(UN)TRANSPARENTLY COMMUNICATING ACCESSIBILITIES IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT: A GENRE-BASED AND CORPUS-INFORMED ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The increased importance of accessibility has contributed to the approval of laws aimed at the inclusion of people with various disabilities as well as the drafting of guidelines for the creation of more accessible web pages. Given the lack of studies on this topic from a linguistic perspective and the importance of this issue in the transportation sector, this study aimed to analyse a comparable corpus of web pages and documents on accessibility produced by companies operating in this sector in different country groups. Combining the tools of genre analysis and corpus linguistics, the research examined whether these web pages and documents may be featured as texts with standardized and common rhetorical moves, the discursive construction of *accessibility*, and the linguistic strategies employed by companies to transparently or vaguely communicate their approach to this issue.

From both a cross-sector and cross-cultural perspective, evidence from the genre analysis showed the presence of common, albeit nonlinear, persuasive and informative rhetorical moves, with the former being more prevalent than the latter. Results from the corpus-informed analysis suggest a stronger discursive association of accessibility with disability inclusion than with web accessibility. The close reading of the extended concordance lines of the words *accessible* and *accessibility* revealed a greater use of promotional language and vague linguistic items in the whole corpus, which suggests a lack of transparency towards actions and initiatives ensuring services or digital accessibility. In contrast, strategies conveying transparency observed across all the country groups include statements of compliance with digital-accessibility guidelines and the more explicit mention of inaccessible facilities or content in texts produced by Scandinavian companies. The few cross-sector and cross-cultural divergences found in the corpus imply a common linguistic and communicative approach to accessibility in the field of transport.

1. Introduction

The concept of *accessibility* has long been significant across various sectors, including urban planning, architecture, and disability-rights advocacy. In recent years, advancements in technology and shifts in societal attitudes have highlighted the importance of addressing accessibility concerns, making them focal points for commitment. Accessibility today takes on a crucial role both in the organization of different physical spaces and in the creation of useful and usable websites for a wide range of people,

especially those with disabilities (visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, or neurological disabilities); those with learning disorders (e.g. dyslexia); the elderly; people with low (digital) literacy or language difficulties; and people who are not in possession of updated technologies (Rutter *et al.* 2006).

Countries and institutions have become aware of these issues, resulting in the introduction of laws aimed at promoting accessibility at all levels. For instance, European countries have promulgated regulations conforming to the European Accessibility Act.[1] Another significant initiative was the Accessible Canada Act,[2] which encourages companies operating in Canadian territories, including those in the transportation sector, to develop a strategic document outlining measures and actions aimed at promoting accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities. This document, known as the Canada Accessibility Plan, contains initiatives that companies are expected to adopt within 3 years.

As for web accessibility, the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)[3] released two versions of its Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 1.0 in 1999 and WCAG 2.0 in 2005)[4] to develop strategies and resources that contribute to the creation of accessible websites across different platforms and websites. WCAG 2.0, in particular, is organized according to four main principles: (a) the content must be perceivable to each user; (b) the interface elements in the content must be operable by each user; (c) the content and controls must be comprehensible to each user; and (d) the content must be robust enough to work with current and future technologies. The WCAGs have been received in most countries worldwide and have represented a reference point for the creation of national standards with which institutions or companies should comply when developing accessible web pages. Web accessibility is equally as important as accessibility for disabled people, not secondary to it. In fact, as stated by López-Arceiz *et al.* (2017: 37), "the degree of transparency of an organization cannot be directly measured, but it can be perceived from the level of organizational accessibility proposed to the stakeholders."

If the theme of accessibility has been addressed mainly in scientific, juridical, and social research areas, to the best of my knowledge, there are no studies that have analysed this concept from a linguistic perspective. In light of this, considering the significance of various forms of accessibility in the transportation sector for organizing spaces and facilities without barriers as well as the usability of operators' websites, this research investigates specialized web sections and documents dedicated to accessibility created by companies in this sector.

From a genre perspective, this study investigates whether accessibility webpages and documents show similar rhetorical patterns, with the aim of identifying their communicative functions. From a discursive and linguistic point of view, I explore how *accessibility* — in all its meanings — is discursively constructed, or, in other words,

[1] See http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/882/oj.

[2] See https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/a-0.6/.

[3] This is an international community of organisations that develops open standards to ensure the long-term growth of the Web. See https://www.w3.org/.

[4] These guidelines were further updated in 2021 (WCAG 2.1) and in 2023 (WCAG 2.2). See https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/ (last visited: 26th March 2024) and https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/.

conceptualized in the field of transport and the strategies through which the companies operating in this area communicate transparently or vaguely their approaches to accessibility. Given the inherent connection between accessibility and disabilities within this particular field, this study identifies the most frequently represented disabilities as well as those that are discursively marginalized. A subsequent goal of this research is to draw any possible cross-sector and cross-cultural comparisons.

In terms of structure, Section 2 describes the data selected and the methodology adopted for the analysis. Section 3 then illustrates and comments on the main results. Finally, Section 4 summarizes the previous sections and makes possible cross-sector and cross-cultural comparisons.

2. Data and methodology

This section is divided into two subsections: Section 2.1 provides information about the corpus built for the analysis while Section 2.2 outlines the methodological procedures followed to explore the collected texts.

2.1. *Data*

This study is based on the Transport Accessibility Corpus (henceforth *TrAc corpus*). This is a monolingual comparable corpus that brings together sections and documents written in English, labelled with the words *accessible* or *accessibility* — these include "accessible/accessibility" (henceforth A-S), "accessibility statements" (A-ST), "accessibility policies" (A-PO), and "accessibility plans" (A-PL). The corpus was built by selecting websites created by companies operating in different fields of transport whose headquarters are in different country groups: Anglo-Saxon, German-speaking, Scandinavian, Neo-Latin, and Asian countries. I personally devised this classification mainly based on geographical areas, apart from countries with an Anglo-Saxon culture that also include the United States and Australia, besides the United Kingdom and Ireland. The main criterion adopted to identify the sample of companies was the current availability of the above indicated sections and documents on their websites.

Tables 1-5 provide a breakdown of the corpus, including information about the selected companies, their headquarters' locations, and the number of tokens. More specifically, the *TrAc corpus* is subdivided into five further subcorpora corresponding to the specific transportation sectors: *TrAc-A*, *TrAc-B*, *TrAc-C*, *TrAc-FC*, and *TrAc-T* comprising, respectively, texts from the websites of airlines, bus operators, car rental and ride-sharing companies, ferry and cruise operators, and rail companies and operators.

Through the scrutiny of the number of tokens of the collected texts, I found that airline companies disclosed the most information about accessibility (57,536 tokens). This is evidenced in Table 1 below, which illustrates the data included in the *TrAc-A* subcorpora. In fact, some texts within this subcorpus are longer than 1,000 or even 10,000 tokens — for instance, *Alaska Airlines* and *Rex Airlines*.

As shown in Table 2, rail companies rank second in terms of the quantity of accessibility information (44,972 tokens). More homogeneity in token distribution may be observed in this subcorpus that typically ranges between 500 and 1,000 tokens on average, although exceptions occur with certain companies that published documents or web pages exceeding 1,000 tokens in length.

TrAc corpus - TrAc-A subcorpus (57,536 tokens)			
Country groups	**Companies and countries**	**Document title and number of tokens**	**Total number of tokens per country group**
Anglo-Saxon	British Airways (UK)	Accessibility statement (513)	42,170 tokens
	EasyJet (UK)	Accessibility (450)	
	Virgin Atlantic (UK)	Accessibility & special assistance (383)	
	Ryanair (Ireland)	Accessibility (59)	
	Alaska Airlines (U.S.)	Accessible travel services (12,978)	
	American Airlines (U.S.)	Web accessibility (374)	
	Delta Airlines (U.S.)	- Accessible travel services (269) - Canada accessibility plan (4,729) - Delta web accessibility (270)	
	JetBlue (U.S.)	- Commitment to accessibility (267) - Accessibility assistance (194)	
	United Airlines (U.S.)	Accessibility (679)	
	Air Canada (Canada)	Accessibility Plan 2023-2026 (4,565)	
	Qantas (Australia)	Access and inclusion plan (4,977)	
	Rex Airlines (Australia)	Disability access facilitation plan (11,463)	
German-speaking	Austrian Airlines (Austria)	Accessible travel (1,915)	3,035 tokens
	Lufthansa (Germany)	Accessible travel (362)	
	Swiss (Switzerland)	Accessible travel (758)	
Scandinavian	Finnair (Finland)	Accessibility on Finnair app (2,839)	2,839 tokens
Neo-Latin	Air France (France)	Accessibility statement (193)	7,549 tokens
	ITA Airways (Italy)	Digital accessibility statement (697)	
	Iberia (Spain)	Accessibility statement (6,569)	
Asian	Cathay Pacific (China)	- Cathay Canada Accessibility Plan (517) - Our commitment to accessibility (403)	1,943 tokens
	All Nippon Airways (Japan)	Web accessibility (380)	
	Japanese Airlines (Japan)	Accessibility (643)	

Table 1. The *TrAc corpus – TrAc-A* subcorpus

TrAc corpus - TrAc-T subcorpus (44,972 tokens)			
Country groups	**Companies and countries**	**Document title and number of tokens**	**Total number of tokens per country group**
Anglo-Saxon	First Group (UK)	Accessibility (370)	36,995 tokens
	Great Western Railway (UK)	Accessibility (79)	
	Govia Thameslink Railway (UK)	Site accessibility (71)	
	LNER (UK)	Accessibility (845)	
	Network Rail (UK)	Accessibility statement (1,267)	
	South Western Railway (UK)	Accessibility features (447)	
	Southern Railway (UK)	Web accessibility statement (350)	
	TransPennine Express (UK)	- Accessible travel & facilities (3,821) - Accessible Travel Policy (13,849) - Making Rail Accessible Guide (8,804) - Rolling Stock Accessibility Information (1,288)	
	Iarnród (Ireland)	Accessibility Policy (3,792)	
	Amtrak (U.S.)	Accessible travel services (500)	
	BNSF (U.S.)	Accessibility (120)	
	Aurizon (Australia)	Accessibility (81)	
	Queensland Rail (Australia)	Accessibility (1,311)	
German-speaking	Deutsche Bahn (Germany)	Accessibility (441)	441 tokens
Scandinavian	Öresundståg (Sweden)	Accessibility (678)	3,195 tokens
	Västtrafik (Sweden)	Accessibility report (2,517)	
Neo-Latin	SNCF (France)	Help and accessibility (1,206)	2,912 tokens
	Trenitalia (Italy)	Accessibility (885)	
	Adif (Spain)	Accessibility (821)	
Asian	Hokkaidō Railway Company (Japan)	Accessibility (790)	1,429 tokens
	East Japan Railway Company (Japan)	Accessibility (639)	

Table 2. The *TrAc corpus – TrAc-T* subcorpus

TrAc corpus - TrAc-B subcorpus (24,069 tokens)			
Country groups	**Companies and countries**	**Document title and number of tokens**	**Total number of tokens per country group**
Anglo-Saxon	Arriva (UK)	Accessibility (714)	20,982 tokens
	Go-Ahead (UK)	- Accessibility policy (792) - Website accessibility statement (1,407)	
	Mobico Group (UK)	- Accessibility and inclusion (4,239) - Disability awareness and accessibility policy (2,142)	
	First Transit (U.S.)	Accessibility features on this website (619)	
	Hampton Jitney (U.S.)	Website and technology accessibility statement (252)	
	Peter Pan Buses (U.S.)	Accessibility – What you need to know (1,855)	
	Presidio Go Shuttle (U.S.)	Accessibility statement (211)	
	Bus Eirann (Ireland)	Accessibility (192)	
	Dublin Bus (Ireland)	Accessibility (357) Accessibility statement (487) Dublin bus accessibility police (360)	
	Expressway (Ireland)	Accessibility (1,184)	
	Go-Ahead Ireland (Ireland)	Accessibility and travel assistance (1,682)	
	LUAS (Ireland)	Accessibility (3,851)	
	Murrays (Australia)	Murrays website accessibility statement (638)	
Scandinavian	Vy Buss (Norway)	- Accessibility (1,497) - Accessibility on the bus (129)	1,626 tokens
Neo-Latin	Keolis Group (France)	Declaration of accessibility (824)	1,092 tokens
	Alsa (Spain)	Accessible mobility (268)	
Asian	Citybus – Hong Kong (China)	Accessibility statement (69)	369 tokens
	Kowloon Motor Bus (China)	Easy access buses (300)	

Table 3. The *TrAc corpus – TrAc-B* subcorpus

Table 3 displays the bus operators chosen for the *TrAc-B* subcorpus. Companies operating in this transportation sector rank third in terms of token quantity.

Tables 4 and 5 show, respectively, the data found for subcorpora *TrAc-FC* and *TrAc-C*. Ferry and cruise operators rank fourth in terms of token count. However, as shown in Table 4 below, when considering only companies headquartered in Anglo-Saxon countries, these companies provide the most information about accessibility in the entire *TrAc corpus* because most of their web pages or documents are longer than 1,000 tokens.

The car rental and ride-sharing sectors consists of companies established in recent years, many of which operate internationally and are headquartered in Anglo-Saxon countries. Table 5 shows that, as a result, covering a broader range of countries during the data-collection phase was more challenging compared to the previous corpus subcorpora.

Ultimately, I could propose no clear generalizations from a cross-cultural perspective because the number of tokens written by companies varies across different country groups. However, it may be argued more broadly that, for most transportation sectors,

TrAc corpus - TrAc-FC subcorpus (14,040 tokens)			
Country groups	**Companies and countries**	**Document title and number of tokens**	**Total number of tokens per country group**
Anglo-Saxon	Fred. Olsen Express (UK)	Accessibility (1,672)	11,594 tokens
	NorthLink Ferries (UK)	- Accessibility options (511) - Accessibility policy (1,814)	
	P&O Cruises (UK)	- Accessible travel and accessibility statement (833)	
	Irish Ferries (Ireland)	Accessibility: Quality Standards Policy (419)	
	Norwegian Cruise Line (U.S.)	Accessible cruising (3,216)	
	Royal Caribbean (U.S.)	Accessibility for all (1,015)	
	Viking River Cruises (U.S.)	Viking River Cruises Accessibility (257)	
	BC Ferries (Canada)	Accessibility (1,495)	
	Captain Cook (Australia)	We're accessible! (781)	
Scandinavian	Scandlines (Denmark)	Accessibility and compliance status (600)	1,393 tokens
	Eckero Lines (Finland)	Accessibility and assistance services (793)	
Neo-Latin	Adria Ferries (Italy)	An accessible, safe and comfortable crossing (470)	1,053 tokens
	Grimaldi Lines (Italy)	Grimaldi accessible tourism (583)	

Table 4. The TrAc corpus – TrAc-FC subcorpus

TrAc corpus - TrAc-C subcorpus (5,239 tokens)			
Country groups	**Companies and countries**	**Document title and number of tokens**	**Total number of tokens per country group**
Anglo-Saxon (International companies)	Gig Car Share (U.S.)	Accessibility statement (640)	2,817 tokens
	Lyft (U.S.)	Accessibility statement (38)	
	Uber (U.S.)	Accessibility (1,448)	
	Zipcar (U.S.)	Accessibility certificate document (651)	
Neo-Latin	Cabify (Spain)	Accessibility (888)	888 tokens
Asian	Gojek (Indonesia)	Accessibility & Inclusion: Building a #SuperApp for everyone (2,164)	2,164 tokens

Table 5. The *TrAc corpus – TrAc-C* subcorpus

Canadian and Australian companies display, on average, the highest numbers of tokens, suggesting a greater concern for accessibility in these countries. A similar degree of concern may also be noticed in Irish companies and operators when examining the rail and bus sectors.

Thus, although the narrow focus in data collection enabled me to construct a corpus that may be considered representative of the language used to address accessibility in the transportation sector, several factors hindered corpus homogeneity. Firstly, compared to other country groups included in this study, there is a scarcity of accessibility web pages from Asian companies. Secondly, certain sectors such as buses, ferries, and cruise operators were left uncovered in some country groups. Third, as previously mentioned, it was not possible to select companies from a wider range of countries for the *TrAc-C* subcorpus.

Although these factors posed challenges to corpus homogeneity, the corpus still retains its representativeness in addressing accessibility within the transportation domain. Moreover, the corpus structure also facilitated its subdivision into the five subcorpora corresponding to the different country groups, including the texts without any differentiation among transportation sectors. This enabled me to conduct the linguistic analysis from a cross-cultural perspective.

2.2. *Methodology*

The aim of this study was twofold. First, on the macro-pragmatic level, the research aimed at identifying the purpose(s) and structure(s) of accessibility sections and documents on the web pages and documents of companies in the field of transport. Second, on the micro-pragmatic level, I focused on the semantic areas and the discourses associated with accessibility, the (under)represented disabilities and learning disorders, and the linguistic choices through which transparency or opacity are conveyed in relation to this issue. In this context, therefore, combining the tools of genre analysis (see Section

2.2.1), corpus linguistics (see Section 2.2.2), and the close reading of texts, seemed to be an appropriate approach.

2.2.1. *Genre-based analysis*

As previously mentioned, the data I collected to build the *TrAc corpus* comprised texts on accessibility, including web pages, statements, plans, and policies authored by companies across various transportation sectors. Therefore, the language data under examination could be regarded as examples of corporate communication. Within this domain and in relation to these specific subgenres, at the current state, studies conducted from a genre perspective include analyses on "About Us" pages (e.g. Casañ-Pitarch 2015) and mission statements (e.g. Swales and Rogers 1995; Aib *et al.* 2021 on mission statements in higher education). Moreover, in relation to policies, research has been carried out on IR policy texts (e.g. Koskela and Crawford Camiciottoli 2020) with a focus on both their genre structure and the discursive expression on the concept of transparency. However, to the best of my knowledge, no recent studies have investigated the linguistic and pragmatic features of accessibility-related texts.

Working along the lines of well-known genre-based studies (see, for example, Swales 1990) and partly drawing on and readapting some of the categories of moves from the studies discussed in the paragraph above, I closely read the texts to identify their generic sequencing by assuming that these texts could be considered as different genre types with their own structures. Through this approach, I aimed to explore whether the companies under scrutiny adhered to a fixed and conventional structure in shaping their texts and to identify the communicative purposes of the texts suggested by the rhetorical moves.

2.2.2. *Corpus-informed analysis and close text reading*

Corpus-driven and corpus-based methods (Tognini-Bonelli 2001) were used to address the remaining research aims. These two approaches were adopted to analyse the corpus from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective.

The first phase consisted in generating and scrutinizing the lists of lexical keywords of each subcorpus. These words are both unusually frequent words in a target corpus compared to a corpus of larger or equal size (Baker *et al.* 2006), and linguistic items that identify the "aboutness" of the corpus texts (Phillips 1989) and the salient discourses (Baker 2006). In light of this, the analysis of these words has served as a tool to pinpoint prevalent themes, semantic areas, and discourses around accessibility.

Keywords were calculated using the online software *SketchEngine* (Kilgarriff *et al.* 2014), using the *EnTenTen21* as a reference corpus. This is a large corpus of 52,268,286,493 words, comprising 120,252,162 documents downloaded from the web in October-December 2021 and January 2022. I decided to use it because of its suitability as a term of comparison with the study corpus which also consisted of online-available data. I also compared the subcorpora against each other, both from a cross-sector and cross-cultural perspective. For reasons of space, for each subcorpus this study illustrates the lexical keywords with the 10 highest keyness scores. This value, also referred to as "simple maths", compares the frequencies in the focus corpus with those in the reference corpus, and is calculated using a variable (N-value) that is adjusted according to a "focus on" value (this may be of different magnitudes in the software, i.e. 1, 10, 100,

1000, 10000 etc.). A lower and a higher N value focuses respectively on rare or common words, i.e. items that are less or more common in the reference corpus compared to the focus corpus. Keyness scores are calculated through the following formula, where the two *fpm* values stand respectively for the normalized frequency (expressed per million words) of the word in the focus corpus and the normalized frequency (expressed per million words) of the word in the reference corpus.

$$\frac{fpm_{rmfocus} + N}{fpm_{rmref} + N}$$

For this analysis, the focus value was set to 10 and the minimum frequency of each lexical item to five to show those words that are rare in the *EnTenTen21* corpus compared to the *TrAc* corpus or its subcorpora but that occur repeatedly in the study corpus.

Subsequently, using the corpus software *AntConc 4.2.0* (Anthony 2022), I generated frequencies of words related to disabilities and learning disorders. The same software was employed in the second phase of the corpus-informed analysis, in which the extended concordance lines of *accessib** were read to observe its strongest lexico-phraseological patterns (i.e. collocations and colligations) and identify its strongest semantic preferences (see, inter alia, Sinclair 2004) or semantic fields to further refine the results from the analysis of keyword lists. The analysis of the same word in its context enabled me to identify the linguistic choices through which the selected companies conveyed transparency or opacity in relation to their disclosures of information about accessibility and to examine these from a cross-sector and cross-cultural point of view. Particular attention was paid to linguistic items that rendered the information accurate and/or understandable (Schnackenberg and Tomlinson 2016), as well as to those that conveyed vagueness (Jin 2022) — for instance, vague lexical items associated with quantity (e.g. the expressions *more than*, *a number of*, and *approximately*), degree (for instance, adjectives such as *important* and *better*), places (e.g. *everywhere*), and time (e.g. *always* and *recent*).

3. Results and discussion

This section is divided into two parts: Section 3.1 illustrates the main findings from the genre-based analysis that was also informed by my reading of the single documents in their entirety. Section 3.2 then shows and discusses the main results of the corpus analysis through the tools of corpus linguistics and close reading of texts.

3.1. *Genre-based analysis*

Table 6 illustrates the number of texts that reported the rhetorical moves I identified by manually scrutinizing the corpus data. These findings encompassed the different types of pages or documents, the specific transportation sectors, and country groups, allowing cross-genre, sectoral, and cultural comparisons. The counting phase did not consider, however, the single rhetorical moves because there were some texts repeatedly displaying the same moves. Due to space reasons, sectors not showing any of these rhetorical moves are not included in the table.

Rhetorical moves	ANGLO-SAXON					GERMAN	SCANDINAVIAN				NEO-LATIN					ASIAN			
	A	T	B	FC	C	A	A	T	B	FC	A	T	B	FC	C	A	T	B	C
Issue(s) acknowledgement	A-S: 1 A-PL: 1	None	None	None	None	None	A-S: 1	None	A-S: 1	None	None	A-S: 1	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Corporate profile and reputation: Statement of commitment	A-S: 3 A-PL: 5	A-S: 6 A-POL: 1 Guide: 1	A-S: 4 A-POL: 2	A-S: 3	A-S: 2 A-ST: 1	None	A-PL: 1	None	None	A-S: 1	A-ST: 2	None	A-S: 1 A-ST: 1	A-S: 1	None	None	None	A-S: 1 A-ST: 1	None
Detailing the service: Resources account	A-S: 7 A-PL: 3	A-S: 6 A-POL: 2 Guide: 1	A-S: 9 A-ST: 2 A-POL: 1	A-S: 8	A-S: 2	A-S: 2	A-S: 1	A-S: 1	A-S: 2	A-S: 1	A-PL: 1 A-ST: 1	A-S: 1	A-ST: 1	A-S: 2	A-S: 1	A-S: 2 A-ST: 1	A-S: 2	A-S: 1	A-S: 1
Detailing the service: Technicalities	A-S: 5 A-PL: 3	A-S: 4 A-POL: 1 Guide: 1	A-S: 2 A-PL: 1 A-ST: 1	A-S: 1	A-ST: 1	A-S: 1	None	A-S: 2	A-S: 2	None	A-ST: 1	None	None	None	A-S: 1	A-S: 2 A-ST: 1	A-S: 1	A-S: 1	None
References	A-S: 2 A-PL: 3 A-ST: 1	A-S: 1 A-ST: 1	A-S: 3 A-PL: 1 A-ST: 2	A-S: 2	A-S: 1 A-ST: 1	A-S: 1	A-S: 1	None	None	A-S: 1	A-S: 1 A-PL: 1 A-ST: 3	A-S: 1	None	None	None	A-S: 2 A-ST: 1	None	None	None
Contact details	A-S: 2 A-PL: 3	A-S: 2 A-POL: 2	A-S: 7 A-ST: 2	A-S: 8 A-ST: 2	None	A-S: 1	A-S: 1	None	None	None	None	None	A-S: 1 A-ST: 1	A-S: 2	None	A-S: 1	None	A-ST: 1	None

Table 6. Rhetorical moves in the *TrAc corpus*

Most of the texts in the corpus seem to use the same rhetorical moves: *Issue(s) acknowledgement*; *Corporate profile and reputation—Statement of commitment*; *Detailing the service—Resources account*; *Detailing the service—Detailing technical aspects; References*; and *Contact details*.

The first two rhetorical moves are persuasive in nature. Through *Issue(s) acknowledgement*, companies acknowledged the significance of the accessibility issue, thereby establishing a link between themselves and a wide range of users (see examples 1 and 2). This move rarely appears and is used only by companies within three country groups (Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, and Neo-Latin), albeit with different stylistic choices.

> (1) We know that people with disability can sometimes face barriers to accessing air travel which can make it difficult and stressful, and experience additional barriers in accessing employment. [ISSUE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT] [*TrAc-A_AUS_Quantas_A-PL*].
> (2) The right to mobility must be guaranteed to all citizens. The social sustainability of infrastructures must respect communities and propose solutions to problems, promoting integration and a sense of belonging. [ISSUE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT] [*TrAc_T_ITA_Trenitalia_A-S*].

Example 1 from the Australian airline *Qantas* is more personal compared to example 2 from the Italian rail company *Trenitalia* because it employs evaluative adjectives such as *difficult* and *stressful*, which denote the difficulties experienced by disabled people. On the other hand, *Trenitalia* simply makes reference to the right to accessibility and inclusion. A similar strategy is employed by Scandinavian companies that use this rhetorical move.

Statement of commitment is another persuasive rhetorical move through which the companies show their commitment to accessibility and thus build their profiles and reputations as accessible companies. This move is often an explicit statement and appears across the whole corpus, as suggested by examples 3 and 4, respectively, from *Kowloon Motor Bus* and *Alsa*; however, it is more popular within the Anglo-Saxon component of the corpus.

> (3) KMB is committed to providing a customer-oriented bus service. [STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT] [*TrAc-B_CHINA_KMB_A-S*].
> (4) Our aim is for all people, regardless of their circumstances, to be able to use our services in the same conditions of safety, equality and comfort and with as much autonomy as possible. [STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT] [*TrAc-B_SPAIN_Alsa_A-S*].

Under the moves *Resources account* and *Detailing technicalities*, which are informative in nature, companies provide detailed information about their resources and services that contribute to accessibility (see example 5). The latter mostly pertains to technical provisions ensuring web accessibility (see example 6). This move is less frequent in texts released by companies within the Neo-Latin country group, and ferry and cruise operators and car-rental and ride-sharing companies rarely employ this strategy.

> (5) At all airports, specially trained staff is at the service of our passengers with disabilities. We offer free wheelchairs and transport vehicles with escorts for departure and arrival. [RESOURCES ACCOUNT] [*TrAc-A_SWITZERLAND_SWISS_A-S*].

(6) Our Website implements Accessible Rich Internet Applications (WAI-ARIA) 1.1 to enhance Web accessibility. Also, we accommodate screen readers, ensuring that the information is provided accurately in case the functionalities are not fully available. [DETAILING TECHNICALITIES] [*A_TrAc-A_JAPAN_ALL NIPPON AIRWAYS_A-S*].

References are given to show that the companies transparently comply with existing laws or guidelines for accessible services and websites (see example 7). To allow a wider range of people to understand their information, companies may also include some additional background information about the references reported (see example 8).

(7) gigcarshare.com has leveraged the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 as reference to ensure the web content made available from this site is more accessible for individuals with disabilities and user friendly for everyone. [REFERENCES] [*TrAc-C_U.S._Gig Car Share_A-ST*].
(8) The Airline Passengers with Disabilities Bill of Rights describes the fundamental rights of passengers with disabilities under the Air Carrier Access Act when flying with any carrier, including Korean Air Lines, to, from and within the United States. [REFERENCES] [*TrAc-A_KOREA_Korean Airlines_A-S*].

This move was found throughout the whole corpus, although for non-Anglo-Saxon companies it occurs almost exclusively in texts from airline companies.

Through *Contact details*, companies offer users ways to seek further information. Specifically, companies provide phone numbers or email addresses (see example 9).

(9) Contact us We're here to help. If you have any questions about accessibility on our ferries or at our terminals, call 1-888-BC FERRY (1-888-223-3779). If you have TTY you can contact us through TELUS relay services at 711. [CONTACT DETAILS] [*TrAc-FC_CANADA_BC Ferries_A-S*].

In general, these informative moves are common to most of the texts in the corpus. Finally, it is worth highlighting that the moves described in this section do not appear according to a fixed order. For instance, in some texts, the references are placed at the beginning of the document versus at the end in others, which made it challenging to differentiate between core and peripheral moves. Moreover, some web pages or documents in the corpus do not present all these moves or repeatedly display only one or two single moves, suggesting that companies adopt different content and stylistic choices to write these texts.

3.2. *Corpus-informed analysis and close text reading*

Table 7 shows the most significant lexical keywords found in each subcorpus compared to the *EnTenTen21*. No data are shown in relation to the comparison of each subcorpus with the other subcorpora because this procedure did not provide any significant results, apart from words denoting the means of transport for each corpus.

As expected, the most frequent lexical keywords across all subcorpora are those related to disability, so accessibility is discursively associated more with this issue than with accessible web design. In fact, words denoting the latter aspect appear among the first 10 key lexical items in *TrAc-C* and the Scandinavian, Neo-Latin, and Asian subcorpora (see, e.g., *wcag*, *clickable*, *ios*, and *edittext*).

TrAc corpus – Keywords across sectors and country groups					
Subcorpus	**Word**	**Keyness score**	**Subcorpus**	**Word**	**Keyness score**
TrAc-A	*accessibility*	290.92	Anglo-Saxon	*accessibility*	315.06
	wheelchair	158.7		*wheelchair*	243.77
	disability	121.21		*disability*	119.46
	passenger	96.57		*passenger*	101.25
	stair	87.58		*mobility*	85.553
	ramp	84.416		*ramp*	78.45
	mobility	69.332		*accessible*	77.77
	accessible	64.229		*stair*	70.947
	jet	60.729		*boarding*	62.97
	airlines	58.042		*assistance*	62.707
TrAc-T	*mobility*	280.45	German	*wheelchair*	531.84
	accessibility	261.3		*passenger*	291.15
	wheelchair	208.74		*mobility*	204.12
	accessible	117.9		*impairment*	142.44
	scooter	95.935		*check-in*	134.1
	assistance	77.361		*departure*	125.51
	passenger	74.068		*impaired*	123.21
	railcard	73.801		*assistance*	111.25
	toilet	72.445		*sensory*	107.74
	on-board	71.853		*flight*	104.83
TrAc-B	*railcard*	317.16	Scandinavian	*accessibility*	310.03
	wheelchair	372.16		*ios*	203.68
	accessibility	277.63		*dinstation*	190.44
	buggy	156.14		*accessible*	162.35
	bus	152.38		*elevator*	140.51
	accessible	144.34		*shortcoming*	139.67
	scooter	135.49		*android*	123.65
	tram	131.84		*toilet*	123.19
	mobility	97.019		*disabled*	120.4
	passenger	94.132		*terminal*	96.314
TrAc-FC	*disembarka-tion*	616.699	Neo-Latin	*accessibility*	257.25
	wheelchair	605.694		*tab*	91.467
	accessibility	575.902		*booking*	67.543
	accesskey	486.057		*accessible*	62.352
	embarkation	485.662		*loyalty*	56.786
	disembark	459.565		*wheelchair*	56.267
	stateroom	420.523		*mobility*	51.217
	ferry	347.382		*wcag*	46.066
	onboard	299.805		*airline*	44.751
	scootaround	281.457		*impairment*	40.253

→

TrAc-C	*accessible*	94.311	Asian	*accessibility*	488.29
	accessibility	599.49		*wheelchair*	184.54
	deaf	210.44		*passenger*	110.66
	audioeye	198.48		*disability*	97.212
	assistive	170.24		*separator*	94.529
	wcag	162.27		*disabilitate*	92.537
	rider	130.42		*impairment*	92.318
	separator	129.91		*conformance*	90.167
	clickable	114.5		*scooter*	88.918
	edittext	107.18		*clickable*	83.364

Table 7. TrAc corpus – Lexical keywords

Considering that the companies under scrutiny provide mobility services for a wide range of people with different needs, this result is logical. However, I also found that, apart from the *TrAc-C* subcorpus, whose keyword list also includes words denoting auditory disabilities (e.g. *deaf*), motor disabilities are those most represented, suggested by the high keyness score of the word *wheelchair*.

The tendency to favour the inclusion of people with physical disabilities was also corroborated by the low absolute frequencies of terms referring to other disabilities across sectors, as can be noted in the pie chart from Figure 1.

As mentioned earlier, the *TrAc-C* corpus is an exception to this trend because both auditory and visual disabilities are significantly more frequent in proportion to frequency distributions in the other sectors due to the high frequency of the words *deaf* and *blind*. More particularly, their concordance lines revealed *Uber*'s special commitment to the inclusion of riders with hearing and visual impairments, as pointed out in examples 10 and 11, respectively.

> (10) Assistive technology such as visible and vibrating alerts can help riders who are ***deaf*** or hard of hearing use the Uber app easily. [*TrAc-C_U.S._Uber (A-S)*].
> (11) The Uber Eats app makes it easier for customers who are ***blind*** or low-vision to order food from restaurants at the touch of a button. [*TrAc-C_U.S._Uber (A-S)*].

The same frequency patterns across sectors were observed from a cross-cultural perspective, even though frequencies of auditive disabilities are slightly more frequent in the Scandinavian country group, as shown in the graph below (Figure 2):

Overall, it may be argued that companies in the field of transportation tend to favour the linguistic and discursive inclusion of physical disabilities at the expense of people with cognitive impairments, neuro-divergences, and learning disorders. Despite the practical challenges experienced by passengers within these categories during their journeys and the aim of WCAG guidelines to facilitate web navigation for them, this finding suggests the discursive erasure of these forms of disabilities.

The same discursive associations identified in the keyword analysis were also identified in the close reading of the extended concordance lines of *accessib**, suggested by the frequent co-occurrence of this node with *disability*, *web*, and *guidelines* referring to WCAG guidelines. The adjective *easy*, co-occurring with the verbs *use* and *navigate*,

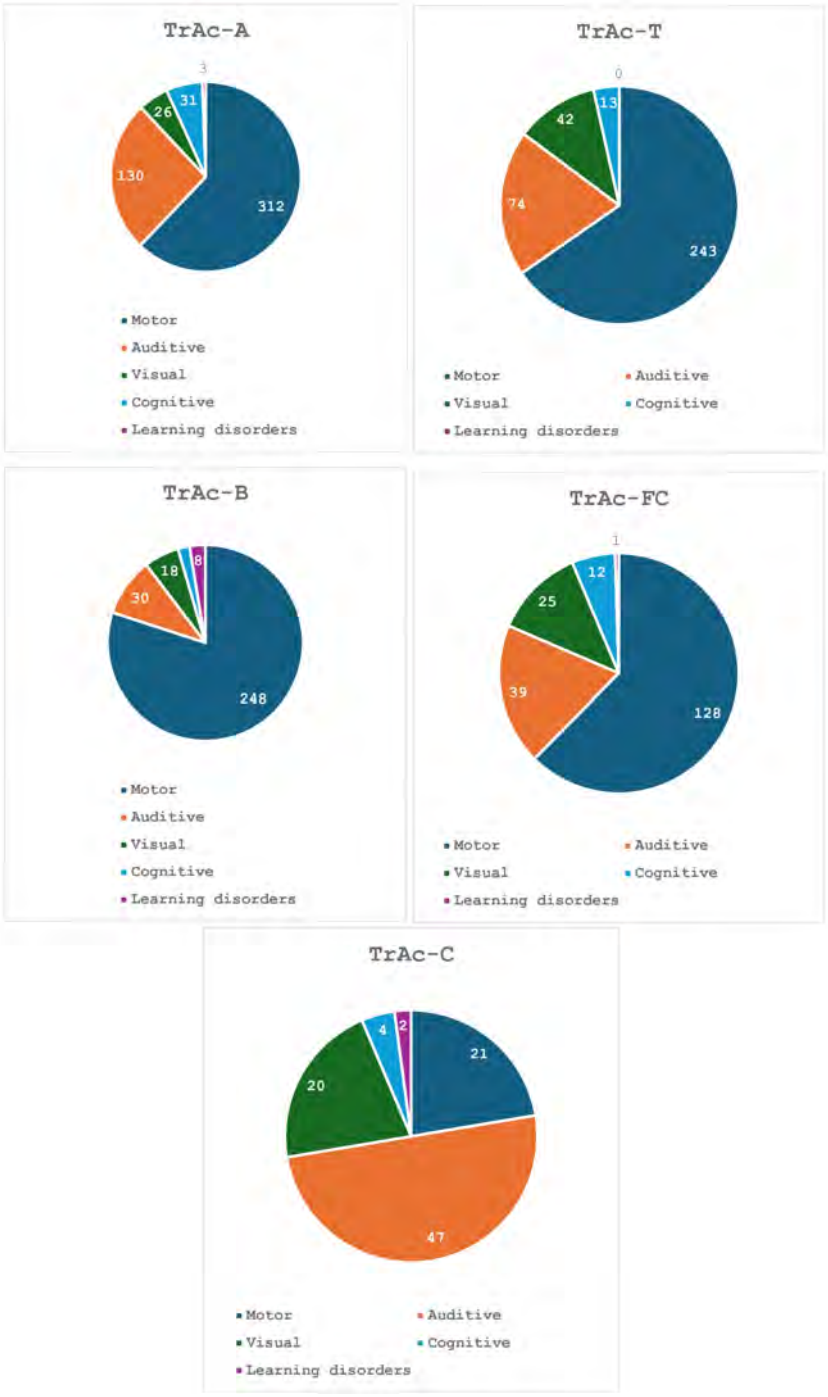

Figure 1. Disabilities in the TrAc corpus across sectors

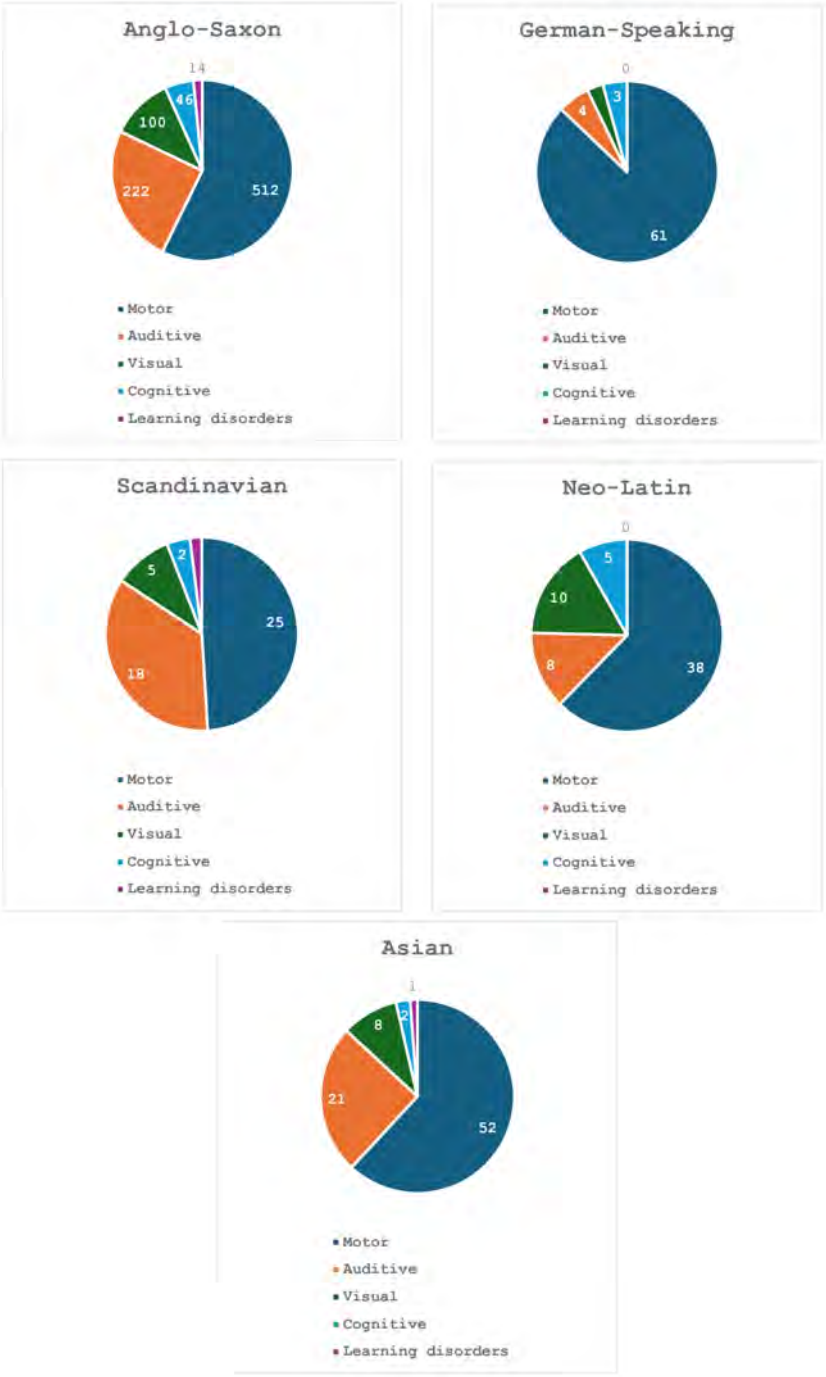

Figure 2. Disabilities in the TrAc corpus across country groups

is another frequent collocation within concordance lines referring to web accessibility, suggesting the discursive link between accessibility and usability (see example 12).

> (12) To help us ensure our website and app are ***easy*** to ***use***, we are working with leading accessibility and user experience consultancies who have significant experience in web ***accessibility*** and designing websites that can be used by anyone, regardless of impairment or ability. [*TrAc-A_UK_EasyJet (A-S)*].

Other items strongly collocating with *accessib**, as mentioned in Section 3.1, are words and phrases denoting the companies' commitment to guarantee accessibilities. These include the word forms of *commit*, forms of futurity followed by verbs expressing continuity, and lexical items projecting the companies' goals (Bondi 2016). These lexico-phraseological patterns are exemplified in examples 13, 14, and 15, respectively.

> (13) Norwegian Cruise Line is *committed to providing* inclusivity and access to world-class holiday experiences by continuously improving and applying the most updated ***accessibility*** *standards* to exceed our guests' expectations. [*TrAc-FC_U.S._Cruise Line_A-S*].
> (14) Citybus *will continue* to *improve* the ***accessibility*** and usability of our website. [*TrAc-B_China_Citybus_A-ST*].
> (15) Our *aim* is to create an ***accessible*** service which is inclusive of *all* our customers and their needs. [*TrAc-B_UK_MobicoGroup_A-S*].

These lexical choices are strategic to creating a caring image of the companies in relation to accessibility. However, their co-occurrence with generic modifiers (e.g. *standards* in example 13), quality-assessment verbs (e.g. *improve* in example 14), and collectivizations (e.g. *all* in example 15 and *for everyone* in example 16 below) suggests a lack of transparency for the specific activities and initiatives adopted to ensure accessibility at all levels, the specific categories of addressees with disabilities or other special needs who would benefit from these activities, and the exact outcomes achieved.

> (16) We are committed to making our website and app ***accessible*** *for everyone*, regardless of ability. [*TrAc-A_FRANCE_Air France_A-ST*].

Other non-transparent language choices include the use of vague time and quantity expressions (Jin 2022). Examples 17 and 18 exemplify these, respectively.

> (17) *For many years*, we have been improving bus facilities to meet the different needs of customers. In aiming to provide a more accessible bus service for all, we have introduced the 'Easy Access Bus' with facilities for the disabled, demonstrating our forward-thinking ethos. [*TrAc-B_CHINA_KMB_A-S*].
> (18) Find out a little bit more about how and why we do what we do: working for an *increasingly* ***accessible*** service for everyone. [*TrAc-C_SPAIN_Cabify_A-S*].

The recurrence of vague language exemplified above avoids revealing specific numerical values to define the exact timeframe and quantity level.

On the other hand, the co-occurrence of verbs and phrases — such as *comply with*, *conform*, and *in accordance with* — in extended concordance lines referring to the

companies' compliance with WCAG guidelines conveys transparency in terms of accuracy. Example 19 is a case in point.

> (19) The assessment has been carried out by means of an ***accessibility*** audit conducted *in accordance with* the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA. [*TrAc-A_ITALY_Ita Airways_A-ST*].

This pattern is more frequent in relation to web accessibility than disability inclusion, suggesting either a lack of transparency in relation to the latter aspect or the companies' pressure to follow web-accessibility guidelines, implying that the importance of disability accessibility is taken for granted. This result could be observed across the whole corpus.

It is worth highlighting that all these linguistic patterns were present across the whole corpus, and therefore I could find no divergences from a cross-sector and cultural perspective. However, the Scandinavian subcorpus of the corpus represents an exception to this trend. In fact, most of the concordance lines from the texts of companies operating in this country group show the frequent co-occurrence of *not*. These refer to services and facilities for which the companies declare their inaccessibility, as exemplified in example 20 below.

> (20) Timetables in pdf are developed as a basis for printing and are therefore *not* ***accessible*** and therefore *do not* comply with the legal requirement on *digital* ***accessibility***. [*TrAc-T_SWEDEN_Västtrafik_A-REPORT*].

Similar forms of negation were also found in the Anglo-Saxon subcorpus, but they are introduced by the modals of possibility *could* and *may*, as shown in example 21 below.

> (21) We adhere to the accepted standards for ***accessibility*** and usability although where some guidelines are evolving this *may not* always be possible. [*TrAc-B_UK_Go-Ahead_A-ST*].

The choice of this modality is not transparent from a linguistic point of view. This is, in fact, addressed as an example of "vague items associated with 'softening stance-taking' (Jin 2022: 92-93)". In the scholar's words, these are "responsive discursive strategies aiming at displaying careful engagement with [specific] performances" (*ibid*.: 92). In this case, this marker of vagueness is strategically used by the companies to avoid responsibility for any possible inaccessibility.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, I have examined how *accessibility* is discursively constructed and (un) transparently communicated in the field of transport through the analysis of a specialized corpus of web pages and documents on accessibility retrieved from websites of companies operating in different transportation sectors and countries.

In relation to corpus data, airline and rail companies disclosed the most information about accessibility. Cross-culturally, in spite of the non-homogeneity of the corpus,

Canadian and Australian companies show a greater concern about the issue via longer documents.

The genre-based and close-reading analyses showed that, in all the sections and document types scrutinized, companies adopt common and conventional persuasive and informative rhetorical moves, although these moves are not shown in linear order or sometimes were missing. This nonlinearity and the predominance of statements of commitment across the corpus suggest that, even though these web pages were written similarly, the promotional function of these texts is more important than the informative one. This argument may be also supported by the less frequent presence of the informative move *Detailing the service - Detailing Technical aspects*.

Moreover, the corpus-informed analysis revealed a stronger discursive association of accessibility with disability inclusion than with web usability. As for the most represented disabilities, I found that more visibility is given to physical disabilities, although the accessibility of information and some mobility services in the transportation sector are also crucial for people with neuro-divergences and learning disorders. The generic reference to diverse passengers and users (e.g. the word *all* and the phrase *for everybody*) contribute to this discursive erasure.

Regarding the linguistic strategies in order to communicate about accessibilities, almost all companies extensively employ promotional lexical items and grammatical choices, including the use of futurity and commissive statements, to show their commitment to these issues. These choices — together with the use of vague expressions of quantity, time, and places — suggest a lack of transparency in relation to the concrete actions ensuring accessibility. On the other hand, these companies convey transparency in terms of accuracy when they report their compliance with guidelines for web accessibility. Cross-culturally, I found a divergence within texts released by companies and operators of Scandinavian countries, which transparently communicate the inaccessibility of specific facilities and content through the use of negation.

Suggestions for future research might include: (a) the inclusion of web sections not labelled with the words “accessible” or “accessibility”; (b) a possible comparison between private companies and public travel agencies; (c) the application of the methodology adopted in this study to companies or institutions operating in different sectors; (d) contrasting analyses of websites written in different languages; and (e) the possibility to integrate the tools of multimodal analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001).

Finally, in relation to the possible implications of this study, the findings from the corpus-informed analysis might be used as a tool to increase awareness of the need to guarantee a complete linguistic inclusion in accessibility documents via sections for different disabilities and people with different degrees of (digital) literacy. With reference to the results from the genre-based analysis, the identification of common rhetorical moves, some of which do not occur in some texts, might be used as a framework to create guidelines aimed at structuring and producing standardized versions of accessibility web pages, policies, and statements.

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