DANIEL M. POTTMANN
Ruhr University Bochum, Germany
Mongolian National University of Education, Ulan Bator, Mongolia

Leichte Sprache and *Einfache Sprache* – German plain language and teaching DaF (German as a foreign language)

1. Introduction

Plain language or plain writing has been discussed by professionals and established by media and public authorities since decades in English language, e.g. the construction of 'Basic English' by Charles Kay Ogden in 1930, the implementation of 'Special English' by Voice of America (1959), the creation of 'Simple English Wikipedia' using 'Special English' (2003) or the enacting of the 'Plain Writing Act' by U.S. President Obama (2010).

The concept of plain language is common in other modern languages as well and this article is supposed to give an introduction to plain language in German. There are literally no results searching for e.g. 'plain German language' and I suppose it has not been an important topic in English literature before, whereas there has been a wide range of new German literature on plain German in the last two decades which I'm giving an overview on in the following.

2. Overview and literature

In 2002, the German equality law for disabled people (Gesetz zur Gleichstellung von Menschen mit Behinderungen) was established and supplemented by the accessible information technology enactment (Barrierefreie-Informationstechnik-Verordnung) obligating government institutions to provide people with accessible information. This includes information for the blind or the deaf, but also

information in plain language, and led to founding a plain language association ('Netzwerk Leichte Sprache', 2006) developing rules for 'Leichte Sprache' (2013). Already in 1998 an international European team from ILSMH (International League of Societies for Persons with Mental Handicap, now: Inclusion Europe) developed rules for plain German language even before the law requiring them.

Since then, driven by the law requiring means to implement plain language, the topic has also become popular in scientific research. It was clear then that plain language addresses people with (permanent or temporary) cognitive limitations making them unable to read and understand complicated texts.

However, illiterates are considered another target group for plain language. In 1999, the German Illiterates' Association (Bundesverband Alphabetisierung und Grundbildung) started a popular TV campaign revealing 4 million people in Germany cannot write or read properly. After redefining criteria, a study in 2011 stated that even 7.5 million of 51.6 million adults in Germany were functional illiterates, 2 million were total illiterates (cf. Grotlüschen/Riekmann 2011). The recent follow-up study of 2018 states that 6.2 million adult German speaking men and women show reduced literacy (cf. Grotlüschen et al. 2019:5).

A third possible but still discussed target group for plain German language are learners of German as a foregin language (DaF, Deutsch als Fremdsprache) or German as a second language (DaZ, Deutsch als Zweitsprache). DaF mainly refers to international learners in controlled or institution learning situations, whereas DaZ refers to people in Germany with a different L1 learing German as L2 in controlled or uncontrolled learning situations.

Recent major works on plain German language are Baumert (2016) giving a comprehensive theoretical background and the anthology of Bock et al. (eds.) (2017) adding perspectives to affiliated disciplines. Baumert (2018) and (2019) are dealing with plain German language on an applied level. Bredel/Maass (2016a, b, c) and Maass (2015) establish another connection between the theoretical background and applied works provided by German and European associations mentioned above by providing extensive examples and materials for authors of plain German language. Oomen-Welke (2015) focuses on plain German language in teaching German as a second or foreign language as well as Heine (in Bock et al. (2017)).

Research on the role and function of plain language is nevertheless part of a bigger and interdisciplinary research on readability or, more generally speaking, understandability, which Lutz (2015) describes comprehensively.

3. Definitions and terms

The terms **Leichte Sprache** and **Einfache Sprache** can be translated literally as **easy language** and **simple language**, but this translation would not sufficiently cover the concepts behind both terms, firstly, because *easy* and *simple* are quite

synonymous and, secondly, because the English translation of the German terms should be in agreement with the use of the English terms referring to simplified English language.

So how should both terms be translated into English in order to make no confusion? Leichte Sprache is considered to be the German-related equivalent of the term plain language and should, therefore, be referred to as plain German. For instance, the German Wikipedia page for Leichte Sprache is connected to the English page for Plain Language.

On the other hand, this expression would be misleading in indicating a resemblance to plain English. Plain English seems to be a not very closely defined term or can more precisely be considered the hyperonym for several concrete concepts of plain language in English such as Basic English, Special English or ASD STE-100 Simplified Technical English. All of them have a respective set of rules how to simplify English language, whereas the term plain English might refer to any forms of intended and useful simplification of the English language.

Leichte Sprache is a controlled language following a set of rules, Einfache Sprache is not restricted by rules but by some suggestions. So, the more appropriate equivalent for Leichte Sprache would be Basic English or Special English, whereas Einfache Sprache represents Plain English. Subsequently, I will use the German terms, but the best translation should be 'Special German' or 'Basic German' for Leichte Sprache and 'Plain German' for Einfache Sprache.

4. Linguistic properties of *Einfache Sprache*

Like plain English in general, Einfache Sprache is not defined by strict rules, but by the following recommendations:[1]

1. Sentence structures should be simple and consistent without mental leaps.
2. Sentences should be no longer than ten to eleven words or fifteen words if a subordinate clause is involved (and then only one), which should be involved when improving understanding of the text.
3. Sentences should be written in active voice.
4. Choice of words should be closer to spoken than to written language.
5. Metaphors, idiomatic collocations and abstract terms should be replaced by more concrete terms with a literal meaning.
6. Foreign words and technical terms should be replaced by native or simple forms respectively. If technical terms cannot be avoided, they should be explained in an appendix.
7. Orthography should not be altered at all.

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[1] Based on https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Einfache_Sprache (7.02.2019).

While no one would probably disagree all of those means contribute to the simplification of language, they leave too much elbowroom to authors and are difficult to control by others as some of the rules are highly subjective.

5. Linguistic properties of *Leichte Sprache*

The following commented set of rules[2] is mainly a list of 'don'ts' rather than 'dos', which is intended to make it easier to obey those rules. The set of rules proposed in BMAS (2014) is divided in five sections: words, numbers and symbols, sentences, texts and layout. This paper follows that classification and focuses on the linguistic characteristics of Leichte Sprache described in section 1 with a short overview of the other sections.

> 1) Rule: Use simple words (BMAS 2014:22).
>   Example: *erlauben* ('to allow') instead of *genehmigen* ('approve').

Although is it not stated explicitly what the term 'simple' refers to, the example shows that it possibly refers to morphological simplicity rather than any semantic simplicity, which would be hard to define, or just a preference for typologically shorter words.

In the given example *erlaub-*$_{verb}$ is morphologically simple, whereas the morphological structure of *genehmig-*$_{verb}$ is synchronically opaque. It consists of a verbal prefix *ge-*, a verbal root *nehm-* and a suffix *-ig* which is common in adjectives and verbs.

On the other hand, *erlauben* can just be considered the more colloquial word in German compared to *genehmigen*, which is rather a formal choice of words – be it by coincidence or because it is a morphologically simple one. Also, it seems that *erlauben* has a broader semantics that *genehmigen*, which is more restricted.

A characteristic of plain English would be to avoid words with French/Latin roots when there is a synonymous word with a Germanic origin.[3] In most cases words with Germanic origin should be better known for most English speakers than words with Latin roots. Although this may also apply for German language, the rule for Leichte Sprache is aimed at avoiding both complicated foreign words and complicated native words.

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[2] Based on Inclusion Europe (ed.) (2009): Informationen für alle. Europäische Regeln, wie man Informationen leicht lesbar und leicht verständlich macht; and BMAS – Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (ed.) (2014): Leichte Sprache. Ein Ratgeber.
[3] Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_plain_English_words_and_phrases (7.02.2019).

> 2) Rule: Use words which describe things precisely (BMAS 2014:23).
>   Example: *Bus und Bahn* ('bus(ses) and train(s)') instead of *Öffentlicher Nahverkehr* ('public mass transit').

The rule may sound misleading as there are many ways to describe things precisely including very complicated ways. The more precisely one wants to describe something, the more information he or she has to give. To use Leichte Sprache it is, however, the crucial task not to give too much information at the same time nor to omit important information. While this is a general problem and refers also to the construction of whole texts, the rule aims to avoid abstract words and to focus on words with a concrete meaning. The rule is explained by a good example introducing an abstract term (public mass transit), which refers either to a traffic system in total, to the traffic company of a town or to certain means of transport. The good counterexample introduces the most known examples for means of transport which a person normally would refer to talking about public mass transport. Buses and trains are concrete things which you can touch and recognize and which stand as first examples for public mass transit in total. So, the rule can be redefined: use concrete words (and examples where necessary) instead of abstract words.

> 3) Rule: Use known words and avoid technical terms and foreign words (BMAS 2014:24).
>   Example: *Arbeits-Gruppe* (literally: 'work group') instead of *workshop*.

The rule aims, according to rule 1, to avoid both not well-known native and foreign terms – given that most technical terms indeed have a foreign origin or are internationally used words, mostly with an English or French/Latin origin. In the given example, the Anglicism is replaced by the literal German translation of the word's parts.

While the rule speaks for itself, there is a useful addition: in case it is unavoidable to use a technical term, authors are recommended not to paraphrase it but to announce and explain it and mention the difficult word at the end of the sentence. Authors are also recommended to add a glossary for those words and their explanations.

> Example: *Er lernt einen neuen Beruf.*
>   *Das schwere Wort ist berufliche Rehabilitation.**
>   *He learns a new trade.*
>   *The difficult word (i.e. for that) is professional rehabilitation.**

> 4) Rule: Stick to the same word referring to one thing (BMAS 2014:25).
>   Example: Choose either *Tablette* or *Pille* ('pill').

Authors are urged to decide on one synonym and not to vary their expressions. This is important as we are used to varying our expressions to achieve a good style normally. For Leichte Sprache unambiguousness is, however, most important.

5) Rule: Use short words (BMAS 2014:26).
    Example: *Bus* instead of *Omnibus*.

This rule applies if there is a choice between two synonymous words and one of them is (morphologically) shorter than the other, so in fact rule 5 is already part of rule 1.

5a) Rule: If there is no short word, divide long words (BMAS 2014:26).
    Example: *Bundes-Gleichstellungs-Gesetz* ('federal equality law') instead
             of *Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz*.

The rule refers mainly to nominal compounds, but also other compounds. German language is known for its frequent and extensive use of (nominal) composition resulting in theoretically infinite nouns. However, it is always possible to identify the compound parts and separate them by the typological mean of a hyphen making them easier to read. In German standard, orthography hyphens are possible or even obligatory in few nominal compounds only and they are especially recommended when it is not clear if there are actually two words or one. English language does not have this problem, as many German nominal compounds correspond to noun phrases in English. Other languages like the Romanic languages are easier to read in this respect, as they use prepositional phrases to replace the first part of the nominal compound.

6) Rule: Avoid abbreviations (BMAS 2014:27).
    Example: *das heißt* instead of *d.h.* (literally: 'this means').

Although it is obvious that the usage of abbreviations requires the reader to know the original long form and is, therefore, more difficult, there are some cases where very well-known abbreviations are easier to understand. The abbreviation *LKW*, for example, refers to the original long form *Lastkraftwagen* (AE: *truck* / BE: *lorry*) and is well known and probably even better known than the long form and should therefore be used. The rule aims to avoid abbreviations of technical terms, where most abbreviations are actually used, and again abbreviations of foreign words. To give an example in English similar to the above-mentioned German one: Use *for example* instead of *e.g. (exempli gratia)*, as not everybody knows the long form of *e.g.*, but surely knows the meaning of *for example*.

  7) Rule: Use verbs insetad of nouns (BMAS 2014:28).
       Example: *Morgen wählen wir einen neuen Präsidenten* instead of
                  Morgen findet die Wahl zum Präsidenten statt.
                  Tomorow we are going to elect a new President instead of
                  The presidential election will take place tomorrow.

German speakers, especially writers, tend to use nouns rather than verbs where both ways are possible to describe the same fact. The advantage of verbal use is that one is more inclined to mention the actor ('we') making the information more precise.

  8) Rule: Use active speech instead of passive speech (BMAS 2014:29).
       Example: *Morgen wählen wir einen neuen Präsidenten* instead of
                  Morgen wird der neue Präsident gewählt.
                  Tomorow we are going to elect a new President instead of
                  A new president will be elected tomorrow.

This rule pursues exactly the same aim as rule 7, so the same example may show the difference.

  9) Rule: Avoid the use of genitive (BMAS 2014:30).
       Example: *Das Haus vom Lehrer / Das Haus von dem Lehrer* instead of
                  Das Haus des Lehrers.
                  The house of the teacher instead of *the teacher's house.*

The use of genitive can be difficult both for learners of German language and for some native speakers. Unlike the other two German oblique cases, genitive is only rarely used as a case for verbal objects, but mostly as a case for possessive adjuncts and can easily be replaced by a prepositional phrase using the preposition *von* (*of*) followed by dative case.

  10) Rule: Avoid the use of subjunctive mood and replace it by adverbs
                  (BMAS 2014:31).
       Example: *Morgen regnet es vielleicht* ('Maybe it's rainy tomorrow') in-
                  stead of *Morgen könnte es regnen* ('It could be rainy tomor-
                  row').

Rule 10 is important and necessary, but not precise enough. Some explanations may help: the subjunctive mood in German (Konjunktiv) has two forms, Konjunktiv I ('present subjunctive') and Konjunktiv II ('past subjunctive'). Konjunktiv I and II can be used both for past and present time, the English names are misleading. They are mainly used for reported or indirect speech (Konjunktiv I) and for conditional tense (Konjunktiv II).

The example involves a modal verb (*könnte*, 'could') and the explanation also mentions several modal and auxiliary verbs connected to the use of subjunctive mood, *hätte*, *könnte*, *müsste*, *sollte*, *wäre*, *würde*, which all shoud be avoided. This may be misleading, because the rule's aim is not to avoid modal and auxiliary verbs in general, but using their subjunctive forms. Their mood-changing meaning can also be conveyed by certain sentence adverbs as shown in the given example.

While this is possible in some contexts (here: expressing a realistic, future possibility), the use of subjunctive mood stays necessary and its lack cannot be compensated by using adverbs in most irreal (past or present) conditional clauses, which are formed using Konjunktiv II:

> Example: *Wenn es gestern geregnet hätte, hätte er nicht komen können.*
> *If it would have rained yesterday, he would not have come.*

Another example shows the way the German Konjunktiv II is derived from the preterite form. For weak verbs, the forms of Konjunktiv II are identical to the preterite forms of indicative mood (*regnen*, *es regnete*, *es regnete*, *(to) rain*, *it rained*, *it rained / would rain*), while strong verbs have distinctive Konjunktiv II forms involving mutated vowels (Umlaute): *kommen*, *ich kam*, *ich käme*, *(to) come*, *I came*, *I came / would come*.

> Example: ?*Wenn es heute regnete, käme ich heute nicht.*
> *Wenn es heute regnen würde, würde ich nicht kommen.*
> *If it would rain/be rainy today, I would not come.*

In most cases, some frequent verbs like *sein ((to) be)* excluded, the forms of Konjunktiv II are not used (any more) even by native speakers but replaced by *würde (would)* + infinitive as shown in the example above. Modern textbooks, therefore, skip most forms of Konjunktiv II, while in former times learners of German language were encouraged to learn all the irregular forms. It is evident that skipping them is an appropriate rule for Leichte Sprache. The use of *würde* is necessary then, which actually is contrary to the rule. The rule should, thus, be rephrased allowing the use of the auxiliary verbs:

> 10a) Rule: Avoid the use of subjunctive mood and replace it by adverbs where possible and replace the forms of Konjunktiv II by the *würde* + infinitive construction.

The rule only refers to Konjunktiv II – so far naming it Konjunktiv and not mentioning the use of Konjunktiv I. Konjunktiv I is mainly used for marking indirect speech, but there is actually no need in German language to do so, thus, authors

should be recommended to use other means indicating indirect speech. As subordinate clauses should also be avoided, the easiest solution for indirect speech would be to replace it by direct speech:

> Example: *Er sagte: Ich werde kommen* instead of *Er sagte, er werde kommen.*
> *He said: I will come* instead of *He said he would come*.

> 11) Rule: Use positive speech, avoid negations (BMAS 2014:32).
> Example: *Peter ist gesund* ('Peter is well') instead of *Peter ist nicht krank* ('Peter is not sick')*.*

The given example may be too simple to show the consequences of too many or double negations in a sentence. It is, however, obvious that double or cumulative negations can be confusing. Authors have to keep in mind that every negation has a scope which can be ambiguous and that they have to reduce the risk of using misleading wording.

> 12) Rule: Avoid metaphors (BMAS 2014:33).
> Example: *Schlechte Eltern* ('bad parents') instead of *Rabeneltern* ('bad parents').

The example is difficult to translate to other languages than German, which already shows the problem with metaphoric language. *Rabeneltern* are bad or uncaring parents, while the literal meaning is *raven's parents*. Metaphoric language should be avoided if the literal meaning may not be known and if it is possible to express the literal meaning easily. But metaphoric language is a highly complex field and some metaphors, which Lakoff/Johnson call cognitive metaphors, are not only parts of figurative speech or stylistic devices, but a necessary mean to illustrate complex or abstract ideas. To avoid them could be in conflict with rule 2.

To summarize, some of the rules of Leichte Sprache are the same as for Einfache Sprache (rules 12, 8, 3), some are contradicting. Especially Leichte Sprache allows changing orthography (rule 5a), others are not part of the Einfache Sprache rules set at all. For example the rules of Leichte Sprache also cover the notation of numbers, which is not included in Einfache Sprache (cf. BMAS 2014:34–43). For texts in Leichte Sprache authors should:
– use Arabic numbers instead of Roman numbers;
– avoid old year dates and replace them with e.g. 'long ago', 'more than 100 years ago';
– avoid large numbers and replace them with e.g. 'many', 'millions', 'thousands';
– avoid percentages and replace them with e.g. 'only few', 'almost all';

    – use numerics instead of numerals;
    – write dates including the month's name and omitting zero, e.g. '6. April 2018';
    – write telephone numbers with space characters and
    – avoid additional characters like §, $, %, &.

Some other rules deal with the design of whole texts: sentences should be short (cf. BMAS 2014:44) and only contain one thought. This is quite surprising, as the recommendations for Einfache Sprache have a limit of words per sentence. The set of rules for Leichte Sprache does not.

To divide sentences, which would normally contain subordinate clauses, authors are recommended to start new sentences instead, beginning with coordinate conjunctions (cf. BMAS 2014:46).

Authors should use an easy sentence structure (cf. BMAS 2014:45). It is, however, not mentioned under which circumstances a sentence structure can be considered easy. The given counterexample shows a short sentence with an adverb in the pre-verb position and the subject after the verb (given that declarative sentences in German normally are V2-sentences):

> Example: *Wir fahren zusammen in den Urlaub* instead of
> *Zusammen fahren wir in den Urlaub.*
> *We go on holiday together* instead of
> *Together we go on holiday.*

There is no evidence that sentences with subjects in pre-verb position are more common or easier, although they are often considered as the prototypical word order in declarative sentences. While the example is, therefore, misleading, the rule itself holds, as there are many other possibilities to make the word order complicated or even confusing. The pre-verb position should, for example, not be filled with large phrases or complex phrases, those can, if not avoidable at all, be placed after the verb.

Readers should be personally adressed (cf. BMAS 2014:47) using the German *Sie* pronoun (formal) instead of *Du* (informal) (cf. BMAS 2014:48). In order to minimize confusion, questions in texts should be avoided when possible (cf. BMAS 2014:49). Texts should not contain cross references. If necessary, difficult facts should be explained where they occur (cf. BMAS 2014:50).

Authors are allowed and recommended to alter texts, also on the content level, by adding explanations, hints or examples, changing the layout and the order and also by omitting unimportant parts (cf. BMAS 2014:51), which should be quite difficult to decide.

Exceeding the field of linguistic properties, the set of rules for Leichte Sprache also suggests a certain layout (cf. BMAS 2014:52–71) for texts, avoiding squiggly fonts, the change of too many fonts, italics, using larger font sizes,

double spacing and left-aligned lines. A new sentence should start in a new line, words should not be divided at the end of a line, sentences should not be divided at the end of a paragraph, paragraphs should not be divided at the end of a page. Texts are supposed to be easier to read with more paragraphs and additional headlines, especially short headlines replacing whole sentences.

Following BMAS (2014:72, also cf. Inclusion Europe 2009:8), there is an additional sixth single rule meaning 'Always ask a cognitively limited person to examine your text; if he or she understands, you did a good job.' The rule indicates that all the other rules are not an end in themselves, but serve as a purpose for which they can also be subject to change in a concrete situation and regarding different target groups or even individuals.

6. Are *Leichte Sprache* and *Einfache Sprache* appropriate for foreign language teaching?

BMAS (2014), Oomen-Welke (2015:24) and Inclusion Europe (2009:6) claim that Leichte Sprache is made not only for people with cognitive limitations, but also 'people, who don't understand German so well.' This does not only refer to illiterates, but also to learners of German language. Both Leichte Sprache and Einfache Sprache are considered as a helping instrument for everybody who may find it useful – regardless of why. Leichte Sprache is actually used in language courses for immigrants in Germany and Austria (Oomen-Welke 2015:30).

Following the definitions of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR, Leichte Sprache and Einfache Sprache can both be situated at an A2 to B1 level of German language (Oomen-Welke 2015:25).

Although this is a good aim and although the access to texts and media written in plain German language is open to everybody, some researchers, such as Heine, conclude that Leichte Sprache is not appropriate for L2 learners at all (Heine 2017:412). She argues that Leichte Sprache is not only useless but counterproductive.

A closer look at the linguistic properties of both concepts allows one to examine, if they are effectively useful and not only meant to be useful, the rules for Einfache Sprache being too vague to actually judge on them. Focusing on the set of rules for Leichte Sprache, some of the regulations seem to be indeed counterproductive, some still seem to be effective. For example, Heine (2017:409) focuses on rule 3, which is counterproductive, as foreign language learners may benefit from foreign or international words in texts, which are difficult to understand for others, but may be even known for them from their L1 or another language they understand or their L1 is related to. For instance, learners with a Romanic L1 highly benefit from most of the foreign words in German language

as they have a common Latin-Romanic origin, the same holds for German language learners with L1 English. Heine also criticizes the set of rules for numbers (Heine 2017:410). Evidently language learners without any cognitive limitation do not have a problem at all with large numbers or the notation of numbers; for them it is even easier not having to read the complicated German numerals instead (such as *eintausendzweihundertvierunddreißig* for *1234*) and there is no need to disguise exact numbers by rounding them up or replace them by expressions like 'hundreds' or 'thousands'.

Heine's arguments againt the use of Leichte Sprache hold and I even added a few more in section 4 of this paper resulting from some unclear or unjustifiedly simplified wording. Despite this, I argue in favour of the use of Leichte Sprache in teaching German as a foreign language as some non-linguistic arguments have to be taken into account, e.g. availability of material, lack of alternatives and temporary status of necessity for learners.

Temporary status of necessity means that German language learners without a cognitive limitation are progressing and may only need Leichte Sprache at a certain level or a certain time during their learning process. So, it may serve as a vehicle on their way to understanding difficult language as well, just like altered texts they find in their textbooks. That is the main difference to the core target group which Leichte Sprache was developed for: in most cases cognitive limitations are permanent and affected people have to rely on having an effective instrument of participation, which Leichte Sprache can offer to them. If the limitations of Leichte Sprache cause trouble for language learners, it may just indicate that they have reached the next level where they do not need that much simplification any more.

Lack of alternatives means that there are no other competing concepts like, for example, 'German for foreigners on A1 level' and so on. Altered, not difficult texts are often only available in textbooks and teaching materials, but rarely outside of a teaching context or even on a recent, daily basis. This leads to the argument of availability, as texts in Leichte Sprache are available everywhere and immediately.

Due to the original aim of Leichte Sprache as a part of the German equality law for disabled people (Gesetz zur Gleichstellung von Menschen mit Behinderungen) or the accessible information technology enactment (Barrierefreie-Informationstechnik-Verordnung) respectively, which obligates government institutions to provide people with accessible information, a lot of information is actually provided in Leichte Sprache. This includes permanent information as well as news. For example, recent election voting cards have been written in Leichte Sprache to reach a higher participation among those who are in need of easy-to-understand information. The German public-service broadcast also offers weekly news online, not as programmes but as text only. The idea behind this news service is comparable to the plain language offerings of Voice of America,

on the one hand, strictly focused on the Leichte Sprache rules, on the other hand, limited regarding the range of information.

Nevertheless, weekly news written in Leichte Sprache are the most common tool for language teaching, as they convey recent information on relevant issues, which even monthly teaching materials cannot convey. Thus, they are a good example for an openly available and useful source written in Leichte Sprache which can be used both for language teaching or cultural studies teaching.

7. Conclusions

German plain language is an appropriate tool for teaching German as a foreign language. After defining the concepts of Einfache Sprache and Leichte Sprache in comparison to the respective counterparts in English language teaching and in comparison to each other, at least Leichte Sprache remains a useful instrument despite several problems with the definitions and rules discussed above. If authors keep those in mind, they can produce texts which are appropriate for their target groups and also partly for language learners up to a certain level (B1 in the CEFR). The plain language news provided by the German public-service broadcast may serve as one good example among others.

Further thoughts on how to apply appropriate rules of Leichte Sprache to foreign language teaching and further examples of material are to be presented and discussed in another upcoming paper and/or training.

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Leichte Sprache and *Einfache Sprache* – German plain language and teaching DaF (German as a foreign language)

This paper introduces and discusses two concepts of plain language in German and their usefulness in teaching German as a foreign language. While both concepts pursue the same aim of enabling readers to understand written texts more easily, they differ regarding their extent of rules and their target group: *Einfache Sprache* addresses a wider range of people, including language learners, and is less restricted than *Leichte Sprache*, which follows specific syntactical, lexicological and typological rules and has been developed explicitly for the purpose of inclusion of people with cognitive limitations. The article focuses on describing and comparing linguistic features of both concepts based on their respective rules and gives some examples of connecting them with foreign language teaching.

Keywords: foreign language learning, German language learning, German as a foreign language, plain language, literacy, reading, understandability.