

Connecting cultures: creating bridges with clear communication



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Because the journal is a membership benefit, we ask you to follow some guidelines for sharing and promoting it. This will allow us to protect the value of our membership and continue to produce this resource for all members.

Please do:

- Share a link to our website where we promote the journal.
- Encourage others to join PLAIN so that they can also read the journal.
- Share a printed copy only with your colleagues who might be interested.

Please do not:

- Circulate digital copies.
- Post images of articles that are not written by you.



President's Foreword

Hello everyone,

I'm Lodewijk van Noort, and I'm delighted to be the new President of PLAIN. I am thrilled to be working alongside our new board as we embark on a journey filled with exciting developments.

Let's talk about the recent conference in Buenos Aires

It was a great event where we shared ideas and learned from each other. I'm inspired by the energy and dedication of everyone who took part. It reminds us of the importance of plain language and clear communication.

I also want to share how amazing it was to meet people from our field in person at the conference. It was a special experience, talking face-to-face, sharing ideas, and making connections. But I know we shouldn't keep what we learned just to ourselves at the conference.

That's why I'm excited about this e-Journal — it lets us share what we learned beyond the conference. We've even started a podcast to dive deeper into important topics.

Looking forward, as we plan for our next conference, we're thinking about a mix of in-person and virtual elements — a kind of hybrid setup. This way, everyone, no matter where they are, can join in and benefit. We want to keep building connections and sharing knowledge in ways that work for all of our members. I'm eager to explore these new ideas and create more chances for us to learn and work together in the PLAIN community.

In this e-Journal, you'll find more discussions from the conference

We've gathered insights from some amazing speakers who shared their thoughts in Buenos Aires.

We're highlighting Argentina in this issue to celebrate the hosts of the conference. They've shared the latest updates on how plain language is developing in their country. A big thank you to Joanna Richardson, Lola Tula del Moral, Hipólito Nosiglia, Manuela Thourte, and everyone involved.

We're also covering different topics in this e-journal. There are articles on Artificial intelligence and its impact on plain language by Iria da Cunha, Sidan O Rafa, and Vanina Azzaro & Nuria Gómez Belart, as well as Helena Haapio & Nina Toivonen. We take a deep dive into how plain language is affecting legal design with contributions from Tessa Manuello and Estrella Montolío. And finally, a look at how to bring about organizational change, with articles from Charlotte Swart, Mischa Corsius & Keun Young Sliedrecht, and Nadja Green & Chani Slabbert.

But there's more! As the new President, I'm eager to hear from our members

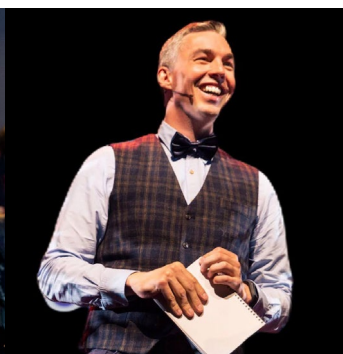
What do you want to do, hear, and know about plain language? How can our association help you in your work? Do you have ideas about this e-journal and what topics our future editions should cover? I'm all ears and would love to have a conversation with you.

Keep an eye on our communication channels because this year, we'll be organizing various online discussions! Let's connect and make PLAIN even better together.

Thank you for your support, and I'm excited for what's to come.

Best,

Lodewijk van Noort
President PLAIN





Introduction

Joanna Richardson (PLAIN President 2023 & 2018)

Guest Editor of the PLAIN e-Journal 1/2024

As someone who has had the honour of serving twice as PLAIN President, I am particularly proud that I was able to host the 2023 Conference in Buenos Aires, the city

I have made my home. It was a very special conference as it brought together plain language practitioners from all over the world, giving them an opportunity to meet up for real for the first time since 2019 in Oslo and share their experiences.

In fact, it was Margrethe Kvarenes, the PLAIN President preceding me, who had the wonderful idea of holding the conference in South America. PLAIN's intention with this conference was to shine a light on all the work underway in Latin America. Although she was unable to attend the conference, Margrethe sent us her warmest wishes, urging us to "get energized, inspired and enlightened."

And that is exactly what we did: we were energized by being back together after such a long and untimely absence, inspired by many of the experiences we heard about, and enlightened by the progress being made in the field of plain language and other interconnected areas.



Of course, it was a challenge organizing a conference in Argentina, a country with a 211.4% annual inflation rate in 2023, but we managed to do it. Everything ran smoothly thanks to our partners, the enthusiastic Observatorio de Lenguaje Claro de la Facultad de Derecho, the experienced Law Faculty of the University of Buenos Aires and of course, PLAIN's wonderful 2023 Board, especially the untiring Conference Team.

An outstanding amount of high quality presentations were submitted for appraisal as conference topics. Our thanks go to Mariana Bozetti, the

Academic Coordinator, who did an excellent job of selecting which ones to showcase at the event.

After careful deliberation, in this issue of the e-Journal, the acting Managing Editor Rafaela Gunner and I, as guest editor, have homed in on the following themes,

which we feel give a fair representation of the subjects covered at the conference, while focusing on the areas of greatest interest shown by attendees. These four themes were plain language in Argentina, Artificial Intelligence, Legal Design and Organizational Change.

We hope that you will enjoy reading these contributions as much as we have!

Joanna Richardson is a member of Clarity International and Plain Language Association International, and served on PLAIN's executive committee for six years, acting as the organization's president in 2018 and 2023. She sits on the committee of the International Plain Language Federation and writes a regular column on clear communication published in the Argentine newspaper TheBATimes.

Call for 2025 Conference Partner

PLAIN is planning its next in-person international conference for 2025. We are seeking a partner organization to host this conference.

The host organization's responsibilities include:

- Finding a suitable location for the conference
- Helping to identify and book speakers
- Arranging on-site technical equipment and catering

- Helping to find sponsors
- Managing registrations

If your organization would like to submit a proposal, please contact the conference committee at conference@plainlanguagenetwork.org for guidelines.

We welcome proposals from all regions.

Submission deadline: July 31, 2024

Introducción

Joanna Richardson (presidenta de PLAIN 2023 y 2018)

Editora invitada del e-Journal PLAIN 1/2024



Como alguien que ha tenido el honor de ser presidenta de PLAIN en dos ocasiones, estoy particularmente orgullosa de fungir de anfitriona de la Conferencia PLAIN de 2023 realizada en Buenos Aires, la ciudad que he hecho mi hogar. Fue una conferencia extraordinaria, ya que reunió a profesionales del lenguaje claro de todas partes del mundo; la primera oportunidad desde 2019, en Oslo, de reunirse en persona y compartir experiencias.

De hecho, fue Margrethe Kvarenes, la presidenta de PLAIN que me precedió, quien tuvo la maravillosa idea de celebrar la conferencia en Sudamérica. La intención de PLAIN con esta conferencia era mostrar todo el trabajo que se está haciendo en América Latina. Y aunque no pudo asistir a la conferencia, Margrethe nos envió sus mejores augurios y nos exhortó a “llenarse de energía, inspiración e iluminación”.

Y es precisamente lo que hicimos: nos llenó de energía volver a vernos luego de una ausencia tan inoportuna, nos inspiraron las experiencias que escuchamos y nos iluminaron los logros que se están haciendo en el campo del lenguaje claro y en otras áreas interconectadas.

Por supuesto, fue todo un desafío organizar una conferencia en Argentina, país con una inflación anual del 211,4 % en 2023, pero logramos que funcione. Todo transcurrió a la perfección gracias a nuestros socios dedicados del Observatorio de Lenguaje Claro de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Buenos Aires y, por supuesto, gracias a la eficiencia de la Junta 2023 de PLAIN, en particular al incansable equipo a cargo de organizar la Conferencia.

La misma contó con una cantidad deslumbrante de presentaciones de muy alta calidad. Afortunadamente, Mariana Bozetti, la Coordinadora Académica, supo realizar un excelente trabajo de selección de los temas que se presentarían en el evento.

Para esta edición del e-Journal de PLAIN, tras muchas deliberaciones, Rafaela Gunner, editora jefa en funciones, y yo, como editora invitada, nos hemos centrado en los siguientes temas que, en nuestra opinión, ofrecen una representación equilibrada de la conferencia y tratan las áreas de mayor interés demostrado por los asistentes. Los principales temas fueron el lenguaje claro en Argentina, la inteligencia artificial, el diseño jurídico y el cambio organizativo.

Esperamos que disfruten de la lectura de estas contribuciones tanto como nosotros.

Joanna Richardson es miembro de Clarity International y de Plain Language Association International y sirvió en el comité ejecutivo de PLAIN durante seis años y ejerció la presidencia de la organización en el 2018 y en el 2023. También está en el comité de la International Plain Language Federation. Publica una columna regular sobre comunicación clara en el diario argentino TheBATimes.

Convocatoria para la Conferencia PLAIN de 2025

PLAIN está planificando su próxima conferencia internacional presencial para 2025 y está buscando un anfitrión para el evento. Las responsabilidades del anfitrión incluyen:

- Encontrar un lugar adecuado para realizar la conferencia
- Ayudar a identificar y convocar a los ponentes
- Organizar el equipo técnico y el catering in situ

- Ayudar a encontrar patrocinadores
- Gestionar las inscripciones

Si su organización desea presentar una propuesta, por favor contactarse con el comité de la conferencia en conference@plainlanguagenetwork.org para conocer los requerimientos en mayor detalle. Son bienvenidas las propuestas de todas las regiones.

Fecha límite de presentación: 31 julio de 2024

Connecting cultures: the PLAIN 2023 Conference in Buenos Aires

Lorena Tula del Moral



During three intense days of activity, over 250 people from different corners of the globe gathered to exchange ideas and experiences in what turned out to be a landmark event. It was a scenario where the enthusiasm, commitment and knowledge of the speakers ensured that each talk offered listeners a privileged and profound view of topics that are of current relevance. The honor of hosting this international event, held for the first time in a Spanish-speaking country and at a university, reaffirms our commitment. It challenges us to continue weaving our network of collaboration with other institutions, forging

a future where plain language is ingrained in policymaking in Argentina.

The PLAIN Conference was not only a learning event, but also a space to build bridges. It was an invitation to continue working together, to deepen and expand plain language policies in our country, building a communicative, inclusive and effective environment.

Lorena Tula del Moral is the Director of the Plain Language Observatory of the Faculty of Law of the UBA and serves as a judge on the Criminal, Misdemeanors and Petty Offenses Court No. 13 in the City of Buenos Aires (CABA). She has authored various publications on the use of plain language, including the "Manual de lenguaje claro y estilo".

The Observatorio de Lenguaje Claro, the Plain Language Observatory housed in the Law School of the University of Buenos Aires, is emerging as a beacon of innovation in Argentina. In a country where commitment to clear communication is reflected in laws enacted at both local and provincial levels, as well as in a series of initiatives in the judicial and legislative branches, the PLAIN 2023 Conference was the catalyst that consolidated these efforts.

ARGENTINA



Connectando culturas: la Conferencia PLAIN 2023 en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires

Lorena Tula del Moral

Desde el corazón mismo de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, el Observatorio de Lenguaje Claro emerge como un faro de innovación en Argentina.

En un país donde el compromiso con la claridad en la comunicación se refleja en leyes promulgadas, tanto en el ámbito local como provincial, y en una serie de iniciativas en los poderes judiciales y legislativos, la Conferencia PLAIN 2023 fue el catalizador que consolidó estos esfuerzos.

Durante tres días intensos, más de 250 personas provenientes de diversos rincones del planeta se congregaron para intercambiar ideas y experiencias en un evento que marcó un hito.

Fue un escenario donde la energía, el compromiso y la sabiduría de los y las ponentes convirtieron cada charla en una inmersión profunda en temas de relevancia actual.

El privilegio de ser anfitriones de este evento internacional, por primera vez en un país de habla hispana y en una universidad, reafirma nuestro compromiso. Nos desafía a continuar tejiendo la red de colaboración con otras instituciones, forjando así un futuro donde la comunicación clara sea una política arraigada en Argentina.

La Conferencia PLAIN no solo representó un evento de aprendizaje, sino un espacio para construir puentes. Nos invitó a seguir trabajando juntos, a profundizar y expandir las políticas de lenguaje claro en nuestro país, construyendo un ambiente comunicativo, inclusivo y efectivo.

Lorena Tula del Moral es Directora del Observatorio de Lenguaje Claro de la Facultad de derecho de la Universidad de Buenos Aires. Se desempeña como jueza del Juzgado Penal, Contravencional y de Faltas N° 13, CABA. Es autora de diversas publicaciones sobre el uso del lenguaje claro, incluyendo el Manual de lenguaje claro y estilo.



A pioneering plain language program in the Argentine Justice System

Hipólito Nosiglia



Argentine Justice has been a pioneer in Latin America and in the return of democracy, especially with regard to human rights and the trial of the military juntas in 1985. The government's decision to convene a group of key figures to hear the witness accounts

of the attacks perpetrated by the military dictatorship, and the willingness of both prosecutor and judges to prosecute and ultimately convict the military juntas, set an historical precedent.

We owe that legacy, as we do the possibility of electing our representatives, to democracy. However, for decades, we have been experiencing a profound erosion in the form of the different outbursts of social unrest suffered by our region. The causes may be several; the crisis of legitimacy of the institutions is one of them, and justice is no stranger to this situation.

To face this problem we need a modern Justice system, one that is agile and efficient with digitized files and accessible buildings. One with a strong commitment to ensure that its communications guarantee the right of citizens to understand.

In this context, from the Public Prosecutor's Office (PPO) of the City of Buenos Aires, under the command of Attorney General Juan Bautista Mahiques, came an initiative that was framed within the search for quality justice. Through the Judicial Information Office, this was about carrying out the program on "Plain Language Workshops" (Resolution 95/2022) for all PPO staff: prosecutors, officials and employees from all units of the institution.

This is an interdisciplinary task involving language and legal specialists, teamwork enriched by the knowledge of the different participants. Each of the nine meetings consists of two parts. The first part presents a brief reflection on an aspect of language that needs to be brought into the foreground so that this knowledge can be applied to working with texts.

The different working groups provide documents with which they most frequently work (e.g., certificates, notifications, decrees, files, reports) to be reviewed from a plain language perspective.

In the second part of the course, groups discuss and work on these documents to reformulate them. In the final stage of the course, we resort to non-specialized readers in the judicial field to read them and comment if there are any issues that continue to be confusing.

The workshop concludes with a final review of the documents, which are then sent to the Prosecutors for evaluation and eventually, if they agree, the go-ahead for their adoption. As the prosecutor wrote in his column published in Infobae, "Plain language in Justice is the key that will open the door to an understanding of the process to which we will be subject." (October 13, 2020)

It is not about presenting formulas or rules to be applied, but encouraging reflection on language. The aim is to avoid documents that only obey tradition and instead foster deliberation about the purpose of the text, to whom it is addressed, how it reaches its recipients. Based on all this, the information, terminology, etc., can be selected, following in all cases the premise of clarity and precision that make the messages understandable.

This prioritizes transparency and democratization in communication from the public spheres, in line with other initiatives arising in the country, such as the recent publication by the Supreme Court of Justice of Argentina of the “General Guidelines for Clear Judgments” for the correct use of language in the courtroom environment. Among other changes, these establish a particular wording structure for judgments and ensure that these are self-sufficient, “in such a way that it is not necessary to resort to other documents for their understanding.”

So far, the results of the “Plain Language Workshops” program have been favorable: in just over a year, almost 300 people from different organizational units of the Criminal, Contraventional and Misdemeanor Courts, and the Contentious-Administrative, Tax and Consumer Relations Courts of CABA have been trained, achieving over 96% positive ratings. In all of the cases, the heads of these offices admitted that they perceived differences in the way the texts were drafted by the staff in charge of their area, after the workshop was held. For example, they said that the documents were simpler and had become clearer in conceptual terms, with improved punctuation and a more limited use of gerunds. Also, a continuous review of the procedures and documents used was implemented.

It should be noted that the plain language projects of the Public Prosecutor’s Office also extend to oral hearings and are aimed at improving communication with plaintiffs and defendants in the suspension of probationary proceedings, better known as probations, in order to achieve greater compliance with agreements.

Currently, work is being done to reformulate the plain language used in the default templates in the judicial administration computer system, where the documents of the prosecutors’ offices are uploaded.

In addition, the Judicial Information Office has begun to move down the path towards national and international quality certification in plain language, thanks to the advice of Joanna Richardson, former president of PLAIN, and Sarah Slabbert and Nadja Green of the South African Plain Language Institute.

One of the main challenges in this regard will be the implementation of a formal body for the periodic review by the public of the texts reformulated in plain language, to ensure that they comply with principles 1 and 4 of the ISO standard, i.e., that the information they contain is relevant and usable.

Finally, the plan is to join one of the international technical committees working on plain language standardization to share experiences and collaborate with other institutions in the quality certification process.

Hipolito Nosiglia studied Social Communication Sciences at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires. After working at the communication agency Salem Viale Gonzalez Villanueva, in 2016 he joined German Garavano’s communication team, the press department for the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights of the Nation. Since 2019, he has been the Head of the Judicial Information Office of the City of Buenos Aires Public Prosecutor’s Office, whose priority is the “Plain Language Workshops” program.

Un programa de lenguaje claro pionero en la Justicia argentina

Hipólito Nosiglia



La Justicia argentina ha sido pionera en América Latina y en el regreso de la democracia, especialmente en lo que refiere a los derechos humanos y el juicio a las juntas militares en 1985. La decisión del Gobierno de convocar a un grupo de notables para que tomen

testimonios sobre los atentados perpetrados por la dictadura militar y la voluntad del fiscal y de los jueces de procesar y, finalmente, condenar a las juntas militares marcaron un precedente en la historia.

Ese legado, como la posibilidad de elegir a nuestros representantes, se lo debemos a la democracia. Sin embargo, desde hace décadas vivimos un desgaste profundo manifestado por los diferentes estallidos sociales que sufre nuestra región. Las causas pueden ser varias; la crisis de legitimidad de las instituciones es una de ellas y la justicia no es ajena a este retroceso.

Para enfrentar esta problemática se necesita una Justicia moderna, que sea ágil, eficiente y cuente con expedientes digitalizados y edificios accesibles. Con un fuerte compromiso para que sus comunicaciones garanticen el derecho de la ciudadanía a entender.

En este contexto, desde el Ministerio Público Fiscal de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, uno de los ejes de gestión del fiscal general Juan Bautista Mahiques, enmarcado dentro de una justicia de calidad y a través de la Oficina de Información Judicial, fue llevar adelante el programa “Talleres de Lenguaje Claro” (Resolución 95/2022) para todo el personal del MPF: fiscales, funcionarios y empleados de todas las unidades de la institución.

El programa desarrolla una tarea interdisciplinaria, con especialistas del lenguaje y del ámbito jurídico; es un trabajo en equipo que se enriquece con los saberes de los distintos participantes. Cada uno de los nueve encuentros consta de dos partes. La primera, donde se presenta una breve reflexión sobre un aspecto del lenguaje que se necesita hacer consciente para poder después aplicar ese saber al trabajo con los textos. Los diferentes grupos brindan los documentos con los que más frecuentemente trabajan (cédulas, notificaciones, decretos, archivos, informes) para revisarlos desde la perspectiva del lenguaje claro.

En la segunda parte, se reformulan esos documentos, se realiza de forma grupal y a través del debate. En la etapa final del curso, se buscan lectores no especializados en el ámbito judicial para que los lean y comenten si hay algunas cuestiones que encuentran todavía confusas.

Al finalizar el taller, se hace una revisión final de los documentos y luego son enviados a las y los fiscales para que los evalúen y les den, si están de acuerdo, el visto bueno para su adopción. Como dice el fiscal en su columna escrita en Infobae: “El lenguaje claro en la Justicia es la llave que abre la puerta para entender el proceso por el cual vamos a ser sometidos”. (13 octubre 2020)

No se trata de presentar fórmulas o reglas para implementar, sino de promover una reflexión sobre el lenguaje. Se busca evitar que los documentos respondan solo a tradiciones y que, en cambio, se piense siempre en cuál es el objetivo del texto, a quién está dirigido, cuál es el circuito en el que llega a sus destinatarios y, en función de todo eso, seleccionar la información, la terminología, etc.; siguiendo en todos los casos la premisa de la claridad y precisión que tornan a los mensajes comprensibles.

Se prioriza así la transparencia y democratización en la comunicación que surge de los ámbitos públicos, en sintonía, además, con otras iniciativas que surgen en el país, como la reciente publicación por parte de la Corte Suprema de Justicia de la Nación Argentina de los “Lineamientos Generales de Sentencias Claras” para el uso correcto del lenguaje en el ámbito del tribunal. Entre ellos, establece la estructura en la redacción que deben tener las sentencias y la necesidad de que sean autosuficientes “de forma tal que para su comprensión no resulte necesario recurrir a otros documentos”.

Hasta el momento, los resultados del programa “Talleres de Lenguaje Claro” han sido favorables: en poco más de un año se capacitó a casi 300 personas de distintas unidades organizativas del Fuero Penal, Contravencional y de Faltas, y del Fuero Contencioso Administrativo Tributario y de Relaciones de Consumo de CABA, con más del 96 % de calificaciones positivas.

En el 100 % de los casos los titulares de esas dependencias admitieron que perciben diferencias en la redacción de los textos por parte del personal a su cargo desde la realización del taller. Entre los cambios, mencionan, por ejemplo, que los documentos se simplificaron y que adquirieron mayor claridad conceptual, que se mejoró la puntuación, se limitó el uso de gerundios y que se implementó una revisión continua de los procedimientos y documentos utilizados.

Cabe señalar que los proyectos de lenguaje claro del Ministerio Público Fiscal también se extienden a la oralidad: apuntan a mejorar la comunicación con víctimas y personas imputadas en las suspensiones de los procesos a prueba, más conocidos como probation, para lograr un mayor cumplimiento de los acuerdos.

Actualmente, se está trabajando en la reformulación en lenguaje claro de las plantillas predeterminadas del sistema informático de gestión judicial donde se cargan los documentos de las fiscalías. Además, la Oficina de Información Judicial comenzó el camino rumbo a la certificación de calidad nacional e internacional en lenguaje claro, gracias al asesoramiento de Joanna Richardson, expresidenta de PLAIN, y de Sarah Slabbert and Nadja Green, del Instituto de Lenguaje Claro de Sudáfrica.

Uno de los principales desafíos en ese sentido será la implementación de una instancia formal de revisión periódica por parte de la ciudadanía respecto de los textos reformulados en lenguaje claro, para garantizar que cumplen con los principios 1 y 4 de la norma ISO, es decir, que la información que contienen es relevante y utilizable.

Por último, planifican integrar alguno de los comités técnicos internacionales que trabajan en la estandarización en lenguaje claro para compartir su experiencia y colaborar con otras instituciones en el proceso de certificación de calidad.

Hipolito Nosiglia se formó en la Universidad de Buenos Aires en la carrera de Ciencias de la Comunicación Social de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales. Luego de trabajar en la agencia de comunicación Salem Viale Gonzalez Villanueva, en el 2016 formó parte del equipo de comunicación de German Garavano, como vocero de prensa del Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos de la Nación. Desde el 2019 se desempeña como Titular de la Oficina de Información Judicial del Ministerio Público Fiscal de CABA, que tiene como prioridad el Programa “Talleres de Lenguaje Claro”.

Of course, there are certain issues that require the use of technical terms, such as, for example, the Urban Code or the Traffic and Transportation Code; therefore, the Plain Language Law contemplates exceptions and adds definitions to clarify more technical words.

In this regard, it is important to mention other initiatives that have been developed by the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires. These include drawing up a guide for the use of Plain Language; the creation of the Plain Law program; and the launch of the Legislative Dialogue Portal for the presentation of parliamentary initiatives. This is designed to elicit the opinion of citizens regarding different bills through written contributions (a highly interesting tool to encourage citizen participation); and training for legislators, public officials, institutional committees and other areas, for instance. All of these are tools for transparency that, in short, contribute to the quality of democracy.

As a legislator and author of the Plain Language Law, I am faced with the daily challenge of being as clear as possible when drafting bills, resolutions and laws, so that they can be easily understood by everyone. I believe that this is also our responsibility as public officials.

In times when, in Argentina and in the rest of Latin America, there is so much distrust towards public institutions, plain language is essential to bring citizens closer to democracy. And, as public servants, it is our obligation to ensure that citizens understand what we write, and to be transparent.

But, ultimately and more importantly, I believe that we should try to find other ways in which citizens can get involved in public affairs or politics, and make it easier for them to do so.

Being more horizontal does not mean being less complex, but quite the opposite, as the aim is to bring the State closer to the people, and to bring people closer to democracy, raising their level of satisfaction with the system.

Manuela Thourte is a legislator of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and the author of Law 6367 on Plain Language. She has a Master's in Administration and Public Policy from the University of San Andrés and a degree in Political Science from the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). She worked for over ten years for international organizations such as the UNDP and UNICEF, and was an advisor to the Chamber of Deputies of the Nation for the Bicameral Commission on the Rights of Children and Adolescents. Since December 2019 she has sat on the City of Buenos Aires legislature for the UCR Evolución bloc, where she presides the Commission on Education, Science and Technology.

Una ley de Lenguaje Claro con objetivos claros

Manuela Thourte



Hay una frase muy famosa que le atribuyen a Albert Einstein que dice: “No entiendes realmente algo a menos que seas capaz de explicárselo a tu abuela”. Una gran verdad, porque hasta las cosas más complejas pueden explicarse en un lenguaje llano y sencillo.

El lenguaje claro es fundamental para comprender la comunicación oficial. Existe la falsa creencia de que cuantas más palabras complejas se utilizan y cuanto más extenso es un texto, mejor es. La Ley 6367 de Lenguaje Claro en el sector público, que se encuentra vigente desde diciembre de 2020 en la ciudad de Buenos Aires, viene a romper con esa idea.

Muchas veces el lenguaje que utiliza el Estado (la Administración pública, el sistema de justicia y el legislativo) en sus documentos y actos es difícil de comprender para la ciudadanía, que, en varias oportunidades, incluso debe recurrir a intermediarios para entenderla.

Es necesario que los vecinos y vecinas puedan comprender toda comunicación oficial que afecta su vida cotidiana. Entender, por ejemplo, los formularios para anotarse en una escuela, pedir una beca escolar o para realizar trámites; cuáles son los requisitos y cómo es el procedimiento para sacar el registro de conducir o solicitar una habilitación de un local comercial; entender qué impuestos y tasas se deben pagar; si recurre a la justicia: comprender qué sucederá después, cuáles son las etapas de un proceso judicial o entender una citación a declarar.

Las poblaciones más vulnerables, que en general cuentan con un menor nivel educativo, tienen mayores dificultades para entender lo que se comunica desde el Estado, como, por ejemplo, el acceso a un beneficio social. La lectura fácil es fundamental porque las personas necesitan conocer sus derechos y obligaciones, y esto implica una redacción clara y directa, de fácil comprensión, con expresiones sencillas y párrafos breves, sin tecnicismos innecesarios.

En este sentido, los objetivos de la Ley de Lenguaje Claro son varios y están vinculados con reducir interacciones innecesarias con la Administración pública, como así también, costos tanto para el ciudadano como para las entidades; facilitar el control ciudadano de la gestión pública y fomentar su participación; promover la transparencia de los actos de gobierno, el derecho a comprender y acceso a la información pública. En síntesis, lograr una comunicación efectiva entre el Estado y la ciudadanía.

La ley establece que todos los organismos públicos de la ciudad tienen la obligación de incorporar lenguaje claro en sus comunicaciones, publicaciones e informaciones públicas, tanto los tres poderes (Ejecutivo, Legislativo y Judicial) como así también las comunas, organismos descentralizados, entes autárquicos, organismos de la seguridad social, empresas y demás sociedades del Estado porteño.



Por supuesto que hay ciertas cuestiones que requerirán el uso de términos técnicos como, por ejemplo, el Código Urbanístico o el Código de Tránsito y Transporte; por eso, la Ley de Lenguaje Claro contempla excepciones y agrega definiciones que permiten aclarar las palabras más técnicas.

En este sentido, es importante mencionar otras iniciativas que se vienen desarrollando desde la Legislatura de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires referidas a este tema: la confección de la guía para el uso del Lenguaje Claro; la creación del programa Ley Claray; el lanzamiento del Portal de Diálogo Legislativo para la presentación de iniciativas parlamentarias, cuyo objetivo es conocer la opinión de la ciudadanía sobre los proyectos de ley mediante sus aportes escritos (una herramienta muy interesante para fomentar la participación ciudadana); y capacitaciones para legisladores, personal de despachos, comisiones y áreas institucionales, entre otras. Todas son herramientas de transparencia que, en definitiva, contribuyen a mejorar la calidad democrática.

Como legisladora y autora de la Ley de Lenguaje Claro, me encuentro ante el desafío diario de ser lo más clara posible a la hora de redactar proyectos de declaración, resolución y de ley, que se entiendan de manera fácil para todos y todas.

Creo que esa es, también, nuestra responsabilidad como funcionarios públicos. En tiempos en los que, en Argentina y en el resto de América Latina, hay mucha desconfianza respecto de las instituciones públicas, el lenguaje claro es central para poder acercar la ciudadanía a la democracia. Y, como servidores públicos, es nuestra obligación que la ciudadanía entienda qué es lo que redactamos, ser transparentes.

Pero, en definitiva y más importante, creo que debemos tratar de pensar de qué otras maneras los ciudadanos pueden involucrarse en la cuestión pública o en la política, y cómo podemos hacer para que sea todo más fácil para ellos.

Ser más llanos no implica ser menos complejos, sino todo lo contrario, es lograr que el Estado esté más cerca de la gente y que la gente pueda estar más cerca y satisfecha con la democracia.

Manuela Thourte es legisladora de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires y autora de la Ley 6367 de Lenguaje Claro. Posee un Magíster en Administración y Políticas Públicas de la Universidad de San Andrés, así como una Licenciatura en Ciencia Política con Diploma de Honor de la Universidad de Buenos Aires. Con más de 10 años de experiencia, ha trabajado en organismos internacionales como el PNUD y UNICEF. Anteriormente, se desempeñó como asesora en la Cámara de Diputados de la Nación en la Comisión Bicameral de los Derechos de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes. Desde diciembre de 2019, ocupa el cargo de legisladora en la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires y, desde diciembre de 2023, ejerce como Presidenta del bloque UCR Evolución.

Assisted writing in plain language using natural language processing techniques: the arText system¹

Iria da Cunha



In Spain, since the 1980s, several initiatives have been carried out with the dual aim of modernising legal-administrative discourse and promoting the use of plain language. These initiatives have been put forward by different stakeholders: first, by some judicial and administrative

institutions; second, by universities, research groups and companies, and third, by the Royal Spanish Academy. As a result, several guides and manuals have been published, which provide guidelines on writing in plain language in Spanish.

Moreover, since 2020, different technological systems have been developed to help people write in plain language in Spanish. One of them is the CLARA tool (<https://clara.comunicacionclara.com/>), which can test short administrative documents and offer a percentage of clarity. Another one, which is widely used, is the arText claro system (<http://sistema-artext.com/>), which helps to draft legal-administrative texts in plain language. In this article, I will refer to this second project, which I lead, in the Department of Foreign Languages of the Faculty of Philology of the National University of Distance Education in Spain.

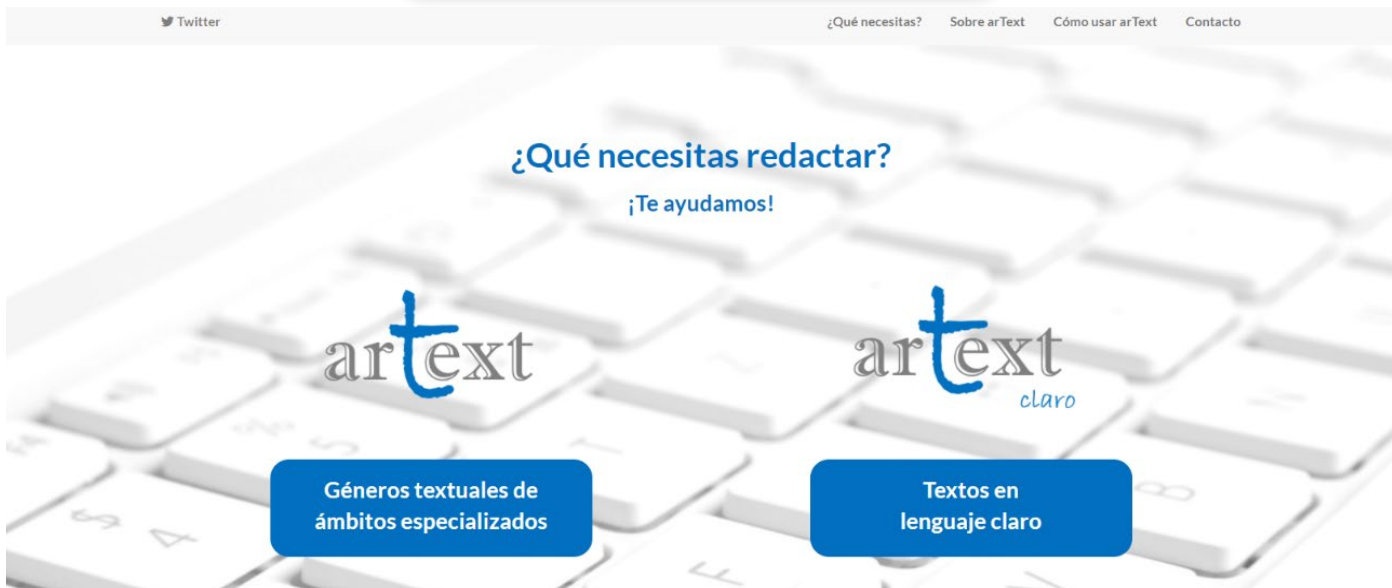
This project is developed by an interdisciplinary team of 13 people, including linguists, IT developers, and experts in administrative law. The starting point of this research was a project funded by the BBVA Foundation, from 2015 to 2016. In the framework of this project, we developed arText, a technological system for writing texts in Spanish in the domains of administration, tourism, medicine and academia.

Next, we obtained funding from the Ministry of Science and Innovation to carry out the research project “Information and Communication Technologies for the e-Administration: towards the improvement of communication between Administration and citizens by means of plain language”. This project was carried out between 2018 and 2022, focusing on plain language in administration. Recently, the Ministry of Science and Innovation gave us funding for a new project, in this case a Proof of Concept project, entitled “A technological prototype for writing in plain language: incorporation in public administration and analysis of its impact on citizens.”¹⁷ We are currently working on this project, testing the tool to demonstrate that arText claro can be successfully used in public administration.

This research has been done in collaboration with the Madrid City Council, with whom we signed an agreement in 2021. The Madrid City Council has over 27,000 public employees, who are required to compose various textual genres, such as notifications, contracts or resolutions. In the framework of this collaboration, we held a survey to identify the writing needs of these public employees. The information obtained through this needs analysis was very useful for designing and developing arText claro. In addition, in the survey we asked officials if they thought that using a writing assistant to draft Spanish administrative texts in plain language would help them in their work. Almost 90% replied in the affirmative.

Therefore, the two main objectives of our research are: a) to develop an online and free technological system to help public employees to draft administrative texts in plain language addressed to citizens, by using natural language processing resources and tools, and b) to evaluate the impact of the use of this system on different groups. (For more information, please see, “Lenguaje claro y tecnología en la Administración”, Da Cunha, 2022).





The image shows a screenshot of the main page of the system.

Our research methodology covers three stages: 1) the design of arText claro, 2) the implementation of the system, and 3) the evaluation. With regard to Stage 1, arText claro is online, free of charge and no registration is required to use. It has a text editor format and includes three modules: a module related to text structure and contents, a module for spell-checking and formatting, and a module with linguistic recommendations for plain language. The system allows documents to be exported and imported in different formats.

Regarding Stage 2, arText claro has been developed in a LINUX environment and optimized for use in a Google Chrome browser. It integrates several resources, such as: an opensource spellchecker, 22 linguistic recommendations for plain language in Spanish, a morphosyntactic parser, a discourse segmenter and several algorithms developed by our team.

With respect to Stage 3, we have undertaken a data-driven evaluation with a test corpus including the Madrid City Council's administrative resolutions. We are also running various user-driven evaluations, with both text recipients and Madrid City Council employees.

Benefits for software users are manifold. If institutions use this kind of software, they will save time and money, instil confidence in institutions, improve their image, comply

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with legal requirements, and, also, meet the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Also, the benefits for recipients of the texts generated by arText, that is, citizens, are clear. For example, it will help them to have more confidence in their institutions and to better understand the texts sent by the administration. This better understanding will, in turn, make it easier for them to exercise their rights and fulfil their obligations.

Finally, if we were interested in using it in a language different to Spanish, what would we need to adapt arText claro to another language? Well, we would need a spellchecker, a selection of plain language recommendations for that specific language, a morphosyntactic parser, a discourse segmenter and, also, to adapt the algorithms developed by our team to that language. In fact, I am pleased to end this paper announcing that we have just obtained funding from the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities to adapt arText claro into English,² as well as funding from the government of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands to adapt it into Catalan. Stay tuned! 😊

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2. Grant PID2022-143092NB-I00 funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ and by the ERDF Una manera de hacer Europa

Redacción asistida en lenguaje claro mediante técnicas de procesamiento del lenguaje natural: el sistema arText

Iria da Cunha



En España, desde los años ochenta, se han llevado a cabo iniciativas con el objetivo de modernizar el discurso jurídico-administrativo y de promover el uso del lenguaje claro. Diferentes actores han impulsado estas iniciativas: en primer lugar, algunas instituciones judiciales y administrativas; en

segundo lugar, universidades, grupos de investigación y empresas, y, en tercer lugar, la Real Academia Española. Como resultado, se han publicado varias guías y manuales que ofrecen pautas para escribir en lenguaje claro en español.

Además, desde 2020, se han desarrollado diferentes sistemas tecnológicos para ayudar a escribir en lenguaje claro en español. Uno de ellos es la herramienta CLARA (<https://clara.comunicacionclara.com/>), que permite analizar documentos breves y ofrecer un porcentaje de claridad. Otro es el sistema arText claro (<http://sistema-artext.com/>), que ayuda a redactar textos jurídico-administrativos en lenguaje claro. En este artículo, me referiré a este segundo proyecto, que dirijo en el Departamento de Filologías Extranjeras de la Facultad de Filología de la Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia en España.

El equipo interdisciplinar que desarrolla este proyecto incluye trece personas expertas en diferentes campos: lingüística, informática y derecho administrativo. El punto de partida de esta investigación fue un proyecto financiado por la Fundación BBVA entre 2015 y 2016. En el marco de ese proyecto, desarrollamos arText, un sistema tecnológico para la redacción de textos en español de los ámbitos de la administración, el turismo, la medicina y la universidad.

A continuación, obtuvimos financiación del Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación para desarrollar el proyecto de investigación “Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación para la e-Administración: hacia la mejora de la comunicación entre Administración y ciudadanía a través del lenguaje claro”. Este proyecto tuvo lugar entre 2018 y 2022, y se centró en el lenguaje claro en la Administración. Recientemente, el Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación nos ha concedido financiación para un nuevo proyecto, en este caso en la modalidad Prueba de Concepto, titulado “Un prototipo tecnológico para la redacción en lenguaje claro: incorporación en la Administración pública y análisis de su impacto en la ciudadanía.” Actualmente, estamos trabajando en este proyecto, que busca evaluar la herramienta para demostrar que arText claro puede utilizarse con éxito en la Administración pública.

Esta investigación se ha realizado en colaboración con el Ayuntamiento de Madrid, con el que firmamos un acuerdo en 2021. Este ayuntamiento cuenta con más de 27.000 empleados públicos, que deben redactar diversos géneros textuales, como notificaciones, contratos o resoluciones. Gracias a esta colaboración, realizamos una encuesta para identificar las necesidades de redacción de los empleados públicos. La información obtenida a través de este análisis fue muy útil para diseñar y desarrollar arText claro. Además, en la encuesta les preguntamos si consideraban que utilizar un asistente tecnológico para redactar textos administrativos en español en lenguaje claro podría ayudarles en su trabajo. ¡Casi el 90% respondió afirmativamente!

Por lo tanto, los dos objetivos principales de nuestra investigación son: a) desarrollar un sistema tecnológico en línea y gratuito para ayudar a los empleados públicos a redactar textos administrativos en lenguaje claro dirigidos a la ciudadanía, utilizando recursos y herramientas de procesamiento del lenguaje natural, y b) evaluar el impacto del uso de este sistema en diferentes colectivos. (Véase más información en “Lenguaje claro y tecnología en la Administración”, Da Cunha, 2022).





La imagen muestra una captura de pantalla de la página inicial del sistema.

La metodología de nuestra investigación incluye tres etapas:

1) diseño de arText claro, 2) implementación del sistema y 3) evaluación. En cuanto a la etapa 1, arText claro está en línea, es gratuito y no es necesario registrarse para utilizarlo. Tiene formato de editor de texto e integra tres módulos: un módulo relacionado con la estructura y el contenido del texto, un módulo para la corrección ortográfica y el formato, y un módulo que ofrece recomendaciones lingüísticas relacionadas con el lenguaje claro. El sistema permite exportar e importar documentos localmente y en distintos formatos.

En relación con la etapa 2, arText claro se ha desarrollado en un entorno LINUX y se ha optimizado para su uso en el navegador Google Chrome. Integra varios recursos, como: un corrector ortográfico de código abierto, 22 recomendaciones lingüísticas sobre lenguaje claro, un analizador morfosintáctico, un segmentador discursivo y varios algoritmos desarrollados por nuestro equipo.

En cuanto a la etapa 3, hemos evaluado los algoritmos del sistema, utilizando un corpus de prueba que incluye resoluciones administrativas del Ayuntamiento de Madrid. Además, estamos llevando a cabo varias evaluaciones basadas en usuarios, que involucran tanto a los destinatarios de los textos como a los empleados públicos del Ayuntamiento de Madrid.

Los beneficios para los usuarios son múltiples. Si las instituciones los utilizan, podrán ahorrar tiempo y dinero, infundirán confianza en las instituciones, mejorarán su imagen, cumplirán con la legalidad y, además, irán en consonancia con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible de las Naciones Unidas.

Asimismo, los beneficios para los destinatarios de los textos escritos con arText, es decir, los ciudadanos, son claros, por ejemplo, más confianza en sus instituciones y mejor entendimiento de los textos enviados por la Administración. A su vez, esta mejor comprensión les facilitará el ejercicio de sus derechos y el cumplimiento de sus obligaciones.

Por último, en caso de querer utilizar arText claro en una lengua diferente al español, ¿qué necesitaríamos para adaptarlo a dicha lengua? Pues necesitaríamos un corrector ortográfico, una selección de recomendaciones de lenguaje claro para esa lengua concreta, un analizador morfosintáctico, un segmentador discursivo y, además, adaptar los algoritmos desarrollados por nuestro equipo a esa lengua. De hecho, me alegra terminar este artículo anunciando que hemos obtenido financiación del Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades para adaptar arText claro al inglés², así como financiación del gobierno de Cataluña y Baleares para adaptarlo al catalán. ¡Estad atentos! 🤗

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1. Ayuda PDC2022-133935-I00 financiada por MCIN/AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033 y la Unión Europea NextGenerationEU/PRTR

2. Ayuda PID2022-143092NB-I00 financiada por MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ y por FEDER Una manera de hacer Europa

Creative visualization of data: the right to understand, in five acts

Sidan O Rafa



Since I was a child, I've always been curious about things that I couldn't see, but could perceive or feel. This curiosity for things invisible to the naked eye led me to work in a profession that involves the act of making things visible.

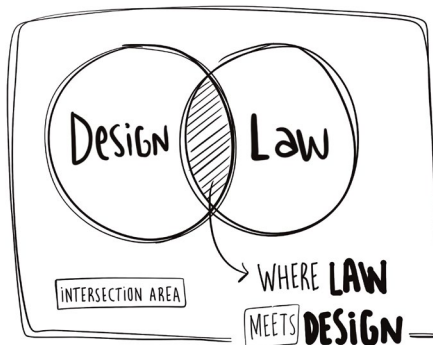
In a world where seeing

is synonymous with believing: making something visible is a way to make people believe in it.

Believe: 1. To accept, or be convinced of the veracity, existence or occurrence of; believe.

THE VISION: Form informs

The way we present information is crucial to communication. Creative data visualization goes beyond the mere transmission of numbers, seeking to transmit a qualified and sensitive message to the recipient through visual representation. The form informs as much as the content itself. Therefore, visual aesthetics and design are not just secondary considerations, **but a force that shapes the viewer's perception, awakening emotions, generating meaning and influencing behavioral changes.** By looking beyond the raw numbers, we discover that how we represent data can inspire a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the facts.



Visual representation of the point of contact/intersection between Law and Design: where do they touch?

THE VERB: Do you understand what you read?

In a world flooded with information, textual comprehension is a valuable skill. The importance of word choice in constructing a meaningful, clear and relevant message becomes a powerful tool for **shaping perception and influencing interpretation.** When the context involves multiple audiences and complex problems, the challenge lies not only in transmitting information, but also in ensuring people's dignity, applying communication as a problem-solving tool.

THE RIGHT: If citizens have the right to understand: whose responsibility is it to explain?

Clarity in communication is not just a convenience, but a fundamental right that strengthens citizen participation and informed decision-making. In Brazil, one of the constitutional principles is the **dignity of the human person**, which occurs if: the person **has access to adequate information and the ability to discern their own acts.** Therefore, if the citizen has the right to understand, the State has the duty to explain.

THE OTHER: "Empathy is like a bridge that connects hearts and minds"

Empathy plays a crucial role in communication. By recognizing the diversity of experiences and perspectives, we can adjust our communication to be more inclusive and accessible. In an increasingly pluralistic world, embracing empathy in language and data visualization promotes more human interaction through the creation of culturally sensitive artifacts.

THE TECHNOLOGY: Evidence-based decision-making

The role of AI as a tool to make the impossible possible: Artificial Intelligence is a powerful tool for making complex information more accessible, translating, simplifying and enabling different levels of reading, visualization and understanding, as well as the use and applicability of this information.



Visualização criativa de dados: uma jornada pelo direito de entender em cinco atos

Sidan O Rafa



Desde criança, sempre tive curiosidade pelas coisas que eu não conseguia ver, mas podia perceber ou sentir, como o vento, por exemplo. Essa curiosidade pelas coisas invisíveis aos olhos, me levou a trabalhar com uma profissão que envolve o ato de tornar visível.

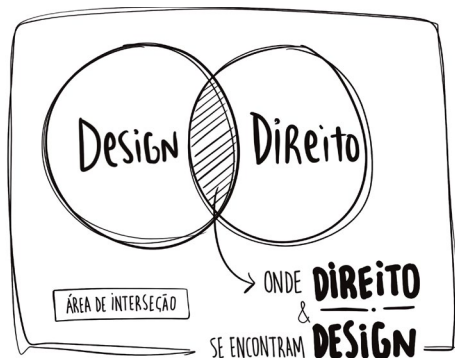
Num mundo onde ver é sinônimo de acreditar: tornar visível é um caminho para fazer as pessoas acreditarem em algo.

Acreditar: 1. aceitar, estar ou ficar convencido da veracidade, existência ou ocorrência de; crer.

A VISÃO: A forma informa

A maneira como apresentamos informações é crucial para a comunicação. A visualização criativa de dados vai além da mera transmissão de números, buscando transmitir por meio da representação visual uma mensagem qualificada e sensível ao destinatário. A forma informa tanto quanto o próprio conteúdo. Portanto, a estética visual e o design não são apenas considerações secundárias, mas uma **força que molda a percepção do espectador, despertando emoções, gerando significado e influenciando mudanças comportamentais.**

Ao enxergar além dos números crus, descobrimos que a forma como representamos os dados pode inspirar uma compreensão mais profunda e significativa dos fatos.



Representação visual do ponto de contato/interseção entre Direito e Design: onde se tocam?

O VERBO: Entendes o que Lê?

Em um mundo inundado por informações, a compreensão textual é uma habilidade valiosa. A importância da escolha de palavras na construção de uma mensagem significativa, clara e relevante se torna uma ferramenta poderosa para **guiar a percepção e orientar o entendimento.** Quando o contexto envolve vários públicos e problemas complexos, o desafio reside não apenas em transmitir informações, mas também em assegurar a dignidade das pessoas, aplicando a comunicação como uma ferramenta de resolução de problemas.

O DIREITO: Se o cidadão tem o direito de entender: de quem é o dever de explicar?

A clareza na comunicação não é apenas uma conveniência, mas um direito fundamental que fortalece a participação cidadã e a tomada de decisões informada. No Brasil, um dos princípios constitucionais é a **dignidade da pessoa humana**, que ocorre se: a pessoa tem **acesso a informação adequada e capacidade de discernir** sobre seus próprios atos. Portanto, se o cidadão tem o direito de entender, o Estado tem o dever de explicar.

O OUTRO: “A empatia é como uma ponte que conecta corações e mentes”

A empatia desempenha um papel crucial na comunicação. Ao reconhecer a diversidade de experiências e perspectivas, podemos ajustar nossa comunicação para ser mais inclusiva e acessível. Num mundo cada vez mais plural, abraçar a empatia na linguagem e na visualização de dados promove uma interação mais humana, por meio da criação de artefatos culturalmente sensíveis.

A TECNOLOGIA: Tomada de decisão baseada em evidência

O papel da IA como ferramenta para possibilitar o impossível: a Inteligência Artificial é uma ferramenta poderosa para tornar informações complexas mais acessíveis, traduzindo, simplificando e possibilitando níveis distintos de leitura, visualização e entendimento, bem como, uso e aplicabilidade dessas informações.

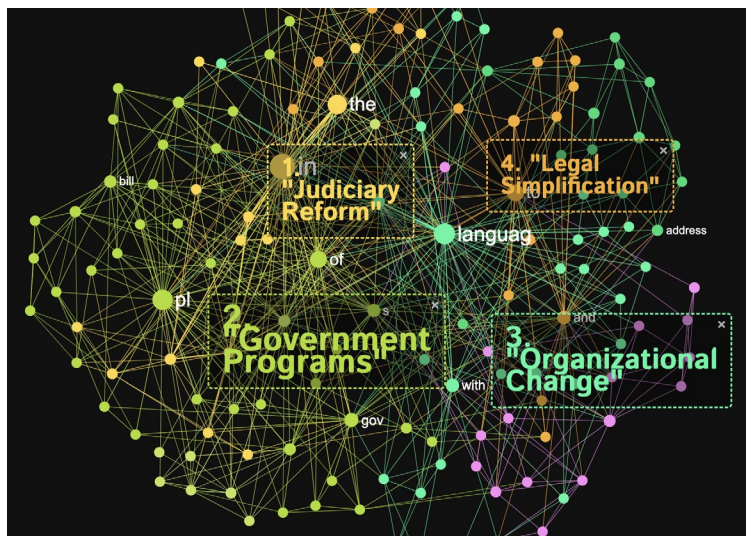
A aplicação de modelos visuais inovadores impulsionados pela tecnologia, possibilita uma compreensão mais profunda e interconectada de cenários complexos, desde documentos e relatórios até serviços e políticas públicas de Estado. Ao integrar a criatividade e sensibilidade humana com o poder analítico da inteligência artificial, cria-se um terreno fértil para uma comunicação eficaz, proporcionando uma experiência que vai além dos limites tradicionais da representação de dados, gráficos e tabelas.

Nas minhas aulas, enfatizo a importância do pensamento em superfície para ampliarmos as possibilidades de comunicar. Através de uma abordagem que percorre o processo criativo da arte, buscamos caminhos que nos possibilitem ver o que importa, abrir os poros do pensamento e ventilar novas ideias, proporcionando o surgimento de novas perspectivas e soluções para problemas complexos.

Perspectiva: vista ao longe, até onde os olhos alcançam

Estimulando os olhos e ampliando perspectivas, encontramos novos espaços, onde é possível criar o novo. A forma como tomamos decisões, está diretamente vinculada à forma como enxergamos e sentimos as coisas. A maneira como vemos as coisas define a postura que iremos tomar (ou não) frente às circunstâncias.

“Uma imagem vale mais que mil palavras”



¹ Infranodus - AI-Powered Visual Text Analysis

Durante a última Conferência da PLAIN 2023, em Buenos Aires, apresentei esse resumo visual da apresentação da especialista brasileira em Linguagem Simples, Heloisa Fischer, criado por meio de uma ferramenta¹ de Inteligência Artificial que possibilita uma leitura totalmente distinta do discurso: em superfície, distribuída no plano visual como uma nuvem

de palavras interconectada, possibilitando enxergar as relações, os padrões recorrentes no texto, os tópicos principais e suas lacunas, trazendo tanto um entendimento global no campo das ideias, quanto entendimentos específicos no campo das relações entre as palavras.

A proposição do pensamento em rede abre um leque de possibilidades na análise visual, possibilitando novos caminhos para a inovação. Mais especificamente, quando lidamos com problemas complexos, a IA pode nos ajudar, de maneira muito veloz, a ter uma ampla compreensão da complexidade, facilitando a visualização de padrões e lacunas ao olho humano. O que pode trazer melhores perspectivas para a tomada de decisão baseada em evidências.

Evidenciar: tornar visível, claro, manifesto, evidente

Há 3 anos venho aplicando o que aprendi com a arte e o pensamento criativo ao contexto burocrático e técnico do serviço público brasileiro, em Tribunais de Justiça, Tribunais de Contas, Ministério Público, Escolas de Governo e de Magistratura, Governos de Estado e Prefeituras.

Pontos cegos

Mesmo com todos os avanços tecnológicos, há um aspecto onde a emoção (a percepção) permanece como um território exclusivamente humano — talvez a última fronteira entre o homem e a máquina.

Acredito que a descoberta de algo novo não está em olhar apenas para o que vemos, sabemos ou conhecemos. Mas em olhar para aquilo que não está visível, às vezes precisamos olhar para o que não está lá! É preciso realizar um esforço, um movimento, um ato de coragem para tornar visível, o invisível.

Sidan O Rafa é artista, pesquisador, consultor em inovação e comunicação, atua por meio da arte e do design como pontes para conectar pessoas e despertar mudanças. Graduado em Ciências contábeis (UFPA), estudou Análise e Gestão de Sistemas de Informação (IFPA/IFSC) e Ciências da Computação (Seneca College).

Innovation in Action: CLAPPI and the implementation of Plain Language in the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires

Vanina Azzaro & Nuria Gómez Belart



During the last few years, in Argentina, the perception of plain language as a tool able to bring the State and its citizens closer together has been installed in the collective unconscious. However, the practical application of this ideal to drafting official documents requires a technical and precise approach.

Throughout many experiences in public administrations, the formulation and implementation of a State policy oriented towards the use of plain language has shown that it does not follow a linear process, but implies a carefully structured strategy over time, supported by hierarchical decisions that take into account the specificity of the addressee. Adaptation to a new communication culture involves specific actions such as dissemination, staff training, development of bibliographic material and design of communication pieces, and involves a process that, in many cases, extends over years.

In this scenario, new technologies have emerged as key tools to facilitate and accelerate the process of change. Constant evolution in the digital sphere, featuring elements such as Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality and the Internet of Things, has transformed the way we live, work and communicate. These technologies, when strategically integrated, can effectively complement the process necessary to develop a new communication culture, especially due. This is because of their positive and significant impact on communication and information accessibility in the digital era.

Aware of this paradigm, in 2023, the Legal and Technical Secretariat of the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA), undertook a technical megaproject that materialized in the creation of CLAPPI, the Spanish acronym for the Administrative Language Corrector for Inclusive Public Policies. CLAPPI is a platform based on advanced techniques involving AI, machine learning and natural language recognition (Natural language processing - NLP and Natural language understanding - NLU). This automatic tool is positioned as a virtual assistant that verifies, corrects and suggests alternative wording for administrative texts, following the guidelines of the Plain Language Manual in its 2023 edition.

To develop the artificial intelligence model for CLAPPI, an organized collection of structured data in digital format was developed. The quality and accuracy of the information were crucial to obtain reliable and meaningful results. Thus, the selection, cleaning and validation of the data were fundamental steps in the process of elaborating what was “fed” into CLAPPI.

A body of 7,000 documents was taken from the Official Gazette of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires and the Normative Information System and Legal Digest, housing over 600,000 official documents, a selection of some 15,000 segments (sentences and paragraphs).

To simplify the work of the artificial intelligence model and ensure specific results, the original documents were cleaned of lexical and discursive errors with a macroinstruction. This means that a series of commands were executed sequentially with a single command. The texts were also clarified and corrected by a group of specialists and, finally, standardized segments were obtained to build a dataset to train the artificial intelligence model. In essence, the database contains segments in their original version and their clarified version. With this information, the model understands how it should transform a sentence or a paragraph in favor of clarity.

In parallel, a segmentation principle was sought in which the artificial intelligence model could work in an efficient and controlled manner. The choice of segmentation criterion in artificial intelligence is important, as it impacts the whole process. Opting for sentences or paragraphs as units of analysis defines the interaction scenario and the complexity of understanding.

In this case, the sentence was established as the unit of analysis, because many of the official documents are made up of single-sentence paragraphs of a limited length (the criterion established in the Plain Language Manual was maintained, which recommends not exceeding fifty words in the length of a paragraph, and thirty for a sentence). To ensure the integrity of the result during clarification, decisions had to be taken concerning the omission of relevant information in the segmentation and named entities that should not be modified, such as codes, numbers and acronyms referring to a particular entity, among others.

CLAPPI is based on OpenAI's artificial intelligence model ChatGPT-3.5, modified specifically for its main purpose: text clarification in the CABA public administration. During the training stage, the Legal Hub data science team performed iterative testing and adjustments based on the results of each test. Unlike fixed rule-based models, ChatGPT-3.5 is pre-trained with an extensive textual corpus, which allows it to infer patterns of actions and make predictions tailored to textual production. It worked on the basis of the Curie model, a ChatGPT variant with thirteen billion parameters, which excels in understanding the stylistic features of official writing and provides more efficient clarification.

The implementation of CLAPPI took one year and its scope was extended to multiple areas of the public sector. The combination of plain language and technology not only benefited citizens by improving the quality of communications issued by the public administration, but also optimized internal efficiency by reducing the need for subsequent clarifications and corrections.

Staff training in plain language and interaction with CLAPPI provided a technical perspective that allowed employees to improve their writing skills and adapt to the standards set by an Administration that cares about its relationship with citizens.

In short, the technical development of CLAPPI marked a before and after in the way the public administration communicates and drafts documents.

With CLAPPI, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires has demonstrated its commitment to transparent, accessible and effective communication in the digital era.

Vanina Azzaro is the Operational Manager of the Operational Department of Regulatory Standards of the Legal and Technical Secretariat of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires (GCBA). She is a leader and referent of the Plain Language Program of the GCBA.

Nuria Gómez Belart is a Doctor in Literature and Literary Corrector, who graduated from the University of Salvador, where she works as a Full Professor. She is linguistic advisor to the Plain Language Program of the Legal and Technical Secretariat of the GCBA and collaborated in the development of CLAPPI, Co-author of the "Manual de lenguaje claro 2023," the "Programa de lenguaje claro 2020-2023" and the "Guía interactiva de lenguaje claro."



Innovación en acción: CLAPPI y la implementación del Lenguaje Claro en el Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires

Vanina Azzaro & Nuria Gómez Belart



Durante los últimos años, en la Argentina, se instaló en el inconsciente colectivo la percepción del lenguaje claro como una herramienta que acerca al Estado y a la ciudadanía. Sin embargo, la aplicación práctica de este ideal en la redacción de documentos oficiales demanda una aproximación técnica y precisa.

A lo largo de diversas experiencias en Administraciones públicas, la formulación y la ejecución de una política de Estado orientada al uso del lenguaje claro ha demostrado no seguir un proceso lineal, sino que implica una estrategia cuidadosamente estructurada en el tiempo, respaldada por decisiones jerárquicas que contemplan la especificidad del destinatario. La adaptación hacia una nueva cultura comunicativa conlleva acciones específicas como difusión, capacitación del personal, desarrollo de material bibliográfico y diseño de piezas comunicacionales, y abarca un proceso que, en muchos casos, se extiende por años.

En este escenario, las nuevas tecnologías han emergido como herramientas clave para facilitar y acelerar el proceso de cambio. La constante evolución en el ámbito digital con elementos, tales como inteligencia artificial, realidad virtual e internet de las cosas, ha transformado la forma en que vivimos, trabajamos y nos comunicamos. Estas tecnologías, al ser integradas de manera estratégica, pueden complementar eficazmente el proceso necesario para desarrollar una nueva cultura comunicacional, especialmente debido a su impacto positivo y significativo en la comunicación y la accesibilidad de la información en la era digital.

Consciente de este paradigma, la Secretaría Legal y Técnica del Gobierno de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires (CABA), en 2023, emprendió un megaproyecto técnico que se materializó en la creación de CLAPPI, el Corrector de Lenguaje Administrativo para Políticas Públicas Inclusivas. Es una plataforma basada en técnicas avanzadas de inteligencia artificial, machine learning y de reconocimiento del lenguaje natural NLP (*Natural language processing*) y NLU (*Natural language understanding*). Esta herramienta automática se posiciona como un asistente virtual que verifica, corrige y sugiere alternativas de redacción de los textos de la administración, siguiendo los lineamientos del Manual de Lenguaje Claro en su edición de 2023.

Para desarrollar el modelo de inteligencia artificial de CLAPPI, se elaboró una colección organizada de datos estructurados en formato digital. La calidad y la precisión de la información fueron cruciales para obtener resultados confiables y significativos. Tal es así que la selección, la limpieza y la validación de los datos fueron etapas fundamentales en el proceso de elaboración de aquello con lo que se “alimentó” a CLAPPI.

Del Boletín Oficial del Gobierno de CABA y del Sistema de Información Normativa y Digesto Jurídico, donde se alojan más de seiscientos mil documentos oficiales, se tomó un cuerpo de siete mil documentos, que conforman cerca de quince mil segmentos (oraciones y párrafos). Para simplificar el trabajo del modelo de inteligencia artificial y garantizar ciertos resultados, a los documentos originales se los limpió de errores léxicos y discursivos con una macroinstrucción, es decir, una serie de comandos que se ejecutan de manera secuencial con una sola orden.

Asimismo, los textos fueron clarificados y corregidos por un grupo de especialistas y, finalmente, se obtuvieron segmentos estandarizados para construir un dataset que permitiera entrenar el modelo de inteligencia artificial. En esencia, la base de datos contiene segmentos en su versión original y su versión clarificada. Con esa información, el modelo comprende cómo debe transformar una oración o un párrafo en favor de la claridad.

Paralelamente, se buscó un principio de segmentación en el que el modelo de inteligencia artificial pudiera trabajar de manera eficiente y controlada. La elección del criterio de segmentación en inteligencia artificial es importante, ya que impacta en todo el proceso. Optar por oraciones o párrafos como unidades de análisis define el escenario de interacción y la complejidad de la comprensión.

En este caso, se estableció como unidad de análisis la oración, porque muchos de los documentos oficiales se componen de párrafos unioracionales, con una longitud limitada (se mantuvo el criterio establecido en el Manual de Lenguaje Claro, que recomienda no superar las cincuenta palabras en la extensión de un párrafo, y las treinta palabras para una oración). Para asegurar la integridad del resultado durante la clarificación, hubo que tomar decisiones sobre las omisiones de información relevante en la segmentación y las entidades nombradas que no debían modificarse, tales como los códigos, los números y las siglas que refieren a una entidad particular, entre otros.

CLAPPI se fundamenta en el modelo de inteligencia artificial ChatGPT-3.5 de OpenAI, modificado específicamente para su propósito principal: la clarificación de textos en el ámbito de la Administración pública de CABA. Durante la etapa de entrenamiento, el equipo de ciencia de datos de Legal Hub realizó pruebas iterativas y ajustes basados en los resultados de cada prueba. A diferencia de modelos basados en reglas fijas, ChatGPT-3.5 se preentrena con un extenso cuerpo textual, que le permite deducir patrones de acciones para realizar predicciones adaptadas a la producción textual. Se trabajó sobre la base del modelo Curie, una variante de ChatGPT con trece mil millones de parámetros.

Esta se destaca por comprender los rasgos estilísticos de los escritos oficiales y ofrecer una clarificación más eficiente. La implementación de CLAPPI llevó un año y su alcance se extendió a múltiples áreas del sector público. La combinación de lenguaje claro y tecnología no solo benefició a los ciudadanos al mejorar lo que la Administración pública comunica, sino que también optimizó la eficiencia interna al reducir la necesidad de aclaraciones y correcciones posteriores.

La capacitación del personal en lenguaje claro y la interacción con CLAPPI ofrecieron una perspectiva técnica que permitió a los empleados mejorar sus habilidades de redacción y adaptarse a los estándares establecidos por una Administración que se preocupa por el vínculo que mantiene con la ciudadanía.

En pocas palabras, el desarrollo técnico de CLAPPI marcó un hito en la forma en que la Administración pública se comunica y redacta documentos.

Con CLAPPI, la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires ha demostrado su compromiso con una comunicación transparente, accesible y efectiva en la era digital.

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Nuria Gómez Belart es Doctora en Letras y Correctora Literaria, egresada de la Universidad del Salvador, donde se desempeña como Profesora Titular. Esesora lingüística del Programa de Lenguaje Claro de la Secretaría Legal y Técnica del GCBA. Colaboró en el desarrollo del CLAPPI. Coautora del Manual de lenguaje claro 2023, del Programa de lenguaje claro 2020-2023 y de la Guía interactiva de lenguaje claro.

Human-First with AI-Assisted Legal Design

Helena Haapio & Nina Toivonen



Despite the successes of plain language, much work remains. Even documents that comply with plain language laws can still be overwhelming to many readers because of their length and complexity. As writers, how can we effectively meet growing expectations and put the human-first vision into action, especially in the context of contracts and legal communications? We suggest that the answer lies in combining plain language with legal design and AI.

Legal design

Legal design is an umbrella term that can mean different things in different contexts, from legal information design to co-designing for policy or improving Access to Justice. In all contexts, legal design prioritizes the point of view of humans: not only lawyers, judges, and regulators, but also all people and organizations. Moreover, legal design seeks to fulfill important societal values and goals, such as the rule of law and legal certainty, by empowering people to be proactive in their own cause. According to the Legal Design Alliance (<https://www.legaldesignalliance.org/>), legal design “applies human-centered design to the world of law to enable desirable outcomes and prevent the causes of problems from arising and developing into conflict and disputes”.

Many practical examples of legal design can be found particularly in the field of legal information design. Lawyer-designer teams and legal designers have transformed complex messages and put humans first in a variety of contexts, from contracts and terms and conditions to codes of conduct and privacy policies. They have collected design patterns and built pattern libraries, including the WorldCC Contract Design Pattern Library (<https://contract-design.worldcc.com/>), which one of the authors helped create. This is an open-access, free collection of repeatable solutions to common usability and understandability problems in contracts.

AI assistants for reading and writing

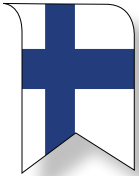
The rise of generative AI has brought many interesting opportunities for the use of legal information design. Smart reading assistants and generative AI writing tools, such as OpenAI’s ChatGPT, can help readers and writers with complex texts, providing summaries, explanations of difficult

For decades, contracts and legal documents have been written by lawyers for other lawyers, resulting in dense texts full of difficult language and with few navigational tools. In recent years, voices have begun to call for a significant change. With legal design and AI tools, we can now move to more inclusive and accessible formats of communication we call Human-First.

Plain writing: the foundation

Traditionally, loan forms and credit card agreements have been lengthy documents filled with legal and financial jargon, making them difficult to understand. This landscape began to change in 1975 when Carl Felsenfeld, a lawyer, and Alan Siegel, a language and design expert, collaborated to develop a more user-friendly Citibank loan form. This pioneering effort sparked a movement toward Writing Contracts in Plain English (echoing the title of the Felsenfeld – Siegel 1981 book) and beyond.

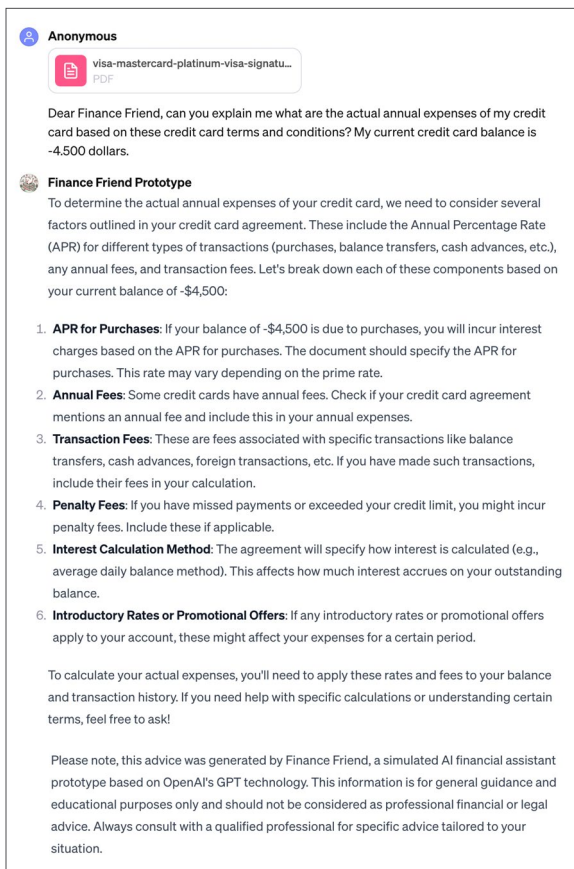
Driven by the advocacy of Annetta Cheek, the Plain Writing Act was passed in the United States in 2010, requiring government agencies to use clear communication. Since then, many other laws have been passed around the world to ensure that legal and government documents use communication that the public can understand and use. Especially in critical areas such as finance, consumers and regulators increasingly expect information that is not only accurate and comprehensive, but also easily digestible and actionable. The recent European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles (2023/C 23/01) emphasizes putting people at the center of digital transformation, also the focus of the 2023 OECD Council Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems (OECD/LEGAL/0498).



FINLAND

words and translations across languages (including from legalese to ordinary language). They can also convert text to speech, allowing users to listen to text like an audio book. If anyone can easily obtain and use such tools to clarify the language of complex documents, why should readers have to do the work and get smart readers? What if we, as writers, did the job for them?

With the help of AI tools, we can make documents not only easier to read and understand, but also easier to use and act upon. Together with our research team, we explored how AI could help improve people’s capabilities, opportunities, and motivation to tackle debt problems and achieve financial well-being. Inspired by fitness apps, we built a “Finance Friend” prototype using OpenAI’s ChatGPT Builder and prompted it with various debt-related tasks. One key finding was that AI tools can be particularly helpful in improving financial literacy (Toivonen et al, “Beyond Debt: The Intersection of Justice, Financial Wellbeing and AI,” forthcoming).



A snapshot of insights generated by the “Finance Friend” prototype on ChatGPT created with OpenAI’s GPT Builder tool.

With colleagues, we created other AI assistant prototypes, including the “Chattable Contract Companion”, which explains the meaning of a contract and answers questions about its terms. It can also help with drafting contracts and clauses, answer questions such as what is missing from a contract, and help with structure and design (Ketola et al, “Chattable Contracts: AI-Driven Access to Justice,” forthcoming).

Putting people first is now much easier with AI-assisted legal design

Our early experiments with AI assistants suggest that, despite their shortcomings, AI tools can help writers bridge the gap between human-readable and lawyer-readable, and merge plain language with effective design patterns.

AI can rewrite complex text in everyday language, suggest summaries and headings, including FAQs, and even include smart readers. For writers, these tools can suggest structural improvements to texts, help create overviews, summaries and layered text, and produce tables, for example. No doubt, with the rapid evolution of AI, these features will soon be further developed.

While AI tools hold great promise, we also argue for the need for trustworthy technology and trust-building regulations that promote the responsible design, implementation, and use of AI. By combining plain language, design, and the responsible use of AI, we can reach and engage diverse audiences and transform complex text into communication that is relevant, findable, understandable, and actionable for humans.

Traditionally, humanizing complex text has required a lot of manual work. Now we can do it more easily. No more excuses for not doing it when we can!

Helena Haapio is a Helsinki-based pioneer in Proactive Law and Legal Design and serves as a Contract Strategist at Lexpert Ltd. She is Associate Professor of Business Law at the University of Vaasa, Professor of Practice at the University of Lapland, and a Senior Researcher with Tampere University’s JARGONFREE Research Group. Her work in contract design and simplification has earned her international acclaim, including a nomination as a European Woman of Legal Tech and an honorary Fellowship from World Commerce & Contracting.

Nina Toivonen is a lawyer and doctoral researcher in law at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Her doctoral research studies legal theoretical foundations for the systemic design of law, especially for the purposes of financial rehabilitation. She has a Master’s degree in Legal Design and Legal Expertise.

Innovation and the Law: Legal Design's Role in Shaping the Future of Law and Legal Information

Tessa Manuello



This article explores the transformative impact of legal design on communication strategies within the legal discipline, as highlighted in the International PLAIN conference. It navigates through key themes such as the systemic shift from compliance to comprehension, the

enhancement of clarity in contract design, and the strategic focus on usability, functionality, and accessibility. With an emphasis on the intersection of law and design, the article sheds light on the evolving landscape of legal information presentation. Authored by Tessa Manuello, a pioneer in legal design and innovation, the article serves as a roadmap for successful implementation in the legal domain, urging legal professionals to champion the cause of legal design for a future where legal information becomes a bridge to understanding.

The International PLAIN conference of this year served as a spotlight on the convergence of design and plain language within the legal discipline, showcasing the potential for collaborative innovation in communication and innovation strategies. The theme of legal design, gaining significant traction globally, addresses the pressing need for a clear and comprehensible presentation of legal information. This new approach is in sync with the evolution of the digital landscape that allows for the use of multimedia, interactive elements, and new technologies with the view to create more modern way of communicating legal information in the 21st century. This article delves into the importance of legal design, highlighting its role in ensuring accessibility for all and providing a roadmap for successful implementation in the legal domain.

1. From Compliance to Comprehension: A Systemic Shift through Legal Design

Traditionally, legal documents have been laden with technical language, treating legal jargon as a necessary evil to ensure compliance with complex regulations and legal protection in case of potential litigation. However, a new narrative is emerging, emphasizing that the clarity, usability, and accessibility of legal information are not only essential for compliance but also vital to empower readers to effectively use and comprehend these documents. By infusing design principles into the legal domain and prioritizing the human-centered aspect of legal systems, processes and information, the focus shifts from merely serving lawyers and judges to placing real users at the center of the process, ensuring a more user-friendly experience.

This shift recognizes that contracts and legal documents are not merely a compliance checkbox but a vital component for building relationships and for ensuring the rule of law in societies. Legal design offers a proven and repeatable framework that helps in dismantling the barriers of complexity, ensuring legal information is accessible and comprehensible. This innovative approach turns the legal service delivery model as a catalyst for building bridges of understanding rather than a bureaucratic hurdle.

2. From Contract Drafting to Contract Design: Enhancing Clarity with Visual Elements

The International Plain Language Summit showcased a Legal Design panel, exploring the symbiotic relationship between law, design, and effective communication. This panel, featuring Helena Haapio, Sofía Escobar Vallejo, Cecilia Ferrari, and myself, highlighted the power of visuals in legal information and contract design. Unlike conventional documents laden with dense legal language and convoluted clauses, the legal design methodology focuses on crafting documents that are not only legally sound but also comprehensible for intended users.

Legal design leverages visual elements to distill complex information into understandable formats, fostering greater comprehension. Visual elements, such as flowcharts and clear layouts, can make legal documents more approachable. Simultaneously, the use of plain language ensures that legal information is not obscured by unnecessary complexity. This new approach has seen global adoption, leading to smoother negotiation processes, heightened client satisfaction, and improved business outcomes.

The emphasis on education, awareness, and collaboration between legal professionals and designers emerged as key takeaways. As legal design shifts the focus from the judge to the user, more disciplines need to be involved in the process with an inter-disciplinary approach to ensure success.

3. From Aesthetic Seeking to Ensuring Usability, Functionality, and Accessibility

Rooted in a human-centered approach, legal design acknowledges that legal information is for everyone in society, not just legal professionals. That is why the approach goes beyond aesthetics and aims to strategically convey legal information in a comprehensible manner. In an era where legal information is abundant yet often inaccessible due to complexity, legal design becomes a beacon of clarity. Ensuring usability and functionality helps make legal information comprehensible, while breaking down barriers for individuals with diverse needs to maximize accessibility.

By considering the functional aspects of legal documents, it becomes possible to ensure that documents are not only legally sound but also serve the needs of organizations effectively. With this approach, legal documents become additional tools to help achieve strategic goals in addition to provide legal protection. Focusing on usability, we can ensure that the document is fit for users and to do so, we are aiming at making legal documents more approachable and empowering readers to engage with legal content confidently, while fostering ease of use.

This proactive approach involves optimizing language, adopting inclusive design principles, and considering diverse needs, including those with disabilities. The fusion of legal knowledge with design thinking enhances the accessibility of legal documents, signaling a paradigm shift in how legal information is perceived globally.

Conclusion: Propelling the Conversation Forward

As the discourse on legal design gains momentum, it stands as a beacon in the broader conversation about effective communication in the legal sector. The fusion of legal knowledge with design principles not only enhances the accessibility of legal documents but also signals a paradigm shift in how legal information is perceived, understood, and utilized globally.

As contributors to the PLAIN e-Journal, let us champion the cause of Legal Design, contributing to the evolution of legal communication and realizing a legal system that serves and empowers everyone. In doing so, we pave the way for a future where legal information is not a barrier but a bridge to justice and understanding.

A pioneer in Legal Design, internationally-recognized speaker and Certified High Performance Coach, Tessa Manuello is considered one of the world's references in Legal Design and Innovation. She founded Legal Creatives as an educational platform empowering legal professionals from all over the world to think creatively about the law, enabling new solutions to be created and recently developed her own Legal Design Series within the Legal Creatives Academy. Tessa is regularly invited to speak to international audiences worldwide as a thought leader and has grown the largest and most engaged community in Legal Design with her motivational virtual events and trainings as well as her more recent Legal Creatives podcast.
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Plain Language Projects spearheading innovation in Public Administration

The case of the Clear Tax Communication project
Estrella Montolío-Durán



Introduction

A clear communication project can have very different dimensions, and be, in all cases, very valid. One can, for example, simply design a poster with citizen information using Plain Language criteria. However, Clear Communication

projects can also be ambitious and holistic, authentic spearheads of innovation in the organization, and examples of collaborative, interdisciplinary, interprofessional and interinstitutional knowledge, aimed at social improvement.

Our research project “The right to understand tax communication. Analysis and clarification of the discourse used in collection procedures” (ComTClar PID 2020-114308RB-100) is funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain. We have combined these activities with those developed within the University of Barcelona-Diputación de Barcelona for clear communication applied to Administrations, of which I am director.

Project objectives and team composition

The objectives of the project are multiple and are intended to account for the phenomenon from complementary perspectives:

- (i) to create a corpus of tax texts addressed to the taxpayer, characteristic of the collection procedure;
- (ii) from this corpus, to investigate with corpus linguistics tools the characteristics of the tax discourse within the administrative legal language;
- (iii) to account for the characteristics of the genres that are part of the collection process and the colony of genres in which they are inserted;

(iv) to ascertain the opinions and beliefs about the quality of tax communication of citizens, tax agency customer service professionals and tax advisors by means of questionnaires prepared using sociological criteria;

(v) to link the quality of tax communication with the legal principle of the right to understand and with public policies of transparency and good governance;

(vi) to investigate the possible simplification of the administrative collection procedure and to identify the possible antinomies existing between the different tax regulations (European, state, autonomous community and municipal);

(vii) to clarify in a global sense (information architecture, language, visual design, etc.) the document of the enforcement order, in its dual state and municipal version;

(viii) to check the validity of the clarified versions by means of user and focus group tests, and;

(ix) to share and disseminate the results among academia, the professional community and the public.

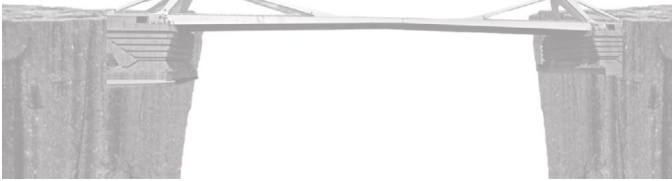
As can be seen, the aim is to have a profound impact on improving the quality of tax communication, bringing together the maximum number of stakeholders involved in this process. This requires a multidisciplinary and inter-professional team made up of academics specialized in different fields of knowledge involved (linguistics, tax law, sociology, political science, graphic design and usability), and professionals in the field (tax advisors, tax inspectors, managers of tax management agencies, lawyers from large firms specialized in tax law, graphic designers, etc.). The team numbers 24 people, including academic researchers from eight universities and three countries, and professionals from six organizations, four of them public and two private.

The research core is made up of the linguists from the Academic and Professional Discourse Studies team, with extensive experience of interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration in knowledge transfer with numerous institutions and administrations.



It is a project that at all times has been governed by a great metaphor, that of the bridge, because the research is proposed as a bridge between disciplines that usually do not work together; between citizenship, academia and the administration; and between the administration and other institutions that usually ignore each other. The bridge is also the great metaphor that explains the object of study we are dealing with, clear communication, because what is Clear Communication if not the great bridge between the Administration and the Citizenry?

Administración Comunicación Clara Ciudadanía



Coping with the challenges of a complex world

No one disputes that ours is a world of complexity and uncertainty. The most recent publications on governance, in general, emphasize the challenge posed to all of us by so-called complex emergencies, such as the recent COVID-19, or global warming, water scarcity or the development of Artificial Intelligence.

How should projects and teams be prepared to deal with complexity and complex emergencies? I will summarize below what the studies conducted by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) indicate about the characteristics of the teams that were able to cope successfully with COVID-19. I would like to say that our project brings together all of these key features.

First of all, **talent diversification**. That is, it must be about teams and interdisciplinary projects. Among the members there must be a **spontaneous conversation**. This is very interesting, and we have experienced it in our project. If each of us continued speaking from our disciplinary discursive routines, we did not understand each other. If we linguists spoke as linguists and the tax inspectors as such, there was no possible communication, so we had to resort to a colloquial tone. What happens when several professionals switch to a conversational and relaxed tone? Spontaneously, communicative relaxation brings with it interpersonal relaxation.

For this reason, in the project a **horizontal structure** has arisen naturally which contributes to the production of another relevant feature of these complex equipment, always in accordance with the LSE: **group cohesion**.

Successful teams are made up of **highly motivated** people. An aspect of interest is the **creativity** that arises in this type of projects, because the different members are aware that, together, we are going to discover something new (a new clear tax communication). From this framework of “collective discovery”, people generate patterns of creativity, achieving a result that is highly complex. The LSE also highlights the **public vocation of all members**, including in our case, participants from private companies.

Another relevant feature is **that people have decision-making capacity**, allowing for **distributed leadership**. In our project, different colleagues have led some of the sublines, for example, the coordination of legal research or obtaining the opinions of professionals and citizens.

The fact that there are subprojects led by other researchers which are different from the main one impacts the degree of **engagement** of the people in the project.

Keeping the project focused is another characteristic. And finally, the need for **prestigious leaders**. All these features are present in our project.

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References: This chapter is part of the ID project PID2020-114308RB-I00, funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/The right to understand tax communication. Analysis and clarification of the speech used in collection procedures.

Proyectos de Lenguaje Claro como puntas de lanza de innovación en la Administración

El caso del proyecto Comunicación tributaria clara
Estrella Montolío-Durán



Introducción

Un proyecto de comunicación clara puede tener dimensiones muy diferentes, y ser, en todos los casos, muy válido. Se puede, por ejemplo, simplemente diseñar con criterios de Lenguaje Claro un cartel con información de la

ciudadanía. Ahora bien, los proyectos de Comunicación Clara pueden ser también ambiciosos y holísticos, auténticas puntas de lanza de innovación en la organización, y ejemplos de conocimiento colaborativo, interdisciplinario, interprofesional e interinstitucional, dirigido a la mejora social.

A este segundo tipo responde nuestro proyecto de investigación “El derecho a entender la comunicación tributaria. Análisis y clarificación del discurso empleado en los procedimientos de recaudación” (ComTClar PID 2020-114308RB-100) subvencionado por el Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación de España, cuyas actividades hemos combinado con las desarrolladas en el seno de la Cátedra Universidad de Barcelona-Diputación de Barcelona para una comunicación clara aplicada a las Administraciones, de la que soy directora.

Objetivos del proyecto y composición del equipo

Los objetivos del proyecto son múltiples y dan cuenta del fenómeno desde perspectivas complementarias:

- (i) crear un corpus de textos tributarios dirigidos al contribuyente característicos del procedimiento de recaudación;
- (ii) a partir de ese corpus, investigar con herramientas de lingüística de corpus las características del discurso tributario dentro del lenguaje jurídico administrativo;
- (iii) dar cuenta de las características de los géneros que forman parte del proceso de recaudación y de la colonia de géneros en la que se insertan;

(iv) conocer las opiniones sobre la calidad de la comunicación tributaria de ciudadanos, profesionales de atención al público de organismos tributarios y asesores fiscales mediante cuestionarios elaborados con criterios sociológicos;

(v) vincular la calidad de la comunicación tributaria con el principio jurídico del derecho a entender y con las políticas públicas de transparencia y buen gobierno;

(vi) investigar la posible simplificación del procedimiento administrativo de recaudación e identificar las posibles antinomias existentes entre las diferentes normativas tributarias (europea, estatal, autonómica y municipal);

(vii) clarificar en un sentido global (arquitectura de la información, lengua, diseño visual, etc.) el documento de la providencia de apremio, en su doble versión estatal y municipal;

(viii) comprobar mediante testeos de usuario y grupo focal la validez de las versiones clarificadas; y

(ix) compartir y difundir los resultados entre la comunidad académica, la profesional y la ciudadanía.

Como se ve, se pretende tener una incidencia profunda en la mejora de la calidad de la comunicación tributaria, convocando para ello al máximo de actores implicados. Para ello, se requiere contar con un equipo multidisciplinar e interprofesional integrado por académicos especializados en diferentes campos del saber implicados (lingüística, derecho tributario, sociología, ciencia política, diseño gráfico y usabilidad), y profesionales sobre el terreno (asesores fiscales, inspectores de Hacienda, cuadros directivos de organismos de gestión tributaria, abogados especializados en derecho fiscal, diseñadores gráficos, etc.). Un total de 24 miembros, entre investigadores académicos de 8 universidades y 3 países, y profesionales de 6 organizaciones, 4 de ellas públicas y 2 privadas.

El núcleo investigador lo componen los lingüistas del equipo Estudios del Discurso Académico y Profesional (EDATP), que cuenta con una larga trayectoria en la colaboración

interdisciplinaria e interprofesional de transferencia de conocimiento con numerosas instituciones y Administraciones.

Es un proyecto que en todo momento se ha regido por la metáfora del **punte**, porque la investigación se plantea como puente entre disciplinas que habitualmente no trabajan conjuntamente; entre ciudadanía, universidad y administración; y entre administraciones y otras instituciones que habitualmente se ignoran entre sí. Esta metáfora también explica el objeto de estudio del que nos ocupamos, la comunicación clara, porque ¿qué es la Comunicación Clara sino el gran puente entre la Administración y la ciudadanía?



Cómo hacer frente a los problemas de un mundo complejo

Nadie discute que el nuestro es un mundo de complejidad e incertidumbre. En las más recientes publicaciones sobre gobernanza se hace hincapié en el reto que supone las llamadas emergencias complejas, como es el caso del reciente covid-19, o el calentamiento global, la escasez de agua o el desarrollo de la inteligencia artificial.

¿Cómo han de ser los proyectos y los equipos preparados para hacer frente a las emergencias complejas? A continuación, sintetizo lo que indican los estudios elaborados por la London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) acerca de las características de los equipos que pudieron hacer frente al covid de modo exitoso. Adelanto que nuestro proyecto reúne todas esas claves.

En primer lugar, **diversificación del talento**. Es decir, ha de tratarse de equipos y de proyectos interdisciplinarios. Entre los miembros ha de producirse una **conversación espontánea**. Esto es muy interesante, y lo hemos vivido en nuestro proyecto. Si cada uno de nosotros continuaba hablando desde sus rutinas discursivas disciplinares, no nos entendíamos. Si los lingüistas hablábamos como lingüistas y los inspectores de Hacienda como tales, no había comunicación posible, así que tuvimos que recurrir al tono coloquial.

Referencias: Este capítulo es parte del proyecto de I+D+i PID2020-114308RB-I00, financiado por MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033/El derecho a entender la comunicación tributaria. Análisis y clarificación del discurso empleado en los procedimientos de recaudación.

¿Qué ocurre cuando varios profesionales pasan a un tono conversacional y relajado? De manera espontánea, la relajación comunicativa trae consigo una distensión interpersonal. Por esta razón, en el proyecto se ha dado de manera natural **una estructura horizontal** que coadyuva para que se produzca otro rasgo relevante de estos equipos complejos, según la LSE: **cohesión grupal**.

Los equipos exitosos están constituidos por **personas altamente motivadas**. Un aspecto de interés es la **creatividad** que surge en este tipo de proyectos, porque los diferentes miembros son conscientes de que, juntos, vamos a descubrir algo nuevo (una nueva comunicación tributaria clara). Desde ese marco de “descubrimiento colectivo”, las personas generan patrones de creatividad logrando un resultado que es un conjunto altamente **innovador**. La LSE destaca también la **vocación pública de todos los miembros**, incluyendo en nuestro caso los participantes procedentes de empresas privadas.

Otro rasgo relevante es **que las personas tengan capacidad de decisión**, permitiendo un **liderazgo distribuido**.

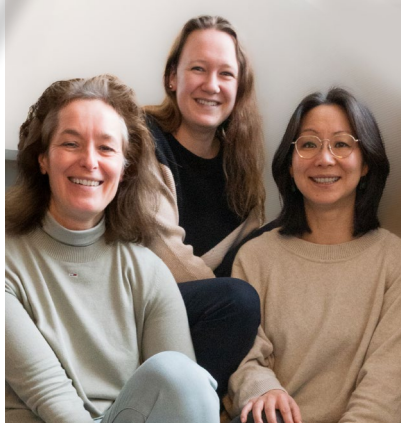
En nuestro proyecto, diferentes colegas han liderado alguna de las sublíneas, por ejemplo, la coordinación de la investigación jurídica o la obtención de las opiniones de profesionales y ciudadanía. El hecho de que haya subproyectos liderados por otros investigadores diferentes del principal impacta en el grado de **implicación** de las personas en el proyecto.

Mantener enfocado el proyecto es otra característica. Y, finalmente, tener **líderes referenciales y con prestigio**. Todas ellas se han cumplido en nuestro proyecto.

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Step by Step Towards a Design Process for Plain Language

Charlotte Swart, Mischa Corsius & Keun Young Sliedrecht



The Dutch government believes that clarity and accessibility of texts are important (for example, the “Direct Duidelijk” initiatives), and many organizations are working hard to improve their communication. Being able to understand and

use these texts is essential for citizens to handle their affairs with the government. Sometimes citizens need to contact the government to fulfill their obligations, and other times they have rights to claim. They need to understand what to arrange or how they can apply for services or facilities. However, it turns out that (web) texts are hard to understand and use for the majority of citizens (Corsius & Sluis-Thiescheffer, 2023). Conversations with several organisations in law and health care (such as hospitals) expose that plain language is not yet self-evident.

The question is: *How can organizations ensure that all their communication with their target group is in plain language?*

Challenges for organizations

Organizations face various problems in making their external communication plain. These problems relate to (1) knowledge, (2) willingness, (3) being allowed to, and (4) ability:

- 1) Not knowing that it can be done differently: lack of knowledge.
- 2) Not seeing why it needs to be done differently: lack of awareness or motivation.
- 3) Not being allowed to do it differently: lack of time or missing consent.
- 4) Not knowing how to do it differently: insufficient skills and tools within the organization to create plain communication tools.

Questions that professionals ask include:

- What is low-literacy and when is something plain language?
- How can we inform all employees about this?
- How do you get employees to adjust their process (willingly)?
- How do we ensure that the content is (legally) correct and in plain language?
- How do you set up the design process in your organization?

Possible solutions/approaches

The key is to involve the entire organization in a new process for designing content. You can start small, show the result, and then gradually spread it throughout the entire organization (oil stain effect). At the same time, you can work on improving the willingness, knowledge, permission, and ability to create understandable content.

Setting up the Design Process

To enable all employees to create plain and accessible content, current processes need to be restructured. Whether it's a text, video, or form, it requires a design, because it is so much more than just writing text. A well-known process is design thinking. This involves exploring the needs of your target group, designing the content based on that, and testing it with the target group. This process repeats until no major problems emerge from the test.

Ideally, you don't just design and evaluate a single text with a design thinking process, but you explore the entire customer journey. From the first touch point onwards, you specifically evaluate the communication mode. Is a letter the right medium for this message?

We now mention a number of methods that fit into this kind of iterative process.

Co-reflection

In a co-reflection session, a communication professional and a content expert discuss a text. They use our checklist with basic features of a plain language text. It is important that the professionals first agree on the main goal of the text, and then on the linguistic form.

By discussing the text together, both professionals identify improvements. This results in a text that is complete and more understandable. Ideally, communication experts are involved early in the text design process.

Testing with the target group

Usability testing (with eye tracking) can be extensive but can also be done quick & dirty. Visit a shopping mall or library and ask five people to perform a task on a website. Or go to a language class and ask students to summarize a letter.

In the Usability Lab at HAN, people can observe a test without disturbing the tester. We ask as many stakeholders as possible to watch during the test: this helps writers understand why their text is unclear and how this affects the reader. Seeing a discouraged or stray reader greatly encourages writers to solve the problem. If you don't have a lab available, record the test and discuss the video with colleagues.

Preferably test content in the bigger picture. For example, ask a tester to first find a piece of information, the way they would normally do it themselves.

Expert with experience as a colleague

In our research group, we hired a colleague with low literacy skills. One morning per week, she looks at designs and texts and makes suggestions for improvement. She also gives presentations to students and teachers. She shares her experience with low-literacy and explains how a writer can take this into account. Her presence provides a continuous reminder to communicate in a plain and accessible way.

VR Experience

There are various tools that can help create awareness of low-literacy. An example is a Virtual Reality (VR) simulation game developed by the HAN University of Applied Sciences. With a VR headset on, you can have a conversation with someone who has low literacy skills.

An example scenario is a father who hasn't filled out a form for his child's school trip. This simulation gives our teachers and students insight into what low-literacy is, what problems it can cause, and how to respond to it professionally.

In conclusion

To embed plain language in an organization, actions are needed at multiple levels. This starts with creating awareness and a sense of urgency (willingness and knowledge).

In addition, employees must be given the space and the skills to implement plain language in practice (being allowed and being able to). With the suggestions in this article, we show that you can start small.

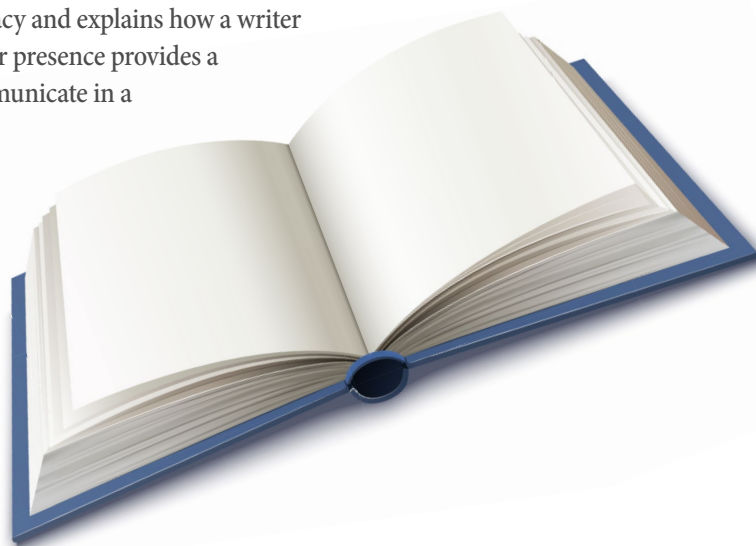
Charlotte Swart, Mischa Corsius and Keun Young Sliedrecht are researchers at HAN University of Applied Sciences (The Netherlands):

Charlotte focuses on inclusive and accessible design as a UX researcher.

Mischa works as a researcher on digital solutions for government and business that take the user as the starting point.

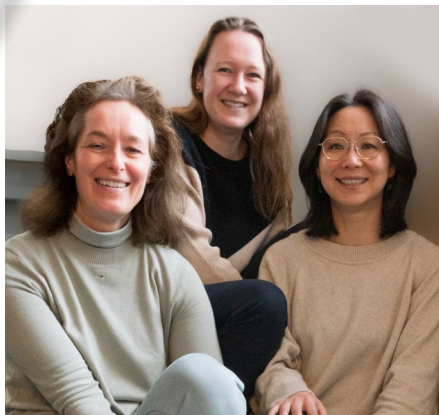
Keun Young is a communication scientist and conducts research on plain language.

Recently, they conducted joint research on the comprehensibility of government communications.



Stap voor stap naar een ontwerpproces voor begrijpelijke communicatie

Charlotte Swart, Mischa Corsius & Keun Young Sliedrecht



De Nederlandse overheid vindt begrijpelijkheid en toegankelijkheid van teksten belangrijk (bv: Direct Duidelijk initiatieven), en veel organisaties doen hun best om hun communicatie te verbeteren.

Begrijpelijkheid en toepasbaarheid van deze teksten zijn essentieel voor de burgers om hun zaken met de overheid te kunnen regelen. De ene keer moet de burger in contact met de overheid om zijn plichten na te komen, een andere keer heeft hij er recht op om iets aan te vragen. Hij moet dan kunnen begrijpen wat hij moet regelen of hoe hij dat kan aanvragen.

Toch blijkt in de praktijk dat (web)teksten voor een meerderheid van de burgers niet toegankelijk geschreven zijn (Corsius & Sluis-Thiescheffer, 2023). Gesprekken met verschillende organisaties binnen recht en gezondheid (bijvoorbeeld: ziekenhuizen) bevestigen dat begrijpelijke communicatie niet vanzelfsprekend is. De vraag is dan ook:

Hoe kunnen organisaties ervoor zorgen dat al hun communicatie voor de doelgroep in plain language is?

Struggles van organisaties

Organisaties hebben allerlei problemen bij het begrijpelijk maken van hun externe communicatie. Deze problemen hebben te maken met (1) weten, (2) willen, (3) mogen en (4) kunnen:

1. Niet weten dat het anders kan: kennis ontbreekt.
2. Niet zien waarom het anders moet: bewustzijn of motivatie ontbreekt.
3. Geen ruimte krijgen om het anders te doen: de tijd of bevoegdheid mist.
4. Niet weten hoe het anders kan: onvoldoende mensen in de organisatie hebben de vaardigheden en tools om begrijpelijke communicatiemiddelen te maken.

Vragen die professionals daarbij stellen, zijn bijvoorbeeld:

- Wat is laaggeletterdheid en wanneer is iets begrijpelijk?
- Hoe kunnen we alle medewerkers informeren daarover?
- Hoe krijg je medewerkers zover dat ze hun proces (willen) aanpassen?
- Hoe zorgen we ervoor dat de inhoud (juridisch) correct is én begrijpelijk?
- Hoe richt je het ontwerpproces in je organisatie in?

Mogelijke oplossingen/werkwijzen

De kern is om de hele organisatie mee te nemen in een nieuw proces om content te ontwerpen. Je kunt klein beginnen, het resultaat aantonen en dan geleidelijk verder verspreiden in de gehele organisatie (olievlek-werking). Je kunt daarbij tegelijkertijd werken aan het verbeteren van willen, weten, mogen en kunnen maken van begrijpelijke content.

Ontwerpproces inrichten

Om alle medewerkers begrijpelijke en toegankelijke content te laten maken, moeten huidige processen anders worden ingericht. Of het nou een tekst, video of formulier is, het vergt een ontwerp, niet alleen het schrijven van een tekst. Een bekend proces daarvoor is design thinking. Daarbij verken je de behoeften van je doelgroep, ontwerpt daar content voor en test dat weer met de doelgroep. Dit proces herhaalt zich tot er uit de test geen grote problemen meer komen.

Idealiter neem je niet één enkele tekst door met een design thinking proces, maar je onderzoekt de hele klantreis. Vanaf het eerste moment dat je doelgroep contact heeft met je organisatie. Je kijkt nadrukkelijk naar de manier van contact hebben. Is een brief wel de juiste vorm voor deze boodschap?

We noemen nu een aantal methoden die passen in zo'n iteratief proces.

Checkgesprekken

In een checkgesprek gaan een communicatieprofessional en een inhoudelijk expert in gesprek over een tekst. Ze gebruiken daarbij onze checklist met basiskenmerken van een begrijpelijke tekst. Belangrijk is dat de professionals eerst overeenstemming bereiken over het inhoudelijke doel van de tekst, dan pas over de talige vorm. Door samen in gesprek te gaan over de tekst, komen beide professionals tot verbeterpunten. Dit resulteert in een tekst die inhoudelijk volledig én begrijpelijk(er) is. Bij voorkeur worden communicatie-experts al vroeg in het tekstontwerpproces betrokken.

Testen met de doelgroep

Testen kan heel uitgebreid met eye tracking, maar kan ook quick & dirty. Bezoek een winkelcentrum of bibliotheek en vraag vijf mensen om een taak uit te voeren op een website. Of maak een afspraak bij een taalles en vraag studenten om een brief samen te vatten.

In het Usability Lab van de HAN kunnen mensen een test observeren zonder dat dit de tester hindert. We laten zoveel mogelijk stakeholders meekijken tijdens het testen: dit helpt medewerkers inzien waarom hun tekst niet duidelijk is en wat voor effect dit heeft op de lezer/tester. Het zien van een ontmoedigde of verdwaalde lezer motiveert schrijvers enorm om het probleem op te lossen. Heb je geen lab ter beschikking, neem dan de test op en bespreek de video met collega's.

Test content het liefst in het grotere plaatje. Vraag een tester bijvoorbeeld eerst om een stukje informatie te vinden, op de manier waarop die dat normaal zelf ook zou doen.

Ervaringsdeskundige als collega

Bij onze onderzoeksgroep werkt iemand die laaggeletterd is. Een dagdeel in de week kijkt ze mee naar ontwerpen en teksten en doet verbeter suggesties. Ook geeft ze samen met ons presentaties aan studenten en docenten. Ze deelt haar ervaring met laaggeletterdheid en legt uit hoe een schrijver daarmee rekening kan houden. Haar aanwezigheid zorgt voor een continue herinnering om begrijpelijk en toegankelijk te communiceren.



Virtual Reality-beleving (VR)

Er zijn verschillende tools ontwikkeld die kunnen helpen bij het creëren van bewustzijn over laaggeletterdheid. Een voorbeeld is een VR-simulatiespel ontwikkeld door HAN University of Applied Sciences. Met een VR-bril op voer je een gesprek met iemand die laaggeletterd is. Een voorbeeldscenario is een vader die een formulier voor het schoolreisje voor zijn kind niet heeft ingevuld. Deze simulatie geeft onze docenten en studenten inzicht in wat laaggeletterdheid is, welke problemen dit kan veroorzaken en hoe je daar als professional mee omgaat.

Tot slot

Om als organisatie plain language in te bedden, zijn er op meerdere niveaus acties nodig.

Dit begint met het creëren van bewustzijn en inzicht in de noodzaak hiervan (willen, weten). Daarnaast moeten medewerkers de ruimte krijgen en de vaardigheden om PLAIN language in de praktijk te kunnen brengen (mogen, kunnen). Met de handreikingen in dit artikel laten we zien dat je daarbij klein en eenvoudig kunt beginnen.

Charlotte Swart, Mischa Corsius en Keun Young Sliedrecht zijn onderzoekers aan de HAN University of Applied Sciences: Charlotte richt zich als UX researcher op inclusief en toegankelijk ontwerpen.

Mischa werkt als onderzoeker aan digitale oplossingen voor overheid en bedrijfsleven waarin de gebruiker centraal staat.

Keun Young is communicatiewetenschapper en doet onderzoek naar begrijpelijke communicatie.

Recent deden zij samen onderzoek naar de begrijpelijkheid van overheidscommunicatie.

Change doesn't have to be chaos

Implementing plain language strategically
in the ever-changing organization

Nadja Green & Chani Slabbert



In 2021, the Plain Language Institute joined a large financial services organization on their plain language journey.

Our mandate was to help them infuse plain language throughout the organization, which

was a major shift away from the document-by-document approach they had followed in the past. This gave us the opportunity to test our conceptual framework for implementing plain language as a strategic priority.

We quickly realized that implementing plain language in a complex, highly regulated organization is no easy feat. To help the organization on their journey, we had to embrace change, be agile, and innovate.

Our conceptual framework for implementing plain language

In 2019, Nadja developed a conceptual framework for implementing plain language as a strategic priority as part of her Masters.

The framework is based on three principles.

To implement plain language strategically, an organization must:

1. Visibly commit to plain language from the top. This means that leadership understands the value of plain language and commits to prioritize and implement plain language across the organization.
2. Give strategic priority to plain language. This entails including plain language in the organization's strategic planning.
3. Implement plain language consistently. To achieve this, the organization must develop an implementation plan that:
 - sets out a plain language content development process for the organization;

- identifies key individuals;
- prioritizes areas for roll-out; and
- describes how the organization will monitor and evaluate the success of the plain language.

Visibly commit to plain language from the top

Give strategic priority to plain language

Implement plain language consistently

Figure 1: Three principles of the conceptual framework for implementing plain language as a strategic priority (Green, 2019).

Putting the framework to the test

Joining a large organization on their plain language journey gave us the opportunity to put the conceptual framework to the test: is the framework practical for, and achievable in, an organization that is dominated by various moving parts and frequent change?

The organization services over 30 million customers and operates in 40 countries. All their revenue-generating business units, including their bank and investment company, operate as separate legal entities. The organization had historically allocated plain language to the group's marketing team, who focused mainly on simplifying documents.

We applied the principles of the conceptual framework to help the organization move from a narrow and unsystematic approach to plain language to a more strategic one. While applying the principles, however, we quickly realised that implementing plain language would not be a straightforward, linear process:

- The organization's business units operate in silos with little collaboration. And even though the marketing team is a centralised business function, it does not have strategic influence in the organization.
- There are two driving forces behind getting projects funded and people invited to decision-making tables: innovation and data.
- Securing commitment from top leadership in such a complex organization can be challenging.

It was evident that leaders:

- have competing priorities and different opinions on what is best for their business unit, and
- tend to resist change especially if a project deviates from the status quo.

So, how do you implement plain language strategically in an organization in which there are competing and shifting priorities, and multiple projects running at the same time? After reflecting, adapting, and innovating, version 2.0 of the framework was born.

Version 2.0

Version 2.0 of the framework is grounded in the realization that implementing plain language strategically in an organization requires gradual organizational change. The figure below shows that plain language is achieved gradually in loops of organizational change. Each loop is a plain language project in the organization. The loops inform and build on one another.

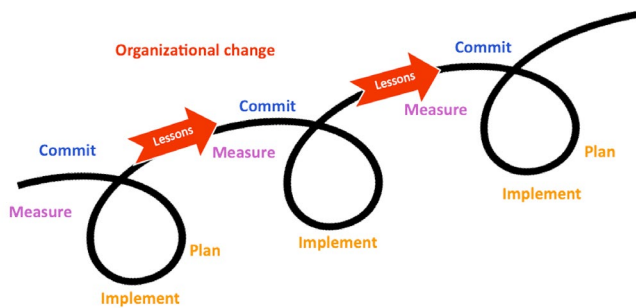


Figure 2: Loops of organizational change to achieve plain language.

Commit

Commitment remains a crucial first step, but instead of seeking top leadership commitment from the get-go, one could use strategic and carefully selected projects to gradually increase organizational (and leadership) commitment to plain language.

Following a change agent approach is particularly useful. This approach entails doing projects with plain language ambassadors (i.e., people already committed to the cause). Plain language ambassadors act as catalysts of change to help others understand the need for plain language in the organization.

To increase organizational, and ultimately leadership commitment, one should aim to get more change agents on board with each loop of organizational change.

Plan & Implement

The next two steps, plan and implement, go hand in hand. In a traditional approach to planning, organizations typically begin by defining their strategic objectives, setting goals, and outlining a strategic plan.

Afterward, they move on to the execution phase, where they implement the strategies and tactics outlined in the plan.

However, we have found that planning should not be separate from implementation. During the planning phase of a plain language project, it is important to:

- align the plan with available resources (budget, skills, organizational processes, technology, etc.) and identify any additional resources needed to implement the plan;
- build flexibility into the plan if circumstances change.

Measure

The last step is to measure the value of the plain language project for the organization. Effective measuring requires defining clear and measurable value indicators at the start of the project. The specific evaluation method and metrics will depend on the expected value of the project.

One should use the results of a plain language project to demonstrate to the rest of the organization the value of following a well-defined, strategic approach to plain language. How we talk about plain language in organizations matter. It's important to communicate the value of plain language in a way that will resonate with key decision makers and leaders. Otherwise, one's efforts to increase organization-wide commitment will be short-lived.

It takes a journey

Embarking on a plain language journey in your, or your client's, organization is not plain sailing. It involves trial and error. With each plain language project, or loop of organizational change, one will learn lessons. It is important to take the learnings of one project and apply them in the next one. This will ensure that the organization improves continuously with each loop of plain language achievement.

As for us, we are still embracing change, staying agile and innovating to infuse plain language throughout the organization. One plain language project at a time.

At the Plain Language Institute, South Africa, Nadja and Chani work together on developing plain language communication strategies and seamless omni-channel customer experiences for clients. Nadja has extensive experience in plain language content development and contributed to the creation of the first ISO standard for plain language. Nadja is also a PLAIN board member and serves on several committees of the International Plain Language Federation.

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