

Linguistic Accessibility in Public Safety Communication: A Comparison of the Finnish and English Versions of the SPEK Website

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This thesis examines how linguistic accessibility is implemented on multilingual websites, focusing on the Safety section of the Finnish National Rescue Association (SPEK) website. The central research question is whether the English version provides functionally equivalent access to safety information as the Finnish version, and how translation and localization choices might affect the user experience. The data consists of the Finnish and English versions of the Safety section, which are analyzed using a qualitative comparison based on three categories: Completeness and Consistency, Clarity and Comprehensibility, and Cultural and Informational Accessibility.

The results show that the English version communicates the key safety instructions, but reduces supporting explanations, contextual information, and some structural elements. Functional equivalence is achieved at a general level, although not in all dimensions of linguistic accessibility. These results support the view that linguistic accessibility is a multidimensional concept that encompasses completeness, clarity, and cultural adaptation. The analysis also highlights the role of translation and localization practices and shows that English-language content primarily functions as a selectively adapted and condensed version of the Finnish source, reflecting institutional priorities and resource allocation rather than providing full and equal access to the content.

This thesis provides practical insights into multilingual online communication in the public sector and highlights the need to combine translation practices with cultural adaptation to ensure user-centered linguistic accessibility. It contributes to translation research and public safety communication by demonstrating how language, localization, and institutional choices shape access to essential information.

Keywords: linguistic accessibility, multilingual websites, safety communication, public safety, localization, translation

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1 Introduction

Linguistic accessibility has become an increasingly important concept in today's digital environment, where online communication and services are part of everyday life. The world is becoming increasingly multicultural, and the demand for multilingual content and availability is constantly growing. This raises questions about what linguistic accessibility is, who it concerns, and whose needs it should prioritize. Many definitions reduce it to a simple requirement that content must be available in multiple languages, but the concept is much broader and multidimensional. It includes the removal of language barriers that prevent equal access to information, participation, and inclusion. In this sense, linguistic accessibility is closely related to broader social and ethical values, such as equality, diversity, and inclusion (Hirvonen and Kinnunen 2020, 470–471).

Linguistic accessibility can be present in public communication in many different ways. One basic and common approach is to enable access to relevant information for people from different linguistic backgrounds by providing information in multiple languages on websites. Another topic that has emerged in language accessibility is intralingual adaptation, such as the use of easy-to-read or plain language. Easy-to-read language is intended for readers who may have difficulties understanding standard language, including people with cognitive disabilities, learning difficulties, or limited language proficiency. It typically includes simplified vocabulary, shorter sentence structures, and clearer text organization (Selkokeskus 2025). Plain language refers to communication that is written in a clear, appropriate, and understandable way so that readers can easily find, understand, and use the information provided (Kotimaisten kielten keskus n.d.). From a translation studies perspective, these practices can also be understood through Jakobson's (1959, 233–234) distinction between interlingual translation, which occurs between languages, and intralingual translation, which involves reformulating information within the same language. Providing multilingual content corresponds to interlingual translation, while plain language and easy-to-read language can be understood as forms of intralingual translation. Although linguistic accessibility can involve a variety of topics and perspectives, this thesis focuses specifically on multilingual accessibility in the context of a website and aims to analyze how safety-related information is presented in terms of linguistic accessibility in the English version of the SPEK website compared to the Finnish version.

As mentioned previously, accessibility is often associated with services and adaptations for people with disabilities, such as visual or hearing impairments, but linguistic accessibility does form an essential part of it (Koponen et al. 2023, 77–78). If thought about more broadly, the concept of accessibility concerns the linguistic aspects of access and how language affects our ability to participate in society and its related things. This idea also links linguistic accessibility with translation, as an aim to bridge linguistic and cultural divides (Rink 2024, 33–34). Translation and localization play an increasingly important role within the globalized digital world discussion, where technology and internationalization have transformed how multilingual communication takes place online (Nauert 2007, 1).

Localization can be understood as the adaptation of a product or website to a specific locale, which refers to a group of users sharing a common language, writing system, and cultural background (Esselink 2001 in Nauert 2007, 1–2). This definition continues to be widely used in more recent research, often alongside other, closely related interpretations of that time. For instance, localization is also commonly described as the process of making a product both linguistically and culturally appropriate for a specific target context (LISA 2003 in Jiménez-Crespo 2020, 376). At the same time, the concept of locale has gradually expanded beyond language and region to include a broader range of factors, such as sociocultural, technical, legal, and ideological dimensions (Dunne 2014 in Jiménez-Crespo 2020, 376). In this sense, website localization can be seen as a process that combines linguistic, cultural, and technical adaptation, and therefore requires expertise across these different domains. The overall aim is to produce content that effectively serves the target audience, meaning that it fulfils both communicative and strategic purposes within a specific context of use. In practice, this often requires active collaboration between the client, the translator, and other stakeholders involved in the process. Such collaboration may take place, for example, through translation guidelines that define the purpose of the localized website, its target audience, and its intended functionality (Nord 1997 in Sandrini 2005, 134).

More recent article further emphasizes that localization cannot be understood merely as linguistic transfer, but rather as a process that also involves cultural, physical, and technical dimensions. This highlights its nature as a complex and multi-layered process, rather than a straightforward form of translation (Jiménez-Crespo 2020, 376). From this perspective, localization should be guided by the communicative purpose of each language version, whether the aim is to provide safety instructions, convey information, or raise awareness of specific issues. Despite the increasing importance of multilingual online communication, the combined

perspective of website translation and linguistic accessibility remains relatively underexplored within translation studies.

This thesis focuses on linguistic accessibility in multilingual websites by comparing Finnish and English versions of a selected public website. The analysis combines multiple topics and perspectives in linguistic accessibility and translation studies. Such topics include, for example, societal and ethical dimensions of linguistic accessibility, as well as practical aspects of translation, localization and multilingual communication. By combining these perspectives, this thesis aims to investigate how language and translation choices could affect online users' access to public safety information and the possible effects of these choices on users of multilingual websites within online services.

I aim to provide new information and insight on the following question: How is linguistic accessibility implemented in the English version of the Safety section, and do both versions (Finnish and English) provide equal access to essential safety information? To answer this question, I will examine the following aspects, which act as the sub-questions for this thesis:

1. To what extent do the Finnish and English versions offer the same content in terms of completeness and informational value?
2. How clear, comprehensible, and user-oriented is the English version, especially for international users who rely on it as their only accessible option?
3. What linguistic and cultural choices influence the accessibility and usability of the English version compared to the Finnish version?

The material chosen for this thesis is the website of The Finnish National Rescue Association (SPEK), or in Finnish Suomen Pelastusalan Keskusjärjestö. Due to the limitations of this thesis (time and length), the analysis will be focused on the “Safety”, or in Finnish, the “Turvallisuus” section of the website. The material will be further explored in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

In this thesis, I intend to conduct a qualitative analysis to examine how linguistic accessibility is implemented in the English version of the Safety section on the SPEK website compared to the Finnish one. The focus is on how effectively the English version informs its

readers about safety-related issues and whether both language versions provide equal access to essential information.

While the Finnish version primarily targets domestic audiences, the English version functions as an important channel for international users such as foreign students, residents and tourists who may lack the required language skills to understand and use the Finnish or Swedish versions. Therefore, linguistic accessibility in this context involves more than literal translation. It is about ensuring that all users, regardless of language or cultural background, receive information that is accurate, clear, and usable. This thesis investigates whether the English version provides the same level of accurate, understandable, and usable information compared to the Finnish version.

The analysis combines the perspectives of translation studies and accessibility research in comparing the two language versions. Therefore, three categories were developed for this thesis to guide the comparison and analysis of the Finnish and English versions: Completeness and Consistency, Clarity and Comprehensibility and Cultural and Informational Accessibility. The background and basis for these three categories will be discussed in detail in the Theory chapter of this thesis. How the categories will be applied in the analysis as a method will be explained briefly in the Methods chapter. The background to the formation of these categories will be explored, because, to my knowledge, such a list has not been used in previous research as it is. By examining these aspects, the thesis aims to reveal possible differences between the Finnish and English versions and to discuss how translation and localization choices affect the linguistic and informational accessibility of public safety communication online.

Based on my previous personal observations that motivated me to write this thesis, I assume that the Finnish version of the SPEK Safety section provides more complete and user-oriented information than the English version. I expect the English content to provide a more limited or simplified version of the same information, as it is presumably a secondary version compared to the Finnish and Swedish versions. As a result, the English version may not fully meet the needs of international users who rely on it as their only source of safety information. I also expect to find differences in completeness, clarity and cultural accessibility between the two language versions.

The structure of this thesis follows a logical progression from theory to analysis. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical background, introducing the concept of linguistic

accessibility and its connections to inclusion, policies, equality, and justice, as well as key theories on translation, localization, and multilingual websites. Chapter 3 describes the research material, and Chapter 4 goes on to explain the methods of this thesis. Chapter 5 presents the analysis and findings, comparing the Finnish and English versions of the selected website. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the main results, discusses their contributions to linguistic accessibility in digital services, and suggests directions for future research.

Lastly, it is also relevant to briefly address the use of AI-based tools in this thesis. These tools were primarily utilized in the early stages of the process, where they supported the generation of ideas and the exploration of possible thematic directions. This included preliminary suggestions for the structure and potential headings, which were later revised and further developed before being incorporated into the thesis. In addition to this, AI-based tools were used to a limited extent to support linguistic expression, particularly in exploring alternative phrasing and increasing variation in wording by comparing different options. However, their role remained purely supportive throughout the entire writing process. All content generated with the help of AI was critically evaluated, edited, and rewritten where necessary, and no material has been included in its original or directly generated form. The final responsibility for both the text and its academic content rests entirely with me as the author. The AI tools were used in a way that complies with academic integrity guidelines.

2 Theory

Linguistic accessibility, specifically in digital environments, involves many intersecting factors. These include, for example, language policy, sociolinguistics, translation practices, and web-related technologies. Understanding how these interact is essential for analyzing multilingual public websites such as the SPEK Safety pages. This chapter presents a theoretical background that conceptualizes linguistic accessibility as both a matter of social and linguistic rights and as a result of translation and localization choices. Section 2.1 discusses the social, political, and communicative dimensions of linguistic accessibility. Drawing on language policy, translation policy, linguistic rights, media accessibility, and sociolinguistic perspectives on translation. Section 2.2 focuses on multilingual online communication and examines how the technological nature of websites, the global digital divide, and localization and online translation principles affect the accessibility of language versions. Section 2.3 and the subsections within it further expand on these perspectives by providing some background and basis for the categories used in this thesis. Together, these sections provide essential information and background needed to understand the scope of linguistic accessibility. All this then allows efficient analysis of the English version of the SPEK website.

2.1 Linguistic Accessibility, Language Policy and Translation Policy

Language is never a neutral means of communication. It always reflects underlying social, political and cultural structures. As Ricento (2006, 10–19) explains, language policy includes the beliefs, practices and ideologies that determine which languages are used, who uses them and in what contexts. These decisions affect who has access to information and participation in society. In a way, linguistic accessibility can be understood as a practical part of language policy. Societal choices lead to which language groups are included or excluded from communication.

What can be understood from Ricento's discussion on language policy is that concerns related to linguistic accessibility in an online context cover not just technical or translational concerns but also tie together with social and ethical issues. For example, deciding on which languages to include in a website and how to present them tightly involves language policy-related decisions. These choices have direct effects on online users' ability to obtain information and participate equally. As Ricento (2006, 11) argues, managing linguistic diversity is inseparable from broader questions related to inclusion, citizenship, and rights.

Within the broader idea of language policy, which concerns societal decisions about language use and communication accessibility, the concept of translation policy further clarifies the relationship between linguistic accessibility and institutional decision-making. Translation policy refers not only to official state regulations, but also to the practices, norms and choices that guide translation activities in various institutional and organizational contexts (Meylaerts 2011, 163). As Meylaerts (2011, 165–166) also notes, translation policies determine whether to grant access or to exclude from public life by focusing on decisions about when, how and to whom translations are provided. This further proves how translation and language policy are greatly influenced by each other because language use in institutional settings involves translation decisions. Therefore, translation policies play a key role in shaping people's ability to participate in society because those policies directly affect access to information, services and communication (Meylaerts 2011, 165–166).

Translation policy not only deals with linguistic accessibility related to textual equivalence or translation quality but also goes beyond those. As Meylaerts (2011, 164, 166) emphasizes, even choosing not to translate is a kind of policy, as this choice then defines the linguistic boundaries and affects the ability to participate. The selection of languages in digital communication, as well as the extent and nature of translated content, can be viewed as the effects of translation policy. These choices determine not only what information is made available across languages but also how linguistic equality is supported in practice.

These discussions can be seen to align with the concept of linguistic rights discussed by Hirvonen and Kinnunen (2020, 470), who frame access to information in one's own language as a prerequisite for equal participation. In a similar thought, Piller (2016, 161–163) conceptualizes linguistic justice as a collective social responsibility, where equal access to information across languages forms a central basis for inclusion in multicultural societies. When these perspectives are considered alongside Thomas Ricento's view of language policy, linguistic accessibility can be understood both as a matter of institutional practice and as a broader social right. From this perspective, decisions regarding the selection of languages in online communication, as well as the clarity and comprehensibility of their content, are not neutral. Instead, they reflect how linguistic equality is implemented in practice. In this sense, ensuring accessible and culturally appropriate translations can be interpreted as a way of promoting linguistic justice in digital communication.

Media accessibility provides additional support for understanding linguistic accessibility. While Remael (2012, 95–97) notes that media accessibility is broadly related to various types of barriers, such as sensory or cognitive, in this thesis, however, the focus is specifically on linguistic barriers. The aim of this thesis is to see whether the language used in public safety is clear, precise and easily understood and processed by different audiences in stressful and emergency situations. By examining the SPEK website through these themes, it can be assessed whether its English-language safety materials succeed in minimizing linguistic barriers and providing essential information in an accessible manner.

Cultural accessibility can also be linked to linguistic accessibility. This can be the case especially in the field of public safety communication. Some previous research argues that access to understandable safety and health information is extremely important in promoting equality in society and health. This is especially important for migrants and otherwise linguistically diverse populations who rely on language versions that are not their mother tongue or other language that they are proficient in (He, Ibrahim, and Kang 2025, 2–3).

Finally, sociolinguistic perspectives on translation help to situate linguistic accessibility within its broader real-world context. As noted by Ramos Pinto (2012, 156–158), language effectiveness is shaped by the communicative situation, the social norms of the target audience, and the purpose of the text. From this perspective, it becomes possible to evaluate not only linguistic accuracy but also the appropriateness of register, terminology, and tone. In this sense, a sociolinguistic approach provides a way to consider how effectively different language versions fulfil their communicative purpose, and whether they support users' understanding and trust in public safety information in an equally effective manner.

2.2 Website Translation, Localization and Digital Inequality

Website translation can be understood as more than just a linguistic task, as it is closely linked to the technological and communicative environment of the web, where translation functions and strategies evolve alongside digital tools and infrastructures (Folaron 2010, 448–449). Furthermore, translation is closely linked to localization and the technical requirements of producing multilingual web content, for example, character encoding and content management systems that enable the presentation and maintenance of different languages on the internet (Folaron 2010, 448).

As said, localization is tightly linked to website translation. Localization can be understood as a functional, user-centered translation process with a particular emphasis on the communicative and cultural contexts of digital environments. Schäler (2010, 209–214) explains that localization involves adapting not only linguistic elements but also cultural and contextual features to ensure that the content is meaningful and usable for the target audience. In the case of the SPEK website, successful localization ensures that safety instructions, warnings, and examples are culturally adapted and are clearly and appropriately communicated to international readers. If, however, localization practices are not applied correctly, it can lead to misunderstandings or loss of clarity in critical situations where users depend on the website for important safety information.

In public and institutional communication, website translation is also closely linked to broader issues of digital accessibility and linguistic justice. A multilingual website is not just a collection of translated texts. It can be understood as a space for communication, together with technological design, institutional goals and sociolinguistic power relations. As public services increasingly use digital platforms to share essential information, the availability, quality and usability of different language versions become important factors for equitable access to information for users. This is particularly important in public safety communication, where clarity, cultural aspects and quick access directly affect people's ability to make informed decisions. Therefore, the analysis of SPEK's English website requires an approach that draws on several areas related to the topic, such as translation studies, digital communication research and theories of digital inequality.

A major challenge for linguistic accessibility in the digital age is the persistence of the digital divide. This concept refers to the unequal distribution of access to online resources and technologies across linguistic, cultural, and geographic boundaries (Folaron 2025, 69). While over sixty percent of the world's population now uses the internet, English still dominates, accounting for nearly two-thirds of all web content (Folaron 2025, 69). Many widely spoken languages that remain largely offline remain hardly visible online, and smaller linguistic communities often rely on online translation tools to access essential information (Folaron 2025, 69–70). This imbalance reflects broader structural inequalities in digital communication, where English serves as the primary lingua franca of the web.

Studies on multilingual websites show that users are more likely to continue searching and intaking information when it is easy to understand and access. For example, the

Theory of Information Foraging (IFT), which was proposed by Kralisch and Koeppen, explains this idea by suggesting that users follow links only when the perceived benefit outweighs the inconvenience. For language minorities, reading in a language other than their native language increases this inconvenience, which can limit how deeply they interact with a website (2005, 4–5). This illustrates why providing clear and complete language versions is essential for linguistic accessibility.

The demand for multilingual websites has increased due to the widespread use of the World Wide Web as a channel for all kinds of communication, and, as in this case, public safety communication. Web content is usually quite multimodal, combining linguistic elements with images, layout, and other visual or interactive features. Together, these shape the overall meaning, intention and user experience of a website. Because online communication often reaches diverse international audiences, translation in this context needs to include sensitivity to cultural and contextual aspects. The goal shifts from achieving equivalence based on the source text to identifying the needs of the target audience, which may require significant deviations from the source text (Rike 2013, 71–73). Rike (2013, 73) also points out that localization and transcreation are often related to such issues. She also discusses that while localization generally refers to adaptation to a specific locale, transcreation is defined as the creative re-creation of a message to ensure it has maximum impact on the target market. This is often applied specifically to corporate websites and marketing materials.

Participation in digital environments depends not only on access to the internet, but also on individuals' ability to use websites and related technologies effectively. In this sense, the ability to navigate and understand online content becomes equally important. At the same time, limited availability of digital content, non-standardized writing systems, and insufficient educational and institutional support in many minority languages can further restrict participation (Folaron 2025, 69–74). These challenges are often intensified by broader social and economic inequalities, such as poverty, discrimination, and low language esteem. Addressing such issues, therefore, requires active language policies alongside educational initiatives that promote multilingualism and digital inclusion. Measures such as integrating minority languages into mainstream translation technologies illustrate how policy and technology can work together to strengthen both digital and linguistic accessibility (Folaron 2025, 69–70, 73).

Research that was recently released, which is somewhat similar to this thesis, has demonstrated that multilingual accessibility on websites is closely related to institutional

translation policies. Kinnunen, Kuusi and Määttä (2025) examined the COVID-19 information websites of Helsinki, Espoo, and Vantaa to see how effectively multilingual content was made accessible during a major crisis. They found that multilingual translation was considered important, with translations being made into up to twenty non-national languages. However, the underlying translation practices were often implicit and fragmented rather than strategic due to the nature of the situation. The study highlights that multilingualism on websites can be either a success or a failure in terms of local translation practices. What could be deemed as a success in the study is broad language coverage, political commitment and prioritization. Information was provided in up to twenty non-national languages, which then covered 60-70% of the foreign-language-speaking population in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The availability of these websites signaled that the municipalities acknowledged the importance of different language groups and were willing to ensure equal access to information and the cities clearly treated multilingual information as a priority, viewing translation as a crucial component of crisis communication. Then failures that emerged in the study would be, for example, poor findability, timeliness issues, immature translation policies, and temporary and confusing design. To briefly explain these failures, information was often buried deep within the website hierarchy. Locating it typically required some knowledge of Finnish, Swedish, or English. There were also delays in publishing translations, as well as website solutions that were often confusing and created in a hurry, with different departments managing different pages, leading to inconsistent and outdated information. Lastly, the study describes the cities' policies as "immature" because they were ad hoc and reactionary rather than standardized or well-defined. Crisis plans often lacked specific instructions on how to reach multilingual residents in practice. In addition, publication delays and inconsistent navigation showed how the lack of clear translation practices can lead to unequal access to important public information (Kinnunen, Kuusi and Määttä 2025, 220–241).

These findings reinforce the broader idea that online linguistic accessibility is not just a technical or translation issue, but is also related to institutional inclusion, translation policy and linguistic justice. Municipal websites can therefore be used as a testing ground for language policy implementation and provide useful practical information on how equal linguistic accessibility is achieved in public organizations (Kinnunen, Kuusi and Määttä 2025, 220–222, 239–241).

Within this broader context, multilingual website management presents additional challenges related to translation and localization. Providing language versions of appropriate

quality often depends on institutional priorities, economic decisions and the use of translation resources. These aspects can lead to imbalances where certain sections are left untranslated or simplified, which can create uneven user experiences. For example, English-language content usually benefits from translation memories and AI-assisted tools, while smaller languages may lack such infrastructure, resulting in inconsistent or incomplete content (Folaron 2025, 71).

When AI and other translation technologies are mentioned, their role in translation should be acknowledged and discussed in more detail in the context of linguistic accessibility. While machine translation and AI-based systems enable faster production of multilingual content, their performance varies across languages and text types (Folaron 2025, 72–73). Smaller languages with limited digital resources often require significant human post-editing, which limits the scope and quality of available content. These technological limitations, when considered alongside institutional priorities and economic factors, contribute to the uneven distribution of linguistic accessibility in online content. In this sense, achieving a truly accessible multilingual web cannot be understood as a purely technical challenge. Rather, it also requires sustained institutional commitment to linguistic diversity, inclusion, and equality.

When discussing the need for multilingual communication in online public services, the perspective of globalization can be brought up. Cronin (2010, 134–139) argues that increasing international mobility and demographic diversity create a demand for organizations to communicate effectively across languages. For institutions such as SPEK, providing clear English-language information is not only a practical necessity but also an ethical responsibility to ensure that all residents and visitors have equal access to safety information.

2.3 Exploring Linguistic Accessibility through Three Analytical Categories

Linguistic accessibility in multilingual online communication is a multidimensional concept that includes not only the existence of multiple language versions but also the quality, clarity and cultural aspects of the information provided. Overall, linguistic accessibility is extremely important because users must be able to locate, understand and act on the information regardless of their linguistic or cultural background. Even more so in the context of public safety communication, urgency and possibly even life-threatening situations create emphasis on this importance.

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of linguistic accessibility, particularly in the context of fire safety, the three analytical categories were formed based on recurring themes identified in both the SPEK website as material for this thesis, as well as previous research on the topic. In more detail, these themes emerged from my own observations regarding linguistic accessibility on websites, as well as from topics addressed in previous research, articles, and books related to linguistic accessibility, translation, localization, and website translation. For example, information was often missing from the English versions of websites. Sections of websites, articles, or instructions had not been translated at all when switching from Finnish to English. In worst cases, the desired page would sometimes disappear because it was not available in English. In addition, the English-language pages often seemed simplified and frequently lacked supplementary materials such as videos, images, and links. Since, to my knowledge, no such classification exists, it was necessary for me to create a framework related to topics, observations, and discussions concerning linguistic accessibility.

Therefore, this section now presents, introduces and discusses these key perspectives related to the three analytical categories used in the analysis of this thesis: Completeness and Consistency, Clarity and Comprehensibility, and Cultural and Informational accessibility.

2.3.1 Completeness and Consistency

The availability of content in multiple languages can only be seen as a starting point or foundation for inclusion. Availability refers to whether certain language options are available and whether they reflect the usability of other language versions. Previous research on multilingual health and government websites shows the importance of availability, as differences in translation coverage directly impact accessibility and can lead to unequal access to essential information (He, Ibrahim and Kang 2025, 2–3). Availability is the main idea behind the concept of completeness in this category.

However, availability alone is not sufficient. Linguistic accessibility requires that translated content is functionally equivalent across language versions, meaning that users are provided with comparable information, structures, and communication opportunities regardless of their language of choice. This idea is closely related to the concept of “dynamic equivalence” introduced by Eugene Nida, which refers to translations that aim to produce the same communicative effect for the target audience as the original text produces for the source audience (Nida 1964, 159–160). Rather than focusing on the similarity of linguistic structures, this approach emphasizes the preservation of meaning and communicative function in the target

language. Therefore, completeness in this thesis refers to whether all relevant information, sections, and resources are available across language versions.

Themes related to consistency can be found in studies on web localization (see, for example, Maroto and De Bortoli 2001 or Wu et al. 2024), which show that consistency in structure and terminology helps users navigate the website and build trust, particularly on institutional websites, where users expect stability and reliability. If users of minority languages, for example, come across partially translated content or when structural inconsistencies can be observed, they may experience reduced access to information, which then promotes already existing digital inequalities (Maroto and De Bortoli, 2001, 3–5). Research on website localization also highlights that terminological stability and stylistic consistency are essential for user experience, orientation, and trust (Maroto and de Bortoli 2001, 5–7). Inconsistent terminology or changing registers may weaken comprehension and institutional credibility.

From a translation studies perspective, this requirement can be seen to align with the approach proposed by Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002, 498–499), according to which micro-level translation techniques should ultimately support the overall communicative purpose of the text. In the context of public safety communication, this perspective extends beyond individual linguistic choices and places emphasis on the functional outcome of the translation.

In this thesis, however, consistency is not approached solely through micro-level features, but rather in terms of whether each language version maintains the intended level of clarity, urgency, and user orientation required for effective communication. This means that translation choices are evaluated based on how well they support correct interpretation and enable appropriate action. Consequently, consistency is understood not only as linguistic equivalence but also as the extent to which the communicative purpose of the safety instructions is preserved across different language versions.

Finally, both completeness and consistency influence how users experience institutional reliability through websites that offer content related to public safety. Research on website localization indicates that coherent and comprehensive language versions contribute to higher levels of institutional trust and user confidence (Maroto and de Bortoli 2001, 10–11).

2.3.2 Clarity and Comprehensibility

Discussion about linguistic accessibility often also includes topics like clarity and comprehensibility. In public safety communication, information must be presented in a way that does not have a significant cognitive load and supports fast understanding that is required. Research in health and safety communication shows that complex sentence structures, specialized or otherwise difficult terminology, and densely presented information can appear as major barriers, especially for users who have difficulties with literacy skills or are not proficient enough in the target language (Myung and Ji 2025, 29, 37–38).

A central part of clarity is textual readability and readability in general. Myung and Ji (2025, 30) note that a significant proportion of adults possess limited literacy skills, which directly affects their ability to interpret complex safety instructions. For this reason, public communication seems to increasingly rely on plain language strategies designed to help reduce cognitive load. Such strategies include shortening long sentences, favoring simple grammatical options, and using short and familiar words (Myung and Ji 2025, 32–38).

Clarity is further influenced by structural and interface predictability. Ara et al. (2025, 1598–1601) emphasize that consistent and clear use of menus, navigation elements, and search functions, etc. reduces confusion and promotes efficient information retrieval for users. In multilingual websites, as mentioned previously, functional equivalence between language versions is particularly important. Therefore, navigation structures, icons, and visual cues should be similar enough across languages to prevent disorientation. In addition, Maroto and de Bortoli (2001, 6–10) discuss that culturally specific symbols or region-bound design choices may create a lack of clarity when localized for international audiences. This observation underlines the need to consider not only linguistic clarity but also multimodal coherence.

Clarity and comprehensibility are shaped by the interpretive nature of accessibility guidelines themselves. Since these guidelines are formulated in natural language, that is, in general descriptive human language rather than formal or technical rules, they are often open to interpretation and difficult to apply consistently in practice (Ara et al. 2025, 1582–1583). As a result, different practitioners may interpret and implement the same guidelines in different ways.

These principles are also reflected in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which are developed by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). WCAG presents

understandability as one of the most important aspects of accessible web content. With the information available, the user should be able to read, predict, and comprehend it (W3C 2018). Although WCAG is often regarded as a technical standard, it also emphasizes understandability as one of its main points, showing that clear and easy-to-understand language is an important part of linguistic accessibility. Readable language, consistent and easy navigation, and clear instructions are not just associated with technical design but also tied to linguistic and communicative aspects. This is particularly important in multilingual contexts, as translated texts can introduce additional complexities related to sentence length, terminology, and cultural assumptions. These challenges often arise when addressing translation problems in source texts, as well as in the strategies used to solve them.

Together, these linguistic, structural, and cognitive aspects make it possible to carry out a systematic comparison of how safety information is communicated in Finnish and English, and whether it actually supports linguistic accessibility in practice. In emergency situations, ambiguity not only reduces usability but can also lead to misunderstandings that may have serious consequences. This category, therefore, addresses a fundamental requirement of public safety communication, where information must be not only accurate but also immediately understandable and usable for all members of the target audience.

When discussing challenges that occur with accessibility, they are not limited to difficulties in literacy or being proficient in a language. Some users may have difficulties related to reading, such as dyslexia, which can affect the processing of written information even when that person has a good level of proficiency in that language. This then even further promotes the importance of clear structures, plain language, and information that is well organized. These can support comprehension and reduce cognitive load. In this thesis, the term “plain language” refers to the use of clear, appropriate, and comprehensible language that enables readers to understand information easily. Plain language aims to avoid unnecessary complexity, specialized jargon, and ambiguous formulations so that texts can be understood by a wide audience with different kinds of backgrounds (Kotimaisten kielten keskus n.d.). Plain language is more important than ever in public communication because it helps people’s ability to access and understand information provided by authorities. Clarity largely encompasses linguistic choices and decisions, such as clear language, transparent and simple sentence structures, and understandable explanations of key concepts.

2.3.3 Cultural and Informational accessibility

Multilingual accessibility is extremely important and a central component of health and safety equity in linguistically diverse societies. Authorities are expected to ensure that essential information is not only available to majority-language speakers but also reachable and usable for ethnic minorities and migrants (He, Ibrahim, and Kang 2025, 2). Informational accessibility in digital environments goes beyond the existence of translated or adapted content. It should also include how information is structured, explained, and contextualized for different users.

The main concept in this category is cultural adaptation. As discussed in this thesis, website localization highlights that effective multilingual communication requires more than the linguistic transfer of textual content. This also requires adapting culturally embedded references, symbols, and communication styles to the expectations of the target audience. Successful localization depends on sensitivity to regional differences in terminology, visual cues, and conversational styles (Maroto and de Bortoli 2001, 6–7). If these elements are not adapted, the final result may feel out of place, less credible, or difficult to interpret in its intended context.

Maroto and De Bortoli (2001, 2–7) emphasize that translating word-for-word is not sufficient or enough when it comes to website localization. Desired content must be culturally adapted or at least keep multicultural aspects in mind. This way, the translated content can be understandable and functional within those different languages and cultures. They also write that website design and content must consider symbols, colors, references, graphics, and practices that can have significantly different meanings in different cultures. Research on website localization demonstrates that failure to adapt culturally specific elements may lead to cultural loss. In cases where essential contextual meaning is lost or weakened in translation, it can reduce the effectiveness of the message (Chen et al. 2024, 729–739).

As said, these perspectives are closely linked to the concept of cultural loss discussed by Chen et al. (2024, 729–733). They demonstrate that the omission or weakening of culturally rooted meanings, local references, or communicative nuances can affect both the perceived comprehensibility of the translated content and its usability in a cultural sense. When adapting this to public safety communication, cultural adaptation not only enhances clarity but also boosts the credibility of institutions and user trust. Users must rely on instructions in potential emergencies, so such credibility is particularly important within public safety. For this

reason, linguistic simplicity and cultural adaptation are not viewed merely as stylistic choices but also as factors that influence equitable access.

Together, these perspectives on linguistic accessibility frame it as a complex and multi-layered concept that combines availability, clarity, and cultural adaptation. Linguistic accessibility requires careful attention to how information is structured, expressed, and contextualized for users from a wide range of backgrounds. The discussion in these subsections brings these ideas together and provides a theoretical foundation for the analytical categories used in this thesis.

The three categories applied in this thesis reflect these topics and how they interact within the context of linguistic accessibility. They enable a systematic analysis of how accessibility is implemented in the English version of the SPEK website. The way these categories will be applied in the analysis will be briefly explained in the Methods chapter.

3 Material

The research material for this thesis consists of the Finnish and English versions of the Safety section of the website of the Finnish National Rescue Association (Suomen Pelastusalan Keskusjärjestö, SPEK). SPEK is an organization that offers and promotes materials related to fire safety, developing fire and rescue services and readiness for fire emergencies in Finland. The website has all kinds of educational, preventive, and instructional materials for residents, communities and individuals. This makes the website a significant source of safety information.

The organization mainly operates in Finnish and Swedish, with Finnish as its administrative language. Based on information gathered from the website, they seem to collaborate with authorities, voluntary organizations, and international partners in the field of fire safety education. English is the third language version available on the website, in addition to the national languages in Finland (Finnish and Swedish). English serves as an important access language for non-Finnish and non-Swedish speakers residing in or interacting with Finnish society. When it comes to English, it plays a particularly significant role, as it often serves as the primary or only accessible language for international users. Suomen Pelastusalan Keskusjärjestö (SPEK)'s Safety section provides a relevant and meaningful site for examining how linguistic accessibility is realized in multilingual public communication because it offers great information to improve fire safety in Finland.

The Safety section is one of the larger thematic areas within Suomen Pelastusalan Keskusjärjestö (SPEK)'s website. It consists of several similar pages presenting practical safety tips, instructions and informational material on everyday safety, accident prevention and emergency preparedness. The section can be accessed through the main navigation of the website in all language versions. The material was collected manually in January 2026 by using a consistent strategy to ensure comparability across the two language versions. This was done by extracting a coherent section from the English language version of the website and then doing the same to the Finnish version by saving the corresponding section. Then the segments extracted in both languages were put side by side in Excel. What was deemed a coherent section is explained in more detail below. The analysis focused on the English-language Safety section and its associated subpages. More specifically, the material includes the main Safety page as well as the following subsections: Emergency plan, Housing safety materials, Fire safety of electrical appliances, Battery fire, and Housing safety for special groups.

To compare the two language versions precisely, the Finnish-language material was limited to only the corresponding pages that match the selected English-language content. This restriction was necessary because the Finnish version of the website contains materials and text on safety-related matters that do not appear in the English version. The contact information presented at the bottom of the pages was also included in the analysis because significant differences were observed during the collection of the material.

The material consists of 85 Finnish-English segment pairs, which form the basis of the comparative analysis. The segments include headings, subheadings, introductory texts, explanatory paragraphs, lists, and instructions visible on the selected pages without further exploration of the page. Explanatory paragraphs were, in most cases, entire paragraphs of text found on the websites, usually linked to a heading.

Although the website content may be subject to updates, the collected segments provide a reliable snapshot of the site at the time of collection of the material. None of the segments that I collected in the Excel sheet were altered or deleted after January 2026. No segments were added to the Excel sheet either. Therefore, the segments within the Excel sheet were not altered at all after the collection of the segments. Content accessed through internal links or separately available materials was excluded. Visual elements were considered only at a general level and were not analyzed in detail. These limitations define the extent of the material. The resulting material consists of the Finnish and English webpages, with the text segments collected into an Excel spreadsheet that organizes and aligns them for qualitative analysis.

When discussing the material, it is important to acknowledge its possible limitations. First, there is a lack of clarity regarding the relationship between the Finnish and English versions of the website. It is not specified whether the English content is a direct translation of the Finnish version or if it has been adapted independently. This may introduce inconsistencies or subtle differences in meaning between the two versions that may affect some of the findings during the analysis. Some information may be outdated or incomplete, and there is no indication of sources or methods used to compile the content. These factors should be considered when analyzing and interpreting the material, as they contribute to uncertainty and may affect the conclusions drawn from it. SPEK also has written on their page that “Accessibility legislation does not apply to the spek.fi website, but we are working to improve accessibility. Feedback on accessibility can be sent to [accessibility\(a\)spek.fi](mailto:accessibility(a)spek.fi)” (Suomen Pelastusalan

Keskusjärjestö (SPEK) 2025, translated from Finnish to English by me). This note most likely refers overall to “[...] people who face challenges in using digital services or devices” (Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom 2024) and not directly to linguistic accessibility. These challenges could be related to visual disabilities, impaired hearing or being unaccustomed to the use of digital services, for example. See Finnish Transport and Communications Agency Traficom (2024) for the full listing of these challenges. These challenges do, however, also include things like reading and learning difficulties or poor proficiency in Finnish, and therefore, the SPEK website's note should still be noted here for transparency.

4 Methods

This chapter describes the methods used in this thesis. It explains how the material was collected and prepared for analysis, as well as how the three analytical categories were applied to the analysis of linguistic accessibility in the Finnish and English versions of the safety section of the SPEK website. The chapter is divided into two parts: the first part presents the methods used and material preparation and collection, while the second part describes the practical application of the categories in the analysis of this thesis.

4.1 Analysis Method and Material Preparation

This thesis applies a qualitative analysis to examine how linguistic accessibility is implemented in the English version of the Safety section of the SPEK website. A qualitative approach was chosen because the purpose of this thesis is to evaluate meaning, clarity, structure and practical usability rather than to measure quantitative linguistic patterns, for example. The method supports deeper analysis beyond the surface and allows detailed comparison, which is essential when assessing how effectively public safety information is communicated in multiple languages for a diverse audience.

The analysis is done by using three categories mentioned previously in this thesis, which I developed specifically for this analysis. The categories were based on research and articles from translation studies and sociolinguistics, for example, as well as on my previous observations related to the issue. These categories, Completeness and Consistency, Clarity and Comprehensibility, and Cultural and Informational Accessibility, provide a structured framework for analyzing how well the English version meets the needs of its intended audiences and implements linguistic accessibility compared to the Finnish language version. Completeness and Consistency focus on whether content is present and on the organization of information across languages. Clarity and Comprehensibility address linguistic transparency and ease of understanding. Lastly, Cultural and Informational accessibility analyzes how well the English version meets the needs of readers with different cultural backgrounds or limited knowledge of Finnish society.

To enable a systematic comparison, the Finnish and English materials were aligned in an Excel sheet, with corresponding segments. These consisted of page titles, paragraphs, bullet lists, terminology items, and navigational elements. These were then placed side by side. The spreadsheet layout makes it possible to consider both linguistic and structural

features. These could be, for example, cases where content appears only in one language version and is omitted in the other, or where the structure has been reorganized. It also allows observations to be written directly next to each aligned pair of segments. Space is also reserved for commenting on additional aspects found during the analysis that could be worth noting, for example, findings related to layout, visuals, and hyperlinks that may influence linguistic accessibility. These aspects are addressed only briefly, as they are not the primary focus of the thesis.

The analysis will proceed with the next steps. First, the overall structure of the Safety section will be compared with the Finnish-language version to see whether both versions contain the same pages and if the content is present across languages and remains similar. Text from each main page was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and color-coded to ensure a clear distinction between the different sections and pages within the Safety section of the SPEK website. In total, 85 segment pairs were analyzed. The segmentation was done by grouping related topics or paragraphs to maintain a sensible number of segments. Second, the aligned texts will be analyzed segment by segment using the three analytical categories. Observations will be written down in the spreadsheet throughout the process. Finally, the findings will be analyzed together in relation to the topics presented in the Theory chapter.

The purpose of this method is to enable a detailed, systematic and effective comparison that captures both linguistic and structural aspects of linguistic accessibility. This method allows examining the points where the Finnish and English versions differ in terms of content, clarity, or cultural adaptation. It can also be used to assess whether the English language version provides equally useful and informative access to safety information as the Finnish version and therefore promotes good linguistic accessibility. This is important given the public function of SPEK and the societal need for safety guidance to be accessible to all, regardless of linguistic background.

4.2 Applying the Analytical Categories

This section explains how the analytical categories are applied in the analysis of the material. I will briefly explain the analytical categories in terms of how they will be used as analytical tools in the analysis of the English-language version of the SPEK website. Rather than functioning as abstract theoretical concepts, the categories have been explained here as concrete analytical perspectives through which the material is systematically examined and compared.

Before applying the analytical categories, it is important to clarify their role in this thesis. The categories provide a structured framework that makes it possible to analyze and compare the Finnish and English versions of the SPEK website in a systematic way. At the same time, they guide the analysis by bringing attention to availability, functional equivalence, clarity and comprehensibility, as well as cultural and informational accessibility across linguistic contexts. In this sense, the categories not only organize the analysis but also shape the way accessibility is understood and interpreted in the material.

The first analytical category focuses on Completeness and Consistency. It is used to examine whether the Finnish and English versions of the public safety website provide functionally equivalent information and whether this information is structurally coherent across language versions. In other words, the category is used to assess whether users receive a comparable amount of content, guidance, and communicative support regardless of the language version they choose, and whether terminology, structure and tone remain functionally parallel between the versions. In practice, this means comparing corresponding pages and sections in both languages and examining whether key instructions, explanations, and contextual details are present and maintained in a consistent form.

In more detail, consistency deals with the coherence of terminology, structure, and navigation. More specifically, it concerns the internal consistency of the translated or adapted material across language versions. In this thesis, consistency refers to terminological stability, stylistic consistency, and ensuring that the intent of communication remains consistent across language versions. This means that equivalent meanings, functions, and communicative intentions are maintained even if the language on a website is changed. This includes, for example, whether the same concepts are expressed using equivalent terms, whether the tone of the text (e.g., formal vs. informal) is consistent in both language versions, whether the actor of the sentence stays the same and whether the intended message and purpose of the content remain the same. Simply put, it means whether the content provided remains consistent across language versions, providing users with an equal experience regardless of the version used.

In this thesis, completeness refers to the extent to which information is available and equally represented across both language versions. It can be examined on multiple levels. First, it concerns the presence or absence of corresponding pages and sections. Second, it extends to the level of individual segments, including key instructions, explanations, and contextual details within the text. Consistency, in turn, refers to how the available information is

maintained across languages. It includes terminological stability, stylistic uniformity, and the extent to which the intended communicative message is preserved. Together, completeness and consistency function as a combined structural and functional measure of whether linguistic accessibility is implemented in a balanced way in the English version of the website.

The second category, Clarity and Comprehensibility, examines how clearly and effectively safety-related information is formulated and presented, and whether users can understand and act upon it without unnecessary effort. In this category, linguistic accessibility is not understood only as the presence of information, but also as the result of linguistic and structural choices that shape how that information is processed. This includes minimizing cognitive barriers and supporting rapid understanding, which is particularly important in the context of public safety communication (Myung and Ji 2025, 29–30). The category also reflects one of the central principles of accessible digital content, often described in accessibility standards as “understandability” (Singh et al. 2024, 3–4).

In practice, this category guides the analysis of individual sentences, instructions, and text segments in terms of clarity, directness, and logical flow. Particular attention is paid to sentence structure, syntactic complexity, and overall textual density from the perspective of readability. Vocabulary choices are also an important part of the analysis, as they play a key role in shaping how accessible the content is for different user groups. As Myung and Ji (2025, 32–37) note, familiar and commonly used vocabulary supports comprehension, while unnecessary technical terminology or culturally specific expressions may create barriers. Through this approach, the analysis can identify potential comprehension challenges for non-native users and evaluate how effectively the English version supports quick and unambiguous understanding. These findings can only provide speculative results as no actual user testing was conducted in this analysis.

Lastly, the third analytical category, Cultural and Informational Accessibility, addresses whether public safety communication provides equal access to essential information for users from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This category focuses on whether the English-language version offers an experience that is not only linguistically, but also informationally and culturally comparable to the Finnish version. The aim is to evaluate whether the English content functions as a contextually appropriate and sufficiently complete source of information, rather than functioning merely as a standalone translation or simplified adaptation. This aspect is particularly important for users who rely on the English-language

version as their primary or only means of accessing public safety information. In the analysis, this category is applied by examining language use, references, and contextual elements that may require cultural knowledge or background information to be fully understood. Through this, it becomes possible to assess whether the English version provides sufficient contextual and cultural support and whether it enables users from different backgrounds to interpret and use the information in a functionally equivalent way. The same note on limitations due to the lack of actual user testing applies to this category as well.

5 Analysis

This chapter presents a qualitative analysis of the English language version of the Safety section of the SPEK website from a linguistic accessibility perspective. This will be done by comparing the two language versions (Finnish and English) with each other. The analysis aims to figure out how functionally equivalent the two language versions are within each category presented previously. I also intend to analyze to what extent the English version provides linguistic access to essential public safety information compared to what is available in Finnish.

The analysis will focus on the Safety section of the Suomen Pelastusalan Keskusjärjestö (SPEK)'s website. The page is one of the thematic pages available. Visually and structurally, the Finnish and English versions of the section appear somewhat similar, following a similar constructed layout and navigational elements. However, it can immediately be seen that the English version is noticeably shorter in available content and lacks significant amounts of the content present in the Finnish version. These notable differences highlight the amount and depth of information made available across languages. As public safety information is often essential and time-sensitive, multilingual content requires more than word-for-word translation. Therefore, effective communication depends on the decision to produce functionally equivalent information that remains clear, comprehensible, and usable for different languages. Comparing these two language versions provides a good basis for analyzing how linguistic accessibility is applied to a public safety website.

The analysis does not aim to evaluate individual linguistic differences in isolation. Instead, the analysis focuses on recurring patterns and other notable findings identified through the systematic segment-level comparison of the Finnish and English versions documented in the Excel sheet discussed in the previous sections of this thesis. The aim is to determine whether linguistic accessibility is achieved in the English language version compared to the Finnish one. The Finnish version is used as a point of comparison, as it constitutes the source text and reflects the primary communicative context of the material. It is not, however, assumed to represent an optimal level of accessibility, but rather, it functions as a reference point for examining shifts, omissions, and adaptations in the English version. Findings related to this mostly deal with differences between the language versions that affect users' access to information, clarity of guidance, or cultural and contextual understanding. In this way,

linguistic accessibility is analyzed not only as the presence of content in multiple languages but also as the overall usability and functional equivalency of the English version.

The analysis is structured to move along the three categories introduced previously in this thesis: Completeness and Consistency, Clarity and Comprehensibility, and Cultural and Informational Accessibility in this order. The following sections analyze the material category by category, highlighting both typical patterns and notable deviations. The observations are grounded in repeated elements within the text across the material rather than just isolated examples. Selected segments are presented as examples to illustrate central findings. As mentioned previously in this thesis, the observations may be affected by the fact that it is not known whether the English language version is translated or adapted independently, or possibly both. The examples in the analysis are presented in two ways. Some longer examples are presented by highlighting them from the main text of the analysis and numbered. Some shorter examples are presented within the main text of the analysis to allow for good following of the text.

5.1 Completeness and Consistency

This section analyses the Finnish and English versions of the Safety section of the SPEK website from the perspective of completeness and consistency. The focus is on whether the English version provides functionally equivalent access to safety-related information and whether the structure, terminology, and order of content are consistent across the language versions.

Overall, the material shows a relatively high level of structural completeness, and many of the core content segments, such as main headings, introductory paragraphs, and key instructional lists, are present in both the Finnish and English versions. This suggests a clear intention to provide multilingual access to essential safety information, rather than the English content being included only in a symbolic or minimal role. In many cases, the English version closely mirrors the Finnish structure and is in some parts almost identical in its organization and overall layout.

Example 1. Structural similarity in instructional lists:

FI: ”Pyykinpesukone ja astianpesukone

Älä laita konetta päälle, jos lähdet pois kotoa tai menet nukkumaan.

Älä jätä pesukonetta käymään yksikseen. Näin minimoit tulipaloriskin ja vesivahingot.

Irrota pistoke käytön jälkeen, jos se on mahdollista.

Sulje vesihana käytön jälkeen.

Puhdista nukkasieppi säännöllisesti.” (SPEK, “Sähkölaitteiden paloturvallisuus”)

EN: “Washing machine and dishwasher

Do not turn on the appliance if you are going out or to bed.

Do not leave the washing machine running unattended. This way, you minimise the risk of fire and water damage.

Disconnect the appliance from the power outlet after use if possible.

Turn off the tap after use.

Clean the lint filter regularly.” (SPEK, “Fire safety of electrical appliances”)

Example number 1 shows a strong structural and functional correspondence between the Finnish and English versions. The heading is directly equivalent, and the instructional points are presented in the same order and format. What stands out in particular is that each Finnish directive has a clearly identifiable counterpart in the English version, with no visible omissions or rearranging of content.

The list format, together with the risk-prevention-oriented imperative style, is consistently preserved, which suggests that the English version is not only a translation but also closely aligned with the communicative structure of the Finnish original. This level of alignment makes it possible for users to follow the instructions in a predictable way, especially if they switch between the two language versions while using the website.

At the same time, I find that it is worth noting that Example 1 seems to represent one of the most stable and consistent parts of the material. In the “Fire Safety of electrical appliances” section of the website, most listings like the one in Example 1 function smoothly, with very few observable issues or problems in terms of structure or content transfer. Overall, this example supports the impression that, at least in straightforward instructional lists, the English version maintains a high level of equivalence with the Finnish one.

Example 2. Consistent formatting of short instructional sections and headings:

FI:

“Jos laite ei toimi tavalliseen tapaan, lopeta sen käyttö ja vie se huoltoon.” (SPEK, “Sähkölaitteiden paloturvallisuus”)

”Ohjeita eri laitteille” (SPEK, “Sähkölaitteiden paloturvallisuus”)

”Lue lisää akkaturvallisuudesta.” (SPEK, “Akkulaitteiden paloturvallisuus”)

EN:

“If the appliance is not functioning normally, stop using it and take it for service.” (SPEK, “Fire safety of electrical appliances”)

“Instructions for different appliances” (SPEK, “Fire safety of electrical appliances”)

“Read more about battery safety:” (SPEK, “Battery fire”)

In relation to the points mentioned in Example 1, Example 2 shows that short instructions and navigation-related headings are handled in a highly parallel manner in both the Finnish and English versions. Each Finnish section has a clear English counterpart, and the overall function of the text elements remains largely the same. Headings, safety instructions, and reference links are preserved both in content and in their general structure, which suggests a strong effort to maintain equivalence.

The segments are not only similar in wording but also in the way they guide the reader’s attention when scanning the page. Since these short elements often function as entry points to more detailed information, their parallel presentation contributes to a sense of predictability and easy use across both language versions. This is particularly relevant in safety communication, where users do not necessarily read the content in order from top to bottom of the page, but instead rely on headings and quick cues to locate relevant information.

Although these segments are short, their high degree of similarity supports the structural consistency of the language versions. This kind of direct correspondence appears frequently throughout the material and reinforces the overall impression that the English version closely follows the structure of the original Finnish text, especially in relation to headings and shorter instructional elements.

However, a closer examination also shows that the completeness of content is not entirely consistent in the English version. While the most important safety topics and key

instructions are generally available in both Finnish and English, some explanatory and background information present in the Finnish version has been shortened, simplified, or in some cases partially or fully omitted in the English version. These omissions mainly concern references to Finnish institutional actors, supplementary material, and broader contextual information that situates the safety recommendations within the Finnish system.

In these cases, the core message is usually preserved, but the removal or reduction of supporting material decreases the overall depth of information available to people using the English version. In addition, a small number of segments identified in the Finnish material do not have a corresponding English version at all. These omissions do not typically affect headline-level content, but they do contribute to an imbalance in informational scope between the two language versions.

Example 3. Complete omission of safety-related segment:

FI:

”Sammutuspeite on mainio kodin turvavaruste.

Myös varautuminen erilaisiin häiriötilanteisiin, kuten pitkiin sähkökatkoihin tai myrskyihin, onnistuu hyvällä suunnittelulla paremmin.” (SPEK, “Turvallisuus”)

EN:

No corresponding segment provided in the English version.

In Example 3, the Finnish segment expands the concept of household safety beyond hazards directly related to appliances. The first part emphasizes the importance of fire blankets as recommended safety equipment, while the second part broadens the discussion to include preparedness for wider emergencies, such as long power outages or storms.

In the English version, these elements are not fully carried over. As a result, English-speaking users are not informed about fire blankets as part of household fire safety, nor are people introduced to the broader idea of preparedness for emergencies beyond fires themselves. This information may be assumed as general knowledge, but in practice, not all users have access to fire blankets or experience with storm-related disruptions that can affect safety

planning. The gap is therefore not only structural, but also conceptual, as it removes elements that define safety in terms of both preventive equipment and proactive preparedness.

Notably, similar patterns can be observed in several other sections of the website. In the Safety section, the Emergency Plan section, and the Housing Safety for Special Groups section, the English-language pages omit final parts of the corresponding Finnish pages. These missing end sections typically contain additional context, recommendations, or links to supplementary materials. Their absence from the English version systematically limits the scope and depth of the instructions provided, thereby weakening linguistic accessibility.

In terms of completeness and consistency, this creates a noticeable imbalance. The absence of these sections reduces the comprehensiveness of the information and limits access to potentially important safety recommendations. For users relying solely on the English version, access to safety instructions is therefore less complete compared to the Finnish version, which creates an unequal distribution of information.

Consistency issues are also visible in smaller textual details. There is some variation in terminology across different pages, with equivalent Finnish concepts being expressed using different English terms. Although these differences rarely lead to direct misunderstandings, they may still create uncertainty for users who rely on precise terminology. In some cases, the English version uses more common or simplified terms, which may improve immediate clarity but at the same time reduce terminological consistency across the material as a whole.

Example 4. Narrowing of informational scope in the English version:

FI:

“Pelastussuunnitelma on tärkeä turvallisuusväline taloyhtiöissä ja työpaikoilla.”
(SPEK, “Pelastussuunnitelma”)

EN:

“An emergency plan is an important safety tool for housing associations and residential properties.” (SPEK, “Emergency plan”)

Example 4 shows that there is a difference in the scope of information between the Finnish and English versions. The Finnish sentence states that an emergency plan is an important safety tool in both housing companies and workplaces. In the English version,

however, the reference to workplaces is omitted, and the sentence is focused solely on residential properties.

Although the English sentence is grammatically clear and easy to understand, this omission narrows the contextual scope of the message. As a result, readers of the English version may interpret emergency planning primarily as something related to residential environments, whereas in the Finnish version, it is presented as relevant across several different contexts. This example illustrates how even relatively small omissions can affect the consistency of information between language versions and slightly shift how the broader safety context is communicated and understood.

Structural consistency is mostly maintained, but there are still some notable exceptions. Some lists and headings have been reorganized in the English version, either through changes in emphasis or shifts in how the user is guided through the content. In certain cases, Finnish phrasing that frames safety as a broader form of shared responsibility has been adapted into English in a way that places slightly more emphasis on individual actions. While this may improve readability for an international audience, it may also introduce a functional difference in how responsibility and agency are expressed. This suggests a certain tension between maintaining strict equivalence and adapting the content to the needs of different users.

One example of this can be seen in the section on fire safety guidance. In Finnish, the text states, “Näillä voit vaikuttaa kodin paloturvallisuuteen:” (SPEK, “Turvallisuus”). The term “paloturvallisuus” refers broadly to overall home fire safety, and the expression “voit vaikuttaa” (“you can influence”) positions the reader as someone who actively contributes to this broader condition of safety. In this way, fire safety is framed as something maintained through everyday practices in the household.

In the English version, this becomes “Here are some tips for fire safety at home:” (SPEK, “Safety”). The phrase “tips for fire safety” presents the content more as a set of practical suggestions rather than actions contributing to a broader safety condition. As a result, the focus may shift slightly more towards individual actions, rather than the idea of contributing to an ongoing collective safety environment.

Another example can be found in the instructions regarding residents’ responsibilities. The Finnish version states: “Asukas pitää huolta kodin paloturvallisuudesta ja varautumisesta” (SPEK, “Turvallisuus”). The singular form “asukas” refers to any resident in a

general sense, and frames responsibility as a shared but individually applicable obligation. The terms “paloturvallisuus” and “varautuminen” refer broadly to fire safety and preparedness as ongoing conditions in everyday life.

The English version reads, “Residents take care of the fire safety and preparedness of the home” (SPEK, “Safety”). Although the core meaning is largely preserved, the use of the plural form “residents” introduces a slightly different framing of responsibility. It shifts the reference from a general singular actor to an explicitly collective group. This subtle grammatical difference can influence how responsibility is perceived. The singular form tends to emphasize individual responsibility, while the plural may highlight shared responsibility among residents.

A similar shift in perspective is also visible in another segment. The Finnish version states, “Turvallinen asuminen syntyy yhteistyöllä” (SPEK, “Turvallisuus”), while the English version reads, “Cooperation is the basis of safe living” (SPEK, “Safety”). Both express the importance of cooperation in safety, but the wording differs in emphasis. The Finnish formulation uses the verb “syntyy”, which conveys the idea of safe living emerging through ongoing cooperation, whereas the English version presents cooperation in a more static and abstract way as a “basis”.

Taken together, these examples show that the English version generally retains the main content of the Finnish version quite well. However, even small linguistic differences can lead to subtle shifts in how responsibility, agency, and cooperation are expressed. These variations do not significantly reduce comprehensibility, but they do illustrate how translation and adaptation choices may influence the framing of safety practices and the perceived roles of those involved in maintaining them.

From a functionalist perspective, these findings suggest that the English version is not simply a reduced form of the Finnish original, but rather a selectively adapted version. In many cases, adaptation appears to improve usability, but in others it results in partial reductions in informational scope or meaning. When consistency is affected by omissions, terminological variation, or structural changes, the overall functional equivalence between the language versions may be weakened.

In summary, the analysis of completeness and consistency shows that the SPEK website partly succeeds in providing multilingual access to key safety information but does not

achieve full functional equivalence across all sections. These findings highlight the importance of considering availability not only as the presence of content, but also as the consistent and coherent transfer of meaning across languages in public safety communication.

5.2 Clarity and Comprehensibility

This section examines the Finnish and English versions of the Safety section from the perspective of clarity and comprehensibility. The analysis focuses on how clearly safety-related information is formatted and how easily users can process it. What I also intend to analyze is whether linguistic choices support understanding for audiences with different levels of language proficiency and background knowledge.

Overall, the English version shows a clear tendency to simplify and clarify content for an international audience, and in many parts, it appears somewhat less complex than the Finnish original. More complex syntactic structures are often avoided, which generally supports readability and aligns with the principles of plain language, which seem to be typically used in public safety communication. These principles are also visible in the Finnish versions, meaning that the English version reflects them to some extent, although often in a more consistent and explicit way through shorter and less information-dense sentence structures.

One example of this can be seen in a section describing residents' responsibilities. The Finnish version states: "Asukkaana sinun vastuullasi ovat oman kotisi turvallisuuden yksityiskohdat. Tulipalojen ehkäisy, oikea toiminta tulipalossa, palonalun sammuttaminen ja turvallinen poistuminen ovat tärkeitä tietoja ja taitoja" (SPEK, "Turvallisuus"). The English version expresses the same idea in a simplified form: "As a resident, you are responsible for the safety details of your own home" (SPEK, "Safety"). While the Finnish version compresses several specific safety-related responsibilities into a single information-dense sentence, the English version presents the idea in a more general form with fewer details. In many sections, the English text also relies strongly on direct instructions and action-oriented phrasing, which further supports clarity.

A similar pattern can be observed in guidance related to electrical appliance safety. The Finnish version states, "Jos laite ei toimi tavalliseen tapaan, lopeta sen käyttö ja vie se huoltoon" (SPEK, "Sähkölaitteiden paloturvallisuus"), which presents a clear set of instructions. The English version reads: "If the appliance is not functioning normally, stop using it and take it for service" (SPEK, "Fire safety of electrical appliances"). In this case, the instruction is

similarly direct in both languages, and the use of imperative verbs such as “stop using” and “take it for service” provides a clear and immediate course of action. This kind of formulation can support quick understanding in situations where users need practical guidance.

Another similar pattern can also be seen in user interface instructions. The Finnish version instructs users to “Klikkaa teksti auki plus-merkistä”, and the English version states, “Click on the plus signs to expand the sections”. Both versions guide the user to the same interface element and provide practical, easy-to-follow instructions. In this matter, there is no meaningful difference between the versions, which suggests that both adhere to a principle of clear and functional user guidance.

Despite these strengths, the analysis also indicates that clarity is not achieved in a fully consistent way across the material. In some cases, simplification appears to reduce precision. Finnish expressions that include specific terms, explanations, or contextual qualifiers are sometimes rendered in English in a more general form. While this may reduce cognitive load, it can also introduce a degree of ambiguity. This is particularly relevant in the context of fire safety, where a precise understanding is essential. This tension between simplicity and accuracy emerges repeatedly in this category.

Comprehension is also shaped by uneven vocabulary choices. Although much of the English content uses relatively simple and accessible language, some segments include technical or institutional terms without explanation. These terms may be familiar to Finnish users due to shared cultural or administrative knowledge, but less transparent to users relying solely on English. For instance, terms such as “residential departments”, “TUKES”, and “housing cooperative” are used without further clarification in the context of fire safety in Finland. In such cases, the lack of explanation or paraphrasing reduces overall linguistic accessibility.

Structural clarity also plays an important role in understanding. Lists, headings, and step-by-step instructions generally support comprehension by breaking information into smaller, manageable units. However, the analysis shows that the organization of these elements is not always consistent across language versions. In some cases, the English version condenses information into fewer paragraphs, whereas the Finnish version uses clearer segmentation or more explicit framing. For example, the Finnish text begins with “Tältä sivulta löydät tietoa turvallisesta asumisesta ja varautumisesta [...]” (SPEK, “Pelastussuunnitelma”), which clearly signals the purpose of the page. This introductory framing is not present in the English version, which may require users to infer the structure and purpose themselves. As a

result, the English text can appear more condensed, even when shorter overall, and navigation may become slightly less intuitive.

Visual and contextual cues also contribute to clarity. Although visual design is not the central focus of this analysis, some textual elements rely indirectly on layout, links, or surrounding structure to convey meaning. These cues are not always equally explicit in the English version, which may require users to make interpretive connections that are more directly guided in Finnish. This further suggests that clarity is not only a linguistic issue but also depends on how textual information interacts with its digital environment.

Taken together, the findings suggest that clarity is supported in many parts of the English version, particularly through simplification and plain language strategies. At the same time, simplification is not applied consistently. In some sections, it leads to more generalized expressions and reduced informational detail. In these cases, the English version appears to prioritize comprehensibility over the more detailed or structured formulations found in the Finnish text. This does not necessarily indicate a loss of accuracy, but rather a tendency toward reduced specificity in some descriptions. Overall, this creates a recurring tension between clarity and informational precision across the material.

In conclusion, the analysis shows that although the English version of the SPEK safety section generally supports clarity through plain language strategies, its comprehensibility varies across sections. Differences in sentence structure, vocabulary, and textual organization result in uneven linguistic accessibility, which may affect how effectively users are able to understand and apply the safety information. These findings highlight the importance of balancing simplicity and precision when communicating essential safety instructions in a multilingual context.

5.3 Cultural and Informational Accessibility

This section analyses the Finnish and English versions of the Safety section from a cultural and informational accessibility perspective. It focuses on how effectively the English version conveys safety-related information to users who may not have the same cultural background, knowledge of institutional aspects, and everyday safety practices as Finnish users most likely do. Attention is paid to whether the English content provides functionally equivalent access to information.

The analysis suggests that the English version generally prioritizes accessibility by presenting key safety instructions in a relatively neutral and broadly universal manner. This approach appears particularly useful for international users, as it avoids overly complex cultural references and reduces the need to rely on implicit local knowledge. In many sections, the English text focuses on practical actions and general safety principles, which in turn support usability for users who may not be familiar with Finnish societal structures or emergency systems.

Example 5. Adaptation of a culture-specific technical term:

FI:

“Kattovalaisimiin voidaan vaihtaa ns. sokeripalan tilalle sähköpistoke.” (SPEK, “Sähkölaitteiden paloturvallisuus”)

EN:

“For ceiling lamps, a plug-in connector can be installed to replace the connector strip.” (SPEK, “Fire safety of electrical appliances”)

Example 5 illustrates how a culturally specific technical term is handled in translation or adaptation. The Finnish text refers to a connector commonly known as a “sokeripala”, a term widely used in Finland in the context of lighting installations. Since there is no direct equivalent for this term in English, the translation or adaptation appears to avoid a literal translation. Instead, it uses the more general expression “a plug-in connector”. This strategy reflects an effort to make the concept understandable to international readers by focusing on the function of the component rather than retaining a culturally specific term. Although the chosen expression may still require some technical familiarity, it improves comprehensibility compared to a more direct translation. Overall, this example demonstrates how translation or adaptation can reshape culturally embedded terminology in order to support broader access to information.

However, the findings also point to recurring cases where cultural accessibility is only partially achieved. Several Finnish-language sections include references to nationally specific practices and institutions, and in some cases, it seems that some assumptions are made about the user’s familiarity with the Finnish safety system or fire safety-related objects. One clear example of this is the mention of the Finnish sauna, and similar examples can also be found in the previous chapter, where understandability was discussed through different

examples. Although these kinds of references are sometimes kept in the English version, they are not always supported with further explanation or contextualization. At the same time, some additional material is provided through links in the Finnish version of the website, which creates a slight imbalance in accessibility between the language versions. As a result, users who rely only on English-language content may at times find it more difficult to fully grasp the meaning or function of certain instructions or services.

Example 6. Safety instructions involving culturally specific elements:

FI:

“Kiukaan asentamisessa tulee huomioida käyttöturvallisuus. Noudata valmistajan käyttöohjeita ja turvaetäisyyksiä kiuasta asennettaessa. Huolehdi, että kiukaan ja sen ohjaamiseen käytettävien laitteiden yhteensopivuus on varmistettu ja että se on dokumentoitu. Ennen käyttöönottoa tutustu kiukaan käyttöohjeisiin ja kytkimien ominaisuuksiin ja toimintaan.” (SPEK, “Sähkölaitteiden paloturvallisuus”)

EN:

“When installing the sauna heater, user safety must be taken into account.

Follow the manufacturer’s instructions and safe distances when installing the heater.

Ensure that compatibility between the heater and its controls is verified and documented.

Before using the sauna heater, read the instructions and learn the features and operation of the controls.” (SPEK, “Fire safety of electrical appliances”)

Example 6, in turn, shows how culturally specific aspects of housing are communicated in the English version. The concept of a sauna heater (“kiuas”) is strongly associated with Finnish housing, but it may not be equally familiar to an international audience. In the English version, the term is translated as “sauna heater”, which provides a direct and generally understandable description of the device. The instructions are largely consistent across the different language versions, and safety instructions are clearly presented in both cases. However, the text still seems to assume that users already have some familiarity with the existence and operation of saunas in residential environments. While the English version successfully conveys the practical instructions, it does not really provide additional contextual information that would help users from different cultural backgrounds fully understand the broader meaning of the instructions.

A further example of the limited accessibility of information can also be seen in how contact and supporting details are presented. The Finnish-language version provides relatively detailed organizational contact information, including service-specific phone numbers, opening hours, and an accessibility feedback email address. In contrast, the English version only includes the organization's name, address, and a single generic email address, while more specific functional elements are omitted. While the English content is clear and easy to understand, its more limited scope means that users who rely solely on English may not be able to access service-specific instructions or easily provide feedback on accessibility, at least not from this section, as the information may still be available elsewhere on the website. This omission becomes particularly significant in the context of public safety communication, where timely access to support and contact information is essential. Overall, this example shows how the reduction of content can affect functional equivalence and highlights the importance of providing culturally and informationally comprehensive resources across all language versions.

Overall, the findings suggest that while the English version of the safety section provides a basic level of informational accessibility, it does not consistently achieve culturally and contextually equivalent access to safety communication. In many cases, the English version succeeds in conveying what actions should be taken, but it is less effective in explaining why these actions matter within the Finnish safety context. This, in turn, limits the extent to which the content can fully support users from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In conclusion, the analysis shows that cultural and informational accessibility in the English version is uneven. While the key safety messages are generally accessible, insufficient contextualization and adaptation sometimes weaken the functional equivalence between the language versions. These findings highlight the importance of considering accessibility not only as a linguistic issue, but also as a cultural and informational one. This is particularly significant in public safety communication, where misunderstandings can potentially have serious consequences.

As can be seen, this category produced fewer clear-cut results on its own compared to previous analytical categories. Issues related to informational accessibility also overlapped with those identified under comprehensibility and completeness, especially in cases where contextual omissions affected both understanding and the overall depth of information. This overlap resulted in some findings being relevant to more than one category. In a way, this

suggests that the analytical framework, while useful for structuring the analysis, could benefit from further refinement in future research in order to more clearly distinguish between linguistic clarity, informational scope, and cultural contextualization.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

This thesis aimed to see how linguistic accessibility is implemented in the English version of the Safety section of the SPEK website in comparison to the Finnish version. The main research question guiding this analysis was how linguistic accessibility is implemented in the English version of the Safety section, and whether both language versions provide equal access to essential safety information. Based on the findings, it can be argued that equal access is achieved on a general level, but not consistently across all aspects of linguistic accessibility discussed in this thesis. While the English version offers access to key safety instructions, it does not fully reproduce the broader contextual scope or the structural depth present in the Finnish version.

Overall, these findings align with my initial assumptions that I presented at the beginning of this thesis. The Finnish version provides more comprehensive, contextually rich information, whereas the English version appears to be a more condensed adaptation that retains the essential instructions but omits certain explanations and rearranges structural elements. As a result, the English version may not fully address the needs of international users who rely on it as their primary source of safety information. The observed differences in completeness, clarity, and cultural accessibility suggest that linguistic accessibility is a versatile issue, shaped both by institutional decisions and by the practical constraints related to translation and localization. This connection to the original assumptions helps clarify how the findings correspond to the expectations that guided the analysis.

A more detailed examination of the results suggests that availability in multiple languages on a website alone does not necessarily guarantee equal access to information. Across the three categories, the English version generally retains the essential content but reduces supporting explanations, contextual information, and some structural elements. While these reductions do not affect factual accuracy too much, they do narrow the overall communicative scope of the English version. In this sense, the findings support the theoretical premise that linguistic accessibility should be understood as a multidimensional concept, encompassing completeness, clarity, and cultural adaptation, rather than being limited to word-for-word translation or simple adaptation.

It is also worth noting that the first analytical category, Completeness and Consistency, produced considerably more findings than the other two categories, Clarity and

Comprehensibility and Cultural and Informational Accessibility. This difference likely reflects the more concrete nature of structural and content-related differences, which are easier to identify through direct comparison of the Finnish and English texts. In contrast, aspects related to clarity, comprehension, and cultural adaptation often require a more interpretive and user-based approach and may therefore be less immediately visible in the material.

For this reason, the prominence of findings in the first category should not be taken to suggest that the other dimensions are less important, but rather that they are more subtle and more difficult to capture through text-based analysis. This uneven distribution of findings also influences how the results can be interpreted. While the English version clearly demonstrates selective omissions and structural modifications, potential challenges related to comprehension or cultural understanding may remain underrepresented in the analysis. This is an important limitation that should be considered, as the material may conceal problems that only become apparent during practical use or user interaction. Therefore, such limitations should be kept in mind when drawing conclusions about functional equivalence and linguistic accessibility.

These limitations also highlight the need for further research as well as for the development of the method used in this thesis. Future research could, for example, involve actual users through interviews, surveys, or usability testing in order to identify challenges related to comprehension and cultural adaptation that cannot be captured through text-based analysis alone. Also, extending the analysis to other sections of the website or to similar websites could offer a broader perspective on multilingual accessibility within websites. The method itself could also be refined by introducing even clearer frameworks for identifying more subtle differences in content and functionality. This could be done by perhaps adding more categories or defining the categories again so that they do not overlap in any way. Such developments would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how effectively different language versions serve their intended audiences.

The analysis also suggests that simplification strategies can both enhance and limit accessibility at the same time. In several of the examples discussed, clearer and more direct English wording improved readability, while the removal of background information reduced the overall depth of the content. This points to an inherent tension within public safety communication, where linguistic accessibility requires not only clarity but also sufficient contextualization. In this sense, this thesis contributes to translation studies by demonstrating how

functionalist and localization-oriented perspectives intersect in institutional multilingual communication.

The findings can be interpreted as reflecting broader institutional choices related to inclusion and accessibility. As Thomas Ricento (2006, 19–21) notes, language policy extends beyond formal legislation and also includes institutional practices that shape which languages are used and how accessibility is organized. In this context, SPEK's decision to provide an English-language version of the safety section could be seen as an effort to promote inclusion and linguistic equality. At the same time, the observed reductions and asymmetries between the Finnish and English versions could indicate that linguistic accessibility is implemented selectively rather than through fully parallel measures.

Then, from the perspective of translation policy, the issue is not only whether translation is provided, but also what is selected for translation or adaptation, to what extent, and for whom. The analysis suggests that while key safety instructions are consistently translated or adapted, contextual explanations and supporting background information are more frequently omitted in the English version. Following the argument presented by Reine Meylaerts (2011, 165–167), translation policies can be seen as regulating participation in public life. From this perspective, such reductions may reflect an institutional prioritization of essential, operational safety instructions over full informational completeness. In this way, translation policy shapes not only the transfer of language but also the level of access to information available to different language groups, which aligns closely with the findings of this thesis.

These findings are also relevant to discussions about linguistic rights and linguistic justice, as mentioned in the theory chapter. Access to information in one's own language has been presented as a need in order to achieve equal participation in society. These are discussed in detail by Hirvonen and Kinnunen (2020) as well as Piller (2016), for example. Although the English version of the safety section clearly enables access to key safety instructions, its narrower communicative scope may indicate a subtle hierarchy between language versions. Linguistic accessibility does not emerge as a binary matter, but as an issue shaped by institutional priorities and available resources.

When it comes to multilingual web communication and digital inequality, the findings illustrate how translation coverage and localization depth often reflect broader structural patterns. Even though English dominates global web content, its presence alone does not guarantee equal depth of information. Research on website translation highlights that

multilingual content is shaped by institutional workflows, technological infrastructures, and resource allocation (Folaron 2010, 446–449 and 2025, 69–73). The English-language version of the Safety section appears to be a secondary version based on the Finnish language version and not a fully independent information system.

Finally, the findings related to cultural and informational accessibility can be closely linked to localization practices. Effective localization requires the adaptation of culturally embedded references and institutional assumptions to match the knowledge base of the target audience, as discussed by Schäler (2010, 209–214). When such culturally specific structures remain implicit without additional explanation, achieving full communicative and functional equivalence becomes more challenging. As emphasized by Maroto and De Bortoli (2001, 6–7), translation alone is not sufficient if it is not accompanied by systematic cultural adaptation. In this sense, the selective localization observed in the English version highlights how linguistic accessibility depends not only on translation but also on deliberate and context-sensitive adaptation.

From a methodological perspective, a qualitative comparison proved to be well-suited for identifying recurring patterns within the material of this thesis. The segment-level comparison provided a structured approach for documenting and organizing the findings in relation to the analytical categories of this thesis. This method proved effective in dividing the data into manageable units and, in doing so, offered a clear foundation for consistent interpretation. At the same time, certain limitations of the thesis and analysis should be acknowledged, as mentioned previously. The data is restricted to a single organization and to one thematic section of its website, and the analysis is based on textual material rather than on user experience.

As a result, the conclusions are specific to this case and cannot be directly generalized to all public sector websites or multilingual safety communication in Finland. However, the question of whether similar patterns might be found in other comparable contexts remains relevant and should be explored in future research. It is also important to note that while segment-level comparison makes observable differences visible, more subtle cultural and meaning-related aspects may remain undetected without user-based methods. This highlights that the findings are primarily text-based, while at the same time pointing toward the need for further research that would examine how users from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds engage with the material in practice. Due to the time and length limitations of this thesis, I

could only push the analysis this far. Therefore, it is important to view this thesis as a limited and relatively short case study.

However, this thesis contributes to the field of translation and linguistic accessibility by offering a focused case study on how linguistic accessibility is realized within a public safety context. It illustrates that English-language content in institutional settings may function as a condensed version of the source-language material, rather than as a fully parallel channel of communication. This observation, in turn, encourages further reflection on translation policy and localization practices within public institutions.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that providing clearer and more contextually adapted English content could enhance both safety communication and equal access to information. Even relatively small additions, such as brief explanatory notes, could improve functional equivalence with the original Finnish text without requiring significant additional resources. Such measures would support international users not only in understanding what actions are required but also why these actions are particularly relevant in the Finnish safety context. In this way, both usability and inclusiveness could be strengthened.

Again, several aspects fall outside the scope of this thesis. The analysis does not include empirical data on user reception, nor does it examine visual accessibility in depth. This thesis also does not address institutional or economic factors that may influence the production of multilingual content. These could include, for example, available resources, time constraints, or translation workflows. Future research, therefore, could expand the material to other sections of the same website or conduct comparative analyses across different organizations. User-based studies would be particularly valuable for understanding how different language communities experience and interpret multilingual safety communications in practice.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Finnish summary

Kielellinen saavutettavuus on noussut yhä merkittävämmäksi teemaksi digitaalisessa maailmassa, jossa verkkopalvelut ja viestintä ovat keskeisessä roolissa jokapäiväisessä elämässä. Yhteiskuntien monikulttuuristumisen myötä tarve saada tietoa useilla kielillä on kasvanut huomattavasti. Kielellinen saavutettavuus ei kuitenkaan tarkoita pelkästään sisällön tarjoamista eri kielillä, vaan myös sellaisten kielellisten esteiden poistamista, jotka voivat vaikeuttaa tiedon saamista ja ymmärtämistä. Tavoitteena on turvata kaikille tasavertaiset mahdollisuudet osallistua yhteiskuntaan. Voidaankin ajatella, että kielellinen saavutettavuus kytkeytyy läheisesti arvoihin, kuten tasa-arvoon ja osallisuuteen (Hirvonen ja Kinnunen 2020, 470–471). Digitaalisessa viestinnässä kääntäminen ja lokalisointi ovat keskeisessä roolissa, jotta tärkeä tieto on saatavilla kaikille käyttäjille heidän kielellisistä ja kulttuurisista taustoistaan huolimatta (Nauert 2007, 1).

Vaikka saavutettavuus liitetään usein ensisijaisesti erityistarpeisiin suunnattuihin palveluihin, kielellinen saavutettavuus on silti olennainen osa saavutettavuutta (Koponen et al. 2023, 77–78). Keskeistä on se, miten kieli vaikuttaa yksilöiden mahdollisuuksiin saada ja ymmärtää tietoa. Monikielisissä digitaalisissa ympäristöissä kääntäminen ja lokalisointi mahdollistavat tiedon saavutettavuuden eri kielitaustoista riippumatta. Lokalisointi tarkoittaa käännettävän sisällön mukauttamista tietyn käyttäjäryhmän kielelliseen ja kulttuuriseen kontekstiin (Esselink 2001, ks. Nauert 2007, 1–2). Sen sijaan että lähdetekstiä käännettäisiin sanatarkasti, lokalisoinnin tavoitteena on tuottaa sisältöä, joka palvelee erityisesti kohdeyleisöä (Nord 1997, ks. Sandrini 2005, 134). Tästä näkökulmasta käännösten tulisi tukea tekstin viestinnällistä tarkoitusta ja varmistaa, että tieto on ymmärrettävää ja käyttökelpoista eri käyttäjille.

Tässä pro gradu -tutkielmassa tarkastelen kielellistä saavutettavuutta monikielisessä verkkoviestinnässä vertaamalla paloturvallisuutta käsittelevän verkkosivuston suomen- ja englanninkielisiä versioita. Aineistona toimii siis Suomen Pelastusalan Keskusjärjestön (SPEK) verkkosivusto, joka tarjoaa turvallisuusohjeita ja opetusmateriaalia onnettomuuksien ehkäisyyn, hätätilanteisiin varautumiseen ja arjen paloturvallisuuteen. Julkisen turvallisuusviestinnän toimijana SPEK:illä on keskeinen rooli sellaisen tiedon tuottamisessa, joka auttaa yksilöitä ja yhteisöjä varautumaan riskeihin. Vaikka järjestö toimii pääasiassa suomeksi ja ruotsiksi, englanti toimii tärkeänä kielenä kansainvälisille käyttäjille, kuten ulkomaalaisille asukkaille,

matkailijoille ja ammattilaisille, jotka eivät välttämättä voi hyödyntää suomen- tai ruotsinkielistä materiaalia.

Pro gradu -tutkielmani analyysi on rajattu SPEK:in verkkosivuston Turvallisuus-osioon, joka sisältää käytännön ohjeita ja neuvoja asumisen turvallisuudesta, suunnittelusta, sähköturvallisuudesta ja muista arjen turvallisuusaiheista. Suomen- ja englanninkieliset versiot ovat rakenteeltaan suhteellisen samankaltaisia ja noudattavat osittain vertailukelpoisia navigointimalleja. Alustavat havainnot osoittavat kuitenkin, että englanninkielinen versio on selvästi suppeampi ja siitä puuttuu sisältöjä, jotka ovat mukana suomenkielisessä versiossa. Tämä herättää kysymyksen siitä, tarjoavatko kieliversiot käyttäjille tasavertaisen pääsyn olennaiseen paloturvallisuustietoon.

Pro gradu -tutkielmani tavoitteena on tutkia, miten kielellinen saavutettavuus toteutuu Turvallisuus-osion englanninkielisessä versiossa ja missä määrin se vastaa suomenkielistä versiota. Huomio kohdistuu erityisesti siihen, miten saavutettavuus ilmenee verkkoviestinnän selkeydessä, kattavuudessa ja käytettävyydessä. Siispä keskeisenä tutkimuskysymyksenä on, miten kielellinen saavutettavuus näkyy englannin kieliversiossa ja onko englanninkielisen version käyttäjillä yhtäläinen pääsy tietoon kuin suomenkielisillä. Lisäksi tarkastelen, miten kielelliset ja kulttuuriset tekijät vaikuttavat turvallisuusviestinnän saavutettavuuteen.

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu SPEK:in verkkosivuston Turvallisuus-osion valikoitujen sivujen suomen- ja englanninkielisistä versioista. Aineisto kerättiin manuaalisesti tammikuussa 2026, ja se sisältää englanninkielisen Safety-sivun sekä sen alisivut. Suomenkielinen aineisto rajattiin vastaaviin sivuihin, jotta kieliversioiden vertailukelpoisuus säilyisi. Suomenkielistä aineistoa olisi ollut huomattavasti enemmän ja siksi tällainen rajausta sen osalta oli tarpeen. Analysoituihin osiin kuuluvat Turvallisuus-pääsivu sekä useita alisivuja, joissa käsitellään muun muassa hätäsuunnittelua, asumisen turvallisuutta, sähkölaitteiden paloturvallisuutta, akkupalotapauksia ja erityisryhmille suunnattuja ohjeita. Rajausten jälkeen aineisto koostuu 85 rinnakkaisesta suomi–englanti-segmenttiparista, jotka sisältävät otsikoita, johdantotekstejä, kappaleita, luetteloita ja ohjeita. Tekstit koottiin taulukkolaskentaohjelmaan (Excel), jotta kieliversioiden järjestelmällinen vertailu olisi mahdollista.

Tutkimuksessa sovelletaan laadullista analyysiä, sillä tavoitteena on arvioida materiaalin saavutettavuutta, selkeyttä, rakennetta ja käytettävyyttä monikielisessä viestinnässä. Analyysi ei keskity yksittäisiin kielellisiin ilmiöihin, vaan pyrkii tunnistamaan toistuvia havaintoja jokaisen kategorian kohdalla. Suomen- ja englanninkielisten versioiden vertailua ohjaavat kolme

tätä tutkimusta varten kehittämäni kategoriaa: kattavuus ja johdonmukaisuus (Completeness and Consistency), selkeys ja ymmärrettävyys (Clarity and Comprehensibility) sekä kulttuurinen ja informatiivinen saavutettavuus (Cultural and Informational Accessibility).

Ensimmäisessä kategoriassa, kattavuus ja johdonmukaisuus, tarkastellaan, tarjoavatko kieliversiot saman määrän tietoa sekä säilyvätkö rakenne ja terminologia yhtenäisinä. Kattavuus viittaa siihen, missä määrin turvallisuustieto on saatavilla molemmissa kieliversioissa, kun taas johdonmukaisuus koskee terminologian, tyylin ja viestinnän tarkoituksen yhtenäisyyttä. Julkisen turvallisuusviestinnän kontekstissa tämä on erityisen tärkeää, sillä selkeä ja vakiintunut terminologia tukee sekä ymmärrettävyyttä että organisaation uskottavuutta.

Analyysi osoittaa, että englanninkielinen versio sisältää pääosin keskeiset turvallisuusohjeet ja sen rakenne noudattaa monin paikoin suomenkielistä versiota. Tämä viittaa siihen, että tavoitteena on välittää keskeinen sisältö myös muille kielille. Englanninkielisestä versiosta on kuitenkin usein jätetty pois selittäviä lisätietoja ja kontekstia, minkä vuoksi se jää alkuperäistä suppeammaksi ja yksinkertaistetuksi. Vaikka ydininformaatio säilyy, sen laajuus on rajallisempi.

Toisessa kategoriassa, selkeys ja ymmärrettävyys, tarkastellaan, kuinka helposti käyttäjät pystyvät ymmärtämään turvallisuusohjeita. Englanninkielisessä versiossa selkeyttä pyritään lisäämään yksinkertaistamalla kieltä ja käyttämällä lyhyempiä lauseita, mikä voi parantaa luettavuutta. Samankaltaisia piirteitä on havaittavissa myös suomenkielisessä versiossa. Yksinkertaistaminen ei kuitenkaan aina johda parempaan ymmärrettävyyteen, sillä kontekstuaalisia selityksiä on paikoin jätetty pois ja osa termeistä jää ilman tarkennusta. Lisäksi rakenteelliset muutokset, kuten luetteloiden korvaaminen kappaleilla, voivat vaikeuttaa tiedon hahmottamista.

Lopulta kolmannessa kategoriassa, kulttuurinen ja informatiivinen saavutettavuus, tarkastellaan, esitetäänkö tieto tavalla, joka on ymmärrettävä eri kulttuuritaustoista tuleville käyttäjille. Englanninkielinen versio välittää usein keskeiset toimintaohjeet, mutta harvemmin avaa niiden taustalla olevia syitä tai suomalaisen kontekstin erityispiirteitä. Kulttuurisidonnaisia käsitteitä on joissakin tapauksissa käännetty ilman riittävää selitystä, mikä voi heikentää niiden ymmärrettävyyttä kansainvälisille käyttäjille.

Yleisesti ottaen tulokset osoittavat, että englanninkielinen versio tarjoaa pääsyn keskeisiin turvallisuusohjeisiin, mutta ei vastaa suomenkielisen version laajuutta ja syvyyttä. Tämä heikentää sen viestinnällistä vaikuttavuutta, vaikka tiedon ydin säilyykin. Tuloksissa korostuu myös se, että kielellinen saavutettavuus on moniulotteinen ilmiö, johon vaikuttavat esimerkiksi sisällön kattavuus, selkeys ja kulttuuristen elementtien mukauttaminen kohdeyleisön tarpeisiin. Pelkkä monikielisyys ei riitä takaamaan tasavertaista saavutettavuutta, vaan myös sisällön rakenne ja kontekstualisointi ovat keskeisiä tekijöitä.

Käännös- ja lokalisoitinnäkökulmasta englanninkielinen Safety-osio näyttäytyy pikemminkin tiivistettynä versiona suomenkielisestä sisällöstä kuin täysin rinnakkaisena viestintäkanavana. Tämä saattaa heijastaa laajempia monikielisen verkkoviestinnän käytäntöjä, joissa käännösten laajuus määräytyy usein institutionaalisten prioriteettien ja resurssien mukaan (Folaron 2025, 69–73). Kielellinen saavutettavuus on laaja-alainen käsite, joka kytkeytyy käännöstieteellisiin, sosiaalisiin ja yhteiskunnallisiin näkökulmiin. Analyysi osoittaa, että kääntäminen ja lokalisointi ovat keskeisiä välineitä saavutettavuuden edistämiseksi, mutta eivät yksin riitä takaamaan kieliversioiden välistä vastaavuutta. Myös kulttuurinen mukauttaminen ja kontekstualisointi ovat olennaisia saavutettavan viestinnän kannalta. Pro gradu -tutkielmani tuloksilla on käytännön merkitystä julkisille toimijoille, sillä ne viittaavat siihen, että jo pienet lisäykset, kuten taustaselitykset ja rakenteellinen vastaavuus kieliversioiden välillä, voisivat parantaa englanninkielisen sisällön kielellistä saavutettavuutta merkittävästi.

On mainittava, että tutkimus rajoittuu kuitenkin vain yhteen organisaation verkkosivun rajattuun aineistoon ja analyysi perustuu ainoastaan tekstien vertailuun eikä esimerkiksi käyttäjäkokemuksiin. Jatkossa tutkimusta voitaisiinkin laajentaa muihinkin verkkosivustoihin tai tarkastella, miten eri kielitaustaiset käyttäjät hyödyntäisivät monikielistä turvallisuuteen liittyvää informaatiota käytännössä.

Näistä rajoituksista huolimatta tutkimus osoittaa, että kielellinen saavutettavuus on keskeinen tekijä tasapuolisen tiedonsaannin varmistamisessa riippumatta kielellisistä tai kulttuurillisista taustoista. Monikielisessä yhteiskunnassa viestinnän tulee mahdollistaa tiedon ymmärtäminen ja soveltaminen eri käyttäjille, siksi kääntäminen sekä lokalisointi ovatkin tässä keskeisessä asemassa.