Images. An equally critical aspect of development

Cathy Basterfield

Access Easy English, Australia

cathy@accesseasyenglish.com.au

+61 0466 579 855

At the 2019 KLAARA conference there were no papers about images. At the 2021 conference there were just 2 papers. This is not good enough.

Apparently, we all agree images are a critical aspect of our work in developing content for people with low literacy. In the work we do in Australia at Access Easy English, we are very aware that when content is provided to consumers with low literacy and there are no images, they will not engage. When we do have images, we also know when consumers can not relate to an image across a range of different parameters, they will still not engage with the material. So, yes, images are critical.

What skills and knowledge do you bring to this aspect of your work? Have you considered

- How many lines of text/how much text you have per image
- How many image sets do you access in your development
- How to use similar images but change meaning for different parts of your content
- How much visual clutter there is per page
- Position and size of images
- How the images affect overall readability, but also the understanding and functional use of different statements in the content.

Or maybe there is no image that you can identify easily for the text. So, is it the problem of the images and range of images available or is it the text is too complex?

The effective use of images are shown to add as much value as the written language. When not used well they can render the work un accessible to the person with low literacy.

When images are not clearly considered they can

- reduce the readers emotional response to the content
- change what the reader understands
- change their response to the text
- change actions they undertake from reading the text.

There is much research in this area, and in different fields of endeavour. This presentation will provide an overview of some of the research from the field of disability, health research and in particular Speech Pathology. It will discuss how this research applies to the development of effective accessible written information.

An overview of some image sets will be shared and illustrate how they are used to enhance communication for different audiences. We will also discuss how images can enhance the development using a universal design approach to its creation.

This paper will address this critical element of developing effective accessible information for people with low literacy, which is as equally important as other parts of our content creation such as text development, format and engaging with consumers.