Making Reading Accessible
Adapting Texts for Emergent Readers

Maureen Stewart
Bridge Program
Bow Valley College
Reasons to Adapt Texts

• Engagement and Motivation
• Comprehension
• Strategy Building
• Stamina and Reading Rate
• Best Practice
Engagement and Motivation

• When text is accessible, learners are more likely to want to read it.
• Text will be more interesting to learners if they can read it
• Being able to read helps students feel successful and like readers
• Build background knowledge before reading by discussing content
Comprehension

• “When we struggle with sentences in a new language, reading takes a lot of cognitive energy”.

• Adapting a text with only familiar vocabulary and grammar structure allows for better comprehension.

• When decoding is at a manageable level, the reader can focus on meaning

• Learners are more likely to retain the ideas in previous sentences and understand the text as a whole.
Strategy Building

• Developing strategies with an adapted text will foster and secure good reading strategies for when the texts become more difficult.

• If there are too many new aspects to attend to, they won’t be develop strategy use.

• They don’t come with suitcase full of reading strategies like non-literacy students do. They need to pack their suitcase as they go.
• Learners already know the vocabulary, freeing them up to concentrate on meaning.

• Learners are not labouring over grammar and vocabulary, and are able to read longer building stamina

• Learning how to read with a text suited for them will increase their reading rate
If we want learners to transition from learning to read to reading to learn, adapting texts is essential.

Learners will not become better readers if the text is too hard and has unfamiliar content.

Reading at a level appropriate for your learners will bolster their confidence and enjoyment in reading.
So, what do I do?

• Limit unfamiliar and complex vocabulary

• Ideally all vocabulary will be pre-taught

• Only write in grammar structures with which they are familiar (simple tense, no passive voice)

• Limit the length of the text

• If the format is different (paragraphs, columns) then pre-teach

• Use one image for every paragraph (at least)

• Stick to theme as much as possible

• Use Microsoft Flesch Kincaid as a guide. The next slide explains how to use Flesch Kincaid.
In Microsoft Office Word there is a tool with which you can gauge the grade equivalency of your text.

• Click the office button
• At the bottom of the box, click Word Options
• In Word Option, click Proofing
• Check Show Readability Statistics

When you review your document for spelling and grammar errors, the readability stats will show. Try to aim for over 85% readability, and anywhere from 1.0 to 4.5 depending on your readers’ level.
Typical Reading Lesson

• Pre-teach vocabulary with videos, images, realia, group discussion, spelling test list, vocabulary games, word wall and quizzes

• Review grammar tenses that are in the text

• Graphic organizers

• Learners need to know the words orally before they read them

• Normally we pre-teach for an entire lesson before reading

• Discuss strategies to use during reading. For example, previewing, predicting, reading past, simple context clues
Graphic Organizers

• These should be a pre-reading activity to familiarize readers with the content of the text, the main elements and the timeline. The graphic organizers should also be reference during and after reading to reinforce comprehension.

• Learners will comprehend more of the text if they are familiar with the basic story elements first.

• The following slide shows an example of a graphic organizer created in Microsoft Office Word with SmartArt.
ALIVE!

Chapter 3: The Crash

- Plane fell through clouds.
- Hit the mountain. Wings and tail fly off.
- People go out of the back of the plane.
- Only the body is left. The plane stopped.
Previewing

• Previewing and Predicting are helpful and necessary strategies for emergent readers.

• As a class, the learners can preview the text with pictures, video, discussion, and targeted vocabulary.

• While the learners discuss what they think the text might be about, the instructor can record their ideas on the board, to be referred to post reading to check accuracy.

• The instructor may wish to provide targeted questions to accompany the pictures.

• The following slide has an example of a previewing activity.
Getting Ready to Read—Previewing

- Do you know who this is?
- Why is there a picture of a car?
- What adjectives do you think of when you look at the pictures?
- What will the story be about?
Ready to Read

• Learners read the text on their own

• Learners highlight any unknown, unfamiliar or confusing vocabulary, phrases, etc

• Read the text at least twice. Repetition does wonders for comprehension and vocabulary acquisition.

• Read with the instructor one on one

• Read as a group. The instructor reads it all first to model fluency, then the learners take turns (volunteer only)
Adapting/Writing Texts

• As an activity to get you started, read the following slide with an original chapter from Alive! from the University of Calgary Learning by Design
• Highlight anything you think needs to be changed, deleted, etc.
• Where would pictures go? of what?
• Think about word order, context clues, vocabulary, grammar
Chapter 1: The Rugby Team

The boys who went to Stella Maris College in Montevideo, Uruguay, loved to play rugby, a type of football. Even after they graduated from the school, they continued to play together with earlier graduates from the same school. Besides rugby, the boys shared a deep faith, or belief, in religion. Their team was named the Old Christians Club, and over the years, they became a strong team. Uruguay had last won the world cup in 1950. Now the Old Christians Club was the best team in Uruguay, and they had just started to play internationally. In 1971, they played against the national team of Chile, a country 900 miles to the west. In 1972, the teams decided to play a rematch. On Thursday, October 12, 1972, the Old Christians Club prepared for their flight from Montevideo, Uruguay across Argentina, and on to Santiago, Chile – a flight of about 4 hours. The team had many young rugby players aged 18 – 26. The captain was Marcelo Perez. Two medical students, Roberto Canessa and Gustavo Zerbino were also players. Fernando – Nando for short – Parrado and his best friend, Panchito Abal, were there, too. Nando was awkward and shy. He was tall and heavy at about 200 pounds. Panchito was handsome, rich and popular with girls and perhaps the best rugby player in Uruguay. Carlitos Paez, the youngest member of the team, was really funny. Roy Harley was a tall, quiet, sensitive boy who liked to tinker with electronic equipment in his spare time. As they gathered at the airport for their flight to Santiago, there was great excitement among the boys. Friends and family joined the rugby team on their flight to Santiago. Nando’s mother, Eugenia, and his sister, Susana, came along. Adolfo (Fito) and Eduardo Strauch, the older cousins of Daniel Fernandez, came to cheer on the team.
Multilevel Classes

• It’s often necessary to adapt the same reading a multiple times.

• All learners get the same previewing, pre-teaching, vocabulary support, etc, but the texts look different.

• Take a look at the following two slides which show the differences between the same text, but at different levels and in different format.
ALIVE!

Chapter Six: Life or Death...No Choice (Part 2)

Roberto knew about medicine and bodies. He said, “Soon we will be very weak. We need to eat meat now. The bodies are meat.” Like all of the other boys, Roberto was very religious. He said they had to stay alive. God wanted them to stay alive.

“It is meat. It is only meat,” Roberto said. Everyone talked about eating the bodies. All 27 survivors said their ideas. Some agreed some disagreed.

Gustavo joked and said, “If I die and you DON’T eat me, I’ll come back and give you a good kick in the ass.” The survivors did not want to eat the bodies. They had no choice. They wanted to live and there was no rescue.

Liliana and her husband did not eat meat from the bodies. Everyone else did. Four boys cut the meat. Roberto used a piece of broken glass to make the first cut. The body was frozen and he cut about twenty slices of meat. He put the meat on the roof of the Fairchild to dry.

Roberto felt good when he put a piece of meat in his mouth and swallowed. He was going to live. The other survivors ate too. They felt strong. They knew they would survive.
ALIVE!

Chapter Six: Life or Death...No Choice (Part 2)

Roberto knew about medicine and bodies.
He said, "Soon we will be very weak.
We need to eat meat now.
The bodies are meat".
Like all of the other boys, Roberto was very religious.
He said they had to stay alive.
God wanted them to stay alive.
"It is meat. It is only meat." Roberto said.
Everyone talked about eating the bodies.
All 27 survivors said their ideas.
Some wanted to eat meat.
Some did not want to eat meat.

Gustavo joked.
He said, "If I die and you DON'T eat me, I will come back.
I will give you a good kick in the ass."
The survivors did not want to eat the bodies.
They had no choice. They wanted to live and there was no rescue.

Liliana and her husband did not eat meat from the bodies.
Four boys cut the meat.
Roberto used broken glass to cut the body.
The body was frozen.
ESL Readers

• ESL readers are not usually made for LIFE

• It’s relatively easy to adapt books such as Canadian Concepts, Easy True Stories and Reading Power

• The following slide shows an adapted text from Canadian Concepts 3

• With the right support, virtually any text can be adapted to fit your learners’ needs and reading levels.
Too Much Garbage

Think about a chocolate bar. What does it look like when you buy it? Think about a bottle of water. What does it look like? Think about a bag of chips. What does it look like?

All of these things are wrapped in plastic. All of the plastic goes into the garbage. If you took all your garbage from last year, it could fill up your living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. You would see plastic bags, food, newspapers, mail, jars, batteries, medicine and many other things.

Canadians like to buy things. This means we make a lot of garbage. Most things we buy have plastic or paper. We throw the plastic and paper away, then we throw the things away when we finish with them.

What happens to your garbage? It usually goes to a landfill. A landfill is also called a dump. It is a big field with a hole where we put garbage. More garbage comes, and then it makes a garbage mountain. Now we have a problem. What do we do with all the garbage? Many landfills are closing because they are full.

Another big problem is many people don’t recycle. They throw paper, plastic and glass in the garbage. People cut down many trees every year to make paper and newspapers. People use oil to make plastic bags. We use many, many plastic bags.

We can change! We can buy things that do not have plastic packages. We can choose products that go in the recycling. We can use things many times. We can buy things that are used. We will help the earth and help ourselves.
Things to Watch For

• Words that are too difficult
  • Prepare—make
  • Trouble—problem
  • State—say

• Dangling Participles
  • Starting at age 20, Margie taught for 10 years.
  • Margie started teaching 10 years ago. She was 20 years old.

• Unnecessary information
  • Paul, the son of a former banker, likes to play soccer.
  • Paul likes to play soccer.
Successful Readers

• Your learners will benefit from adapted readings, and will become stronger readers with an increased confidence in their ability to read.

• Special thanks to my mentor Joan Bruce. She has changed countless lives with her passion for reading, including my own.