coaches (4)   | 0:51:58  |
| Interviews (6)               | Interviewees with intellectual disabilities (7)<br>Interviewers with different professional backgrounds (4) | 1:29:26  |
| Total: 16 conversations      | 12 participants with intellectual disabilities<br>11 professional participants                              | 4:07:11  |

01 Harri: (1.2) I: go (0.5) (to do) some jobs  
 02 (1.2)  
 03 #ää#hh (1.8) ↑in Koi- ↑Koivula  
 04 Eeva: @Koivula@ ((surprised voice))  
 05 Harri: yea (0.5)  
 06 Eeva: you go to Koivula [to do some jo]bs,  
 07 Harri: [ >yea yea< ]  
 08 (0.5)  
 09 Eeva: what jobs.  
 10 Harri: doctor's jobs.  
 11 Eeva: ((laughing)) ↑haha d(h)octor's jobs. \$  
 12 ↑well well what, .h well yes↓ .th  
 13 Eeva: do you know that for that- one has to go to school for quite- a while  
 14 (0.5)  
 15 Harri: yes (.) ((nods)) school↑  
 16 Eeva: \$mm-m\$  
 17 Harri: mt (.)  
 18 Eeva: \$firs[t one should: ] (then) go to school\$↑  
 19 Harri: [(krhm) ] (mt)  
 20 Eeva: \$you: put up quite high-flying dreams here.\$

**Trouble turn 1:** topically surprising, linguistically unclear turn that needs to be negotiated

**Repair initiators:** repeats, "collecting", questions, interpretations to initiate negotiations

**Trouble turn 2:** ineligible claim

**Outright reaction:** repeating with amused voice, smiling, laughing

**"If you say x, this is where we end up":** question clauses to show what consequences the trouble turn can have

**Formulation:** an interpretative turn of how the trouble turn could be assigned to an acceptable context

# What to recommend?

Speak and act as people usually do in similar situations:

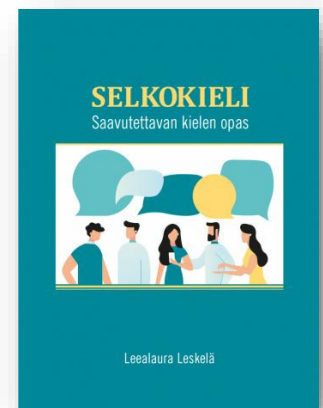
- Initiate repair with different repair initiators.
- React the way people are tend to react in these situations (e.g. laughing when amused)

Speak and act in a special way:

- Use "collecting", use "if you say x, this is where we end up"
- Use formulations to make an unusual action of the co-participant more understandable.
- Speak according Easy Language recommendations (simple vocabulary, linguistic structures, explanations of difficult words etc.)

# To learn more about spoken Easy Language

- Leelaura Leskelä 2022: Selkopuhetta! Puhuttu selkokieli kehitysvammaisten henkilöiden ja ammattilaisten vuorovaikutuksessa. Dissertation research, University of Helsinki. <https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/350709>
- Leelaura Leskelä 2021: Showing knowing. Negotiating about epistemics in interaction between persons with intellectual disabilities and professionals. Journal of Interactional Research in Communication Disorders 11:1, 26–51.
- Leelaura Leskelä 2019: Selkokieli – Saavutettavan kielen opas  [\(opike.fi\)](https://opike.fi)
- Leelaura Leskelä ja Camilla Lindholm (toim.) 2012: Haavoittuva keskustelu  [\(opike.fi\)](https://opike.fi)
- Johanna Kartio 2016: 12 askelta selkokielellä opettamiseen  [\(kansalaisopistojenliitto.fi, pdf\)](https://kansalaisopistojenliitto.fi)
- Johanna Kartio (toim.) 2009: Selkokieli ja vuorovaikutus  [\(opike.fi\)](https://opike.fi)





"Participation,  
the feeling of a joint discussion  
does not necessarily come from  
smooth and problem-free interaction,  
but from the experience that solutions  
to the problems encountered  
were found together."  
(Leskelä 2012)

Kiitos!

Köszönöm!

