Spotlight Session & Special Olympics #03

[00:00:00] What's your story? What does accessibility mean to you?

**Novie:** Hello, and welcome to another episode of the special edition of Inclusion Revolution Radio collaboration with accessiBe Spotlight Session. The Berlin LOC, Inclusion Revolution Radio and the accessiBe will be highlighting the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin 2023. Guests will include athletes, coaches, volunteers, ambassadors, and technical delegates involved in the games. We believe it's important to showcase all of the amazing work that goes into World Games, and how it serves as a [00:01:00] catalyst for building a more inclusive world.

**Josh:** Thanks, Novie. My name is Josh Basile. I am also your co-host for today's show. I'm a C 4 - 5 quadriplegic, paralyzed below my shoulders, and a power wheelchair user. I'm a community relations manager at accessiBe and a passionate disability rights advocate and trial attorney focused on breaking down barriers to access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

**Novie:** I'm Novie Craven. I'm your other co-host for today's, for today's show. I'm a proud Special Olympics athlete and employee of Special Olympics International. I play bocce, basketball, and about any other sport you can think of. I love First Olympics and the work our organization does to to promote friendship, respect, of course, inclusive.

**Josh:** Today we will talk with Sarah [00:02:00] Jane Borchert, Manager, Translation for Easy Language with the Special Olympics World Games. Because the World Games bring so many people together, cultures and languages, translation is incredibly important for all participants to access every part of the games. We can't wait to learn more about the work that goes into translation and how the World Games will be the most inclusive event on earth. Thank you so much for joining us today, Sarah, and welcome to the Inclusion Revolution podcast.

**Sarah:** Thank you very much for having me. It's such an honor and such a pleasure to be on your podcast.

**Josh:** So, I think Novie, I think you're up with the first question.

**Novie:** Alright. Can you tell me, can you tell us, can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you first [00:03:00] got involved with the Special Olympics?

**Sarah:** Um, yes. I have to admit that up until two years ago, I didn't know anything about Special Olympics. At that time, I was working at the Small Translation Agency for Easy Language and one day while I was traveling home from work, I found the job, job posting of the LOC on the internet, and I did some research and I was immediately amazed by the work of Special Olympics, and I knew I want to be part of that. Of course the job offer expired on the same day I found it. So my plan was to put my son to sleep and then send off the application in time. But, but as it sometimes with young children, he didn't want to sleep that day. But in the end, I managed to send my application in time and now I'm here. So my background is I'm a translator for easy language, but I'm also a translator for Italian, as well.

**Novie:** Awesome.

**Josh:** Can you tell us, what is Easy Language Translation and what drew you to the subject? And give us an overview of how it works.

**Sarah:** Yeah. Well, Easy [00:04:00] Language is a scientifically based simplified language variant of a certain standard language. And this sentence of course, was not an easy language. So in easy language we have different rules. For example, we have short sentences that as we have approximately eight to 10 words per sentence and easy language we use easy words. And this rule is not an easy one. I often ask myself, is that an easy word? Is that not an easy word? And then I've got different possibilities. For example, I can look it up at the dictionary to see if I find an indication on the word itself. And I can also ask my reviewers, for example. In easy language we use pictograms and icons, if possible, because, because they have to understand the text and we avoid foreign words. Sometimes this is not possible, then we explain the words, we explain the pronunciation and we explain the meaning. But this depends on the context. For example, I do not explain Special Olympics related terms to our athletes, but, I explain them to, [00:05:00] to the audience that approaches Special Olympics for the very first time. And we also avoid metaphors and idioms because the ambiguity sometimes is difficult to understand. And we have some rules that regard the layout of the text. For example, we have a big font size and we have a big line spacing that is the distance between the lines because we think that the text that is easy to read is also easy to understand. And all these rules, well, I was mentioning only a few, but in fact we have some more rules, make of a text, a text that is easy to understand. And this text then is reviewed by the people from the target group. And if they can understand every word of the text, then the text is finished, then we can use it. If they do not understand every word, if there are still difficult words or sentence. Then we try to change these words. I say try because, I often get the feedback that names are difficult, but of course we cannot change names. So maybe we, explain the meaning of a name or we write the, the [00:06:00] pronunciation or pronounce the name. But of course, we cannot change names. And yeah, these are the basic rules of easy language. Actually, I first got into contact with easy language in 2009 while I was living in Italy because I was working at the sports ground for people with disability and without disability. And I was responsible for a small journal written in Italian language and together with my employer, we developed some sort of easy Italian without knowing that the concept of easy language already. And yeah, that was my first contact with easy language. Back in Germany, then I completed the course on easy language and yeah, started working at a small translation agency.

**Josh:** Thank you for sharing that, Sarah.

**Novie:** I like that. I like that. I like how you broke that down because you know, definitely a lot of people were like, what is easy, easy language? You know, when you take easy, easy language, people are like, okay, it's easy language. English is a easy language, but you know, different [00:07:00] types of language that people don't understand is a good way to, for people to understand it when you break it down and explain what it is. So that, I liked how you explained that.

**Sarah:** Thank you very much. You know, I often get the feedback from my clients that they did some changes on the text on their own because they say, yeah, in the end it's German, it's just an easy version of German. And I'm like, no, we have certain rules and there are reasons why we have these rules. And yeah. But, like you said, easy, easy language is so important because it helps people to participate, to take their own decisions and yeah, so important.

**Novie:** Why is easy language so important? How will it be used during the World Games?

**Sarah:** Well, easy language is so important because everybody's able to understand easy language, in this way, easy language helps people to participate, to take own decisions. Easy language also gives access to information because, you know, if I have some rights, but I'm not [00:08:00] informed about my rights, how can I fight? So, easy languages for me is the basis of inclusion and accessibility, for example. And, during the World Games we will have easy language, nearly all fields. So we will have the signage in easy language, for example, we will have information on allergens and on the bins in easy language. We will have an athlete's handbook, important information, and we are going to have this handbook in all seven Special Olympics languages, but in some sort of easy language variant. And we are going to have the app in Easy German and easy English. We are going to have parts of the website in easy language, so we will have easy language in various fields.

**Josh:** Thank you, Sarah. And one of the most amazing things about the World Games is the, is the continued impact it has on the country for years after the event concludes. How do you make easy language a sustainable, lasting part of German culture once the World Games are [00:09:00] over.

**Sarah:** Well, you have to know that with reference to easy language in Germany already, a few things are going on. But for me, this is not enough because I want every museum, every sports club, every office, every authority to provide information, easy language, because it is so important. And with the World Games, we also have the possibility to raise awareness for easy language because like I said before, we will have easy language in all kinds of, you know, sectors and fields. So, we have the possibility to raise a awareness for easy language also in those countries where the concept of easy language does not exist or is not well known. So for me, this is a great part of sustainability.

**Josh:** Thank you for that.

**Novie:** If someone would like to pursue Easy Language as a career, what step would you recommend them take?

**Sarah:** Well, for me this depends on a little bit on the country you're living in. Because like I said, in in Germany already, a few things are going on. We have got a lot of courses, we have got a lot of [00:10:00] workshops. That's a great offer for easy language. So this for me would always be the first step. So to, you know, take part in the workshop to learn the basics, but the most important thing is to have the contact with the target group because you're not able to decide whether a word or a term or a sentence is easy if you do not have the contact with the target group you're writing or you're translating for. So for me, this is the most important thing. So try to find some, try to get into contact with the target group and that's, that's the most important thing.

**Josh:** That's awesome. And how can companies in the business world easily adopt easy language to make the websites, their resources and products more accessible? Have you seen any improvements over time in language accessibility?

**Sarah:** Well, like, like we said before, easy language is good because everybody's able to understand easy language. And I notice in Germany that a lot of companies [00:11:00] have recognized or are recognizing this advantage of easy language because I get a lot of requests from companies that want to translate their website or a flyer into easy language. And I think this is a good development. And, I notice also an improvement that has come, you know, over time. So, I would suggest to talk with a translation agency, for example, that is responsible, that has lot of experience in the field of easy language because we have some particular particularities in easy language. Like we said before, we have a big font size, for example. We have also something that needs to be taken into consideration when it comes to websites. So I would suggest, you know, the companies to to talk with the translator or translation office. But like I said before, there are many advantages because. I'm sure you will get fewer complaints, for example, because the language is much more clearer and we will have, we have so many examples and explanations in easy language and that's [00:12:00] also one of the feedbacks I get from my clients that are companies.

**Josh:** Thank you, Sarah.

**Novie:** What are you looking forward to the most about the World Games?

**Sarah:** I think the atmosphere and of course the joy of the athlete. But also I'm also looking forward to see whether everything that we are planning right now, you know, whether we are able to, to realize that and whether everything works like we are planning it to work. And I'm also, you know, looking forward to the exchange to discuss with people from all over the world the concept of easy language because we will have, you know, the basis for discussion because the science will be an easy language. So easy language is everywhere. And but also to talk with people from all over the world about the concept of inclusion. I'm so curious to hear, you know, your opinions from people from all over the world.

**Novie:** In a few words, could you answer the question? What does [00:13:00] accessibility inclusion mean to you?

**Sarah:** Well, for me, this accessibility inclusion mean that we all have equal rights, that everybody has the access to information, to sports offers to work and so on. So, like I said before, easy language for me is, is a starting point because it, it enables people to understand what is going on and, yeah, for me it's it means that we all have the same rights.

**Novie:** Thank you Sarah for joining today's episode of Inclusion Radio Revolution Radio podcast and Spotlight Session collaboration. I think what we learned today is that words , even in the most simple form, matter so much. It was fantastic learning more about easy language, how it can be used to bring people together from around the world.

**Josh:** You can learn more about [00:14:00] accessiBe, the Inclusion Revolution Radio, and Special Olympics by subscribing on YouTube and following us on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Thank you all and we are looking forward to our next episode. Everyone have a great day and thank you being for being with us to the end of the show today!