Challenges of News in Easy Language

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Parallel Session: News and Easy Language

Friday, Feb. 23rd, 11:30 – 12:40
A Unique Project

- An experiment in its 3rd year
- Truly inclusive: Easy to read stories are produced by people with learning difficulties.
- Easy-to-read news on a daily basis
  - 5 days/week
  - Average 2 – 5 stories/ day
- Stories are provided on 3 platforms:
  - es.kurier.at
  - news.rechtleicht.at
  - facebook/Inklusive_Lehrredaktion
How we are organized

Funding by Fonds Soziales Wien

Jugend am Werk takes care of pedagogical issues such as career orientation and searching for apprenticeships/jobs accompanying participants directly to the place of work, training on the rules of easy-to-read...

The daily newspaper KURIER provides journalistic support, interface between participants and editorial staff, publication of easy-to-read stories,...

6 trainees
2 coaches for easy-to-read texts
2 journalists
The trainees get individual training in social skills, easy-to-read rules, basic journalistic skills, career orientation and others.
Some of our (journalistic) challenges

- What kind of news can we provide in a society with too much information?
- How easy can stories be without being trivial?
- Which journalistic skills are necessary (investigation, on-the-scene-reporting, writing, editing, …)
- What level of language shall/can we use, in order to meet the needs of our target groups
  - people with intellectual disabilities (learning difficulties)
  - people who have difficulties to read or write
  - people who do not speak German so well
  - young readers who are interested in news
- How to deal with the other departments and desks in the newspaper?
Our approach

- The team works as independently as possible
- Changing focus by changing desk-responsibility
- Trainees chose the stories they want to work on
- Focus on constructive news reporting
- Reporting on social or political issues: We focus on results
- Violence, terror or catastrophes as little as possible
- We do give priority to topics concerning people with disabilities
Our results

- More than 1100 Stories in the past year
- There is a visible interest in political developments:
  Reporting on elections last year raised number of readers significantly (+90%),
- Right now we have between 3000 to 4000 readers per month.
  (There was a significant slump in the number of readers in February/March 2017, which we still cannot explain. In the year before we had around 25,000 up to 45,000 readers per month.)
Conclusions

- Two master thesis to evaluate the project are on their way
- Intensive marketing is necessary to reach a larger audience
- Working in the journalistic environment helps trainees to improve their knowledge and to gain self confidence
- Journalistic tasks such as on-scene-reporting, research or editing are often too difficult
- Inclusion into the editorial team of the newspaper is also difficult, but communication beyond the different desks is a general problem