

# Reading at the Right Level: Strength, Confidence, and Growth

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# Reading at the right level: Outline

1. What is the right level for learning?
2. The CLB and the development of literacy skills
3. Cognitive load
4. Independent level, instructional level, and frustration level
5. The benefits of reading at independent level
6. Factors that affect text difficulty
7. The development of sentence reading
8. Instructional approaches that support reading at the right level

# What is the right level for learning?

**my curiosity is  
awakened**

**I can learn  
from this**

**I wonder how  
you do that...I  
think I see a  
way**

**I feel good  
about what I  
can do**

**I think I can  
do this**

**I think I can  
do this with  
help**

**I feel up to  
this challenge**

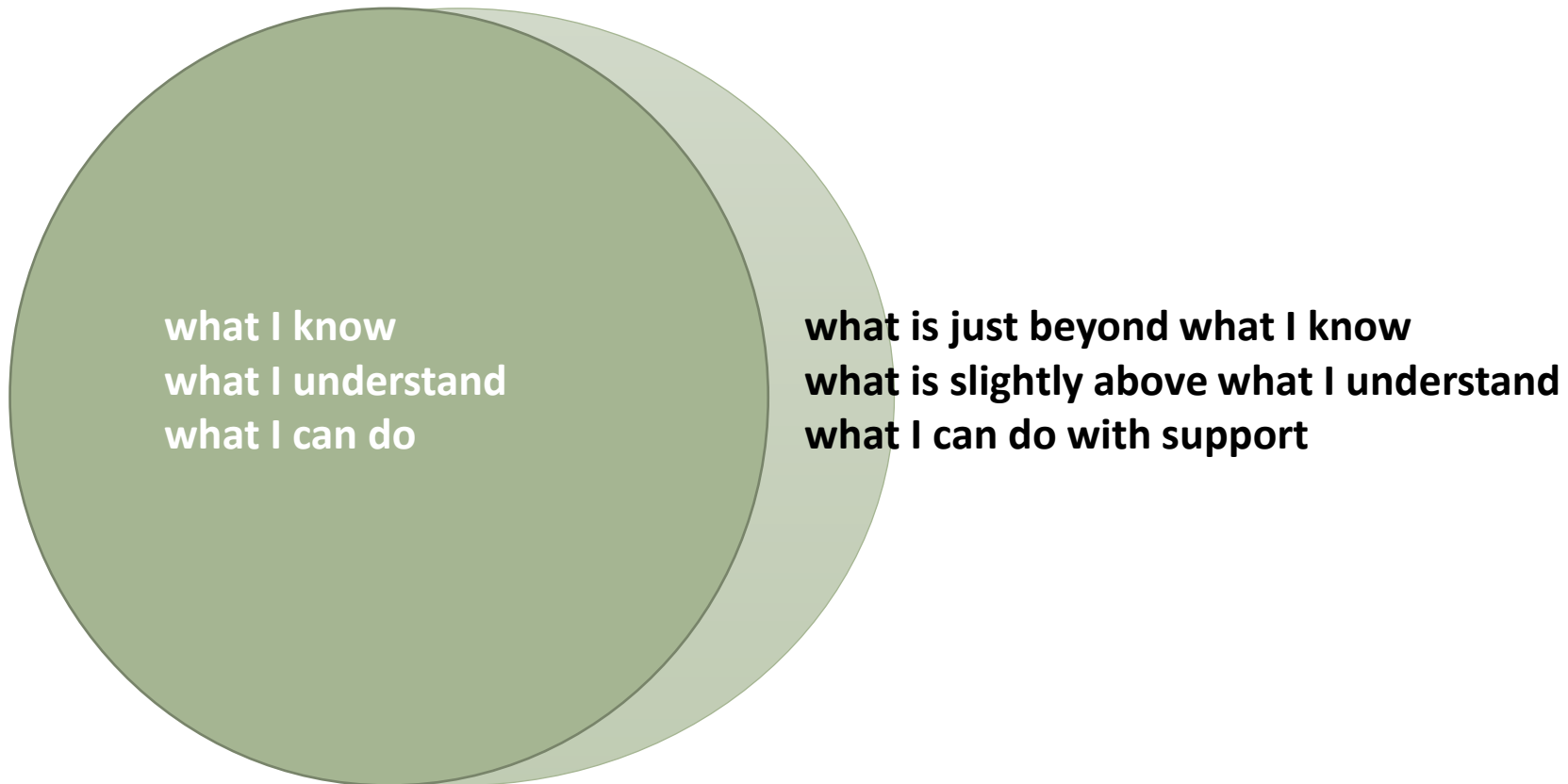
**I bet I could  
do that**

**I am interested  
in learning this**

**I had never  
thought of  
that before**

**I feel  
increasingly  
confident**

# What is the right level for learning?



## **zone of proximal development**

Lev Vygotsky (1931)

Learners will learn when they are able to interact with more knowledgeable others...The ZPD is the area of learning that happens when a learner is helped by someone with a higher understanding or skill set.

## **comprehensible input +1**

Stephen Krashen (1978)

Learners will acquire language in a natural order when presented with comprehensible input that is slightly above their current level.

# The CLB and the development of literacy skills

- In LINC programs, Stage I literacy learners are designated by “L” after their reading and writing benchmarks: CLB 1L-CLB 4L.
- There is also Foundation L, a level in which learners are developing their first foundational literacy skills.
- The CLB are based on successful completion of language tasks and do NOT list the development of literacy skills.
- *ESL for ALL* has a Continuum of Literacy Skills that shows the development of literacy.
- *A Practical Guide to Teaching ESL Literacy* has a Framework of Literacy Skills.



## Overview of Continuum Strands for Reading Skills Development

- 1 Oral Communication to Support Reading and Writing**
  - Expresses and shares personal knowledge in relation to specific topics and activities
  - Acquires, develops, and expands oral vocabulary to support reading and writing
  - Makes a connection between common spoken phrases and print
- 2 Developing Visual/Perceptual Skills**
  - Uses photograph and picture discrimination
  - Uses text discrimination
- 3 Processing Visual Information (pictures, symbols, graphs, and charts)**
  - Uses personally relevant photos and pictures
  - Recognizes symbols, signs, and colour coding
- 4 Decoding Text and Recognizing Spelling Patterns Syllables**
  - Recognizes syllables
  - Uses onset-rimes
  - Uses individual sound-symbol correspondence
  - Recognizes spelling conventions
  - Uses inflections, prefixes, and suffixes
- 5 Developing Vocabulary and Sight Words**
  - Recognizes common words
  - Develops a sight word bank
  - Uses a picture dictionary
- 6 Understanding Word Order and Sentence Patterns**
  - Uses knowledge of oral language to recognize word breaks, spacing, capitalization, and punctuation
  - Recognizes and comprehends modals and auxiliary verbs
  - Uses knowledge of parts of speech and word order to comprehend sentences
  - Demonstrates understanding of meaning
  - Uses knowledge of connecting words and clauses to understand longer and more complicated sentences
- 7 Navigating and Understanding Text Conventions, Formats, and Layouts**
  - Recognizes formats and layouts
  - Recognizes organizational elements (e.g., tables, charts)
  - Recognizes placement and design elements (e.g., envelopes, identification cards)
  - Uses elements to guide the reader through the text (e.g., titles, page numbers)
- 8 Reading with Comprehension, Fluency and Expression**
  - Demonstrates print awareness
  - Activates background knowledge
  - Uses and selects reading strategies
  - Focuses on meaning of what is being read/recognizes that print carries meaning
  - Reads accurately and with speed
- 9 Reading with Social and Critical Awareness**
  - Recognizes the purpose and intentions of various texts
  - Identifies how the text is designed to direct a response
  - Questions the intentions and evaluates response options



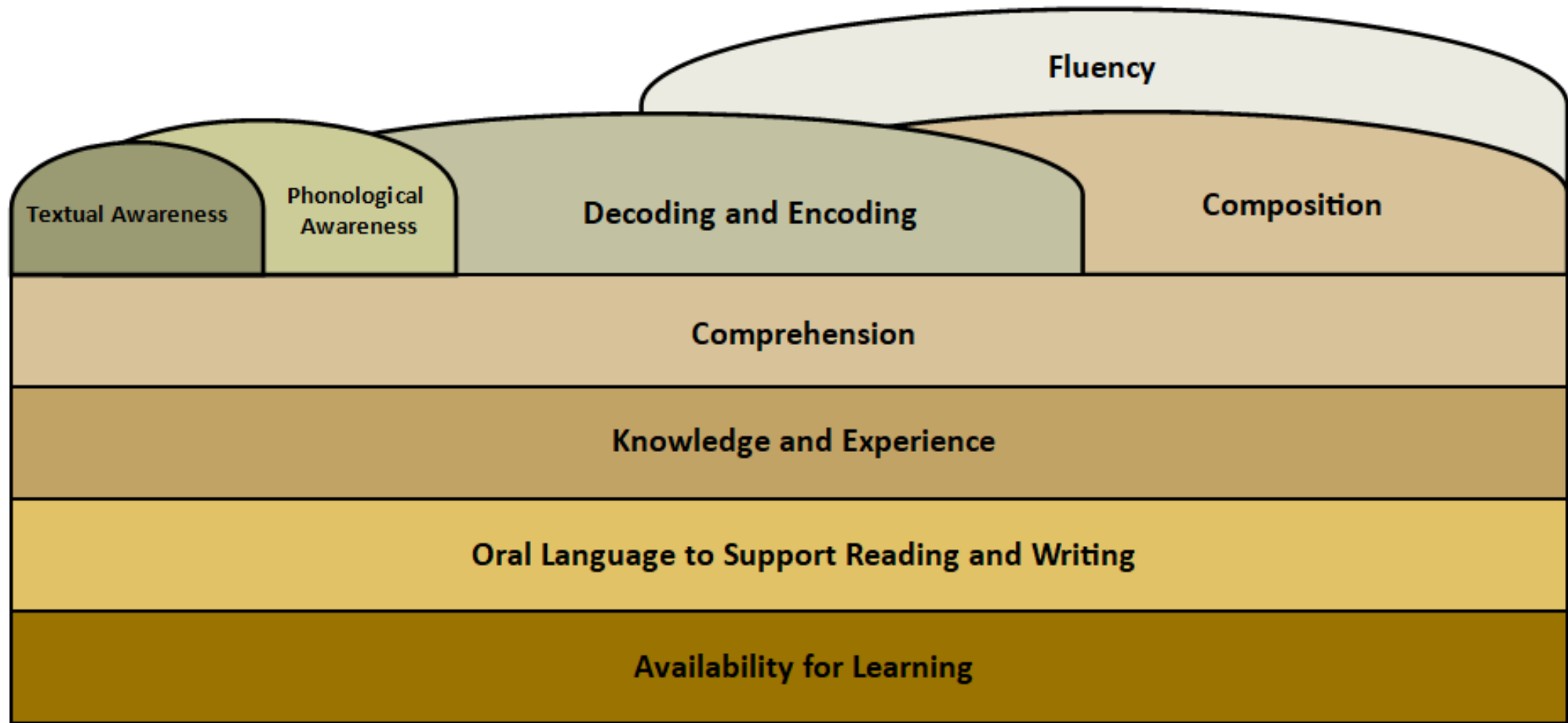
## Overview of the Continuum Strands for Writing Skills Development

- 1 Oral Communication to Support Reading and Writing**
  - Expresses and shares personal knowledge in relation to specific topics and activities
  - Acquires, develops, and expands oral vocabulary to support reading and writing
  - Makes a connection between common spoken phrases and print
- 2 Developing Visual/Motor Skills**
  - Develops writing postures and uses writing implements
  - Forms letters, numbers and spaces
- 3 Communicating Using Visual Information (pictures, symbols, graphs, and charts)**
  - Uses photographs and images with text to convey meaning
  - Forms and uses lines, shapes, symbols, and marks
- 4 Encoding Text and Using Spelling Patterns Syllables**
  - Uses syllables
  - Uses onsets-rimes
  - Uses sound-symbol correspondence
  - Uses inflections, prefixes, and suffixes
  - Spells
  - Alphabetizes
- 5 Vocabulary and Sight Word Development**
  - Uses vocabulary and phrases to convey the intended meaning and to express emotions and opinions
  - Uses vocabulary and phrases to express emotions and opinions
  - Records sight words to support vocabulary development
- 6 Using Word Order and Sentence Patterns to Produce Text**
  - Uses parts of speech
  - Uses modals and auxiliary verbs
  - Uses word order
  - Uses connecting words and clauses
- 7 Using Text Conventions, Formats, and Layouts**
  - Uses format (e.g., paragraphs, lists)
  - Uses organizational elements (e.g., tables, charts)
  - Uses placement and design elements (e.g., addressing an envelope)
  - Recognizes elements to guide the reader through the text (e.g., titles, page numbers)
- 8 Writing Clearly, Expressively, and fluently**
  - Uses models, supports and planning tools to organize and sequence writing in a logical order
  - Writes expressively from own ideas
  - Uses revising and editing strategies
- 9 Writing with Social and Critical Awareness**
  - Establishes purposes and intentions for writing
  - Uses textual supports to emphasize purpose and intentions
  - Understands and evaluates the impact of own writing

# A Framework of Literacy Skills for Adult ESL Literacy Learners

1. **Availability for learning:** Are my basic needs met? Am I ready and able to learn?
2. **Oral language to support reading and writing:** Do I know the sounds, rhythms, words, and patters of the language?
3. **Knowledge and experience:** What understanding do I bring to my reading and writing?
4. **Textual awareness:** Do I know the purpose of print and how it works?
5. **Phonological awareness:** Can I hear the sounds of a word? Can I break words into sounds and blend sounds into words?
6. **Decoding / Encoding:** Can I break words into letters to make sounds? Can I translate sounds into letters to make words?
7. **Comprehension / Composition:** Can I understand what I read? Can I write with meaning?
8. **Fluency:** Can I read and write with accuracy, speed, and expression?

# A Framework of Literacy Skills for Adult ESL Literacy Learners





# How do I pick texts for the learners in my class?

- There is no direct correlation between CLB and reading materials for literacy learners.
- How do I find the right level?
- Consider:
  - Literacy skills
  - Cognitive load
  - Independent, Instructional, and Frustration Levels
  - Factors that affect text difficulty
  - The development of sentence reading

# Cognitive load

- Cognitive load is the amount of information your brain can process at one time.
- Each aspect of a task can increase cognitive load.
- Anything unfamiliar or challenging increases cognitive load.
- Familiarity (such as sight words) and scaffolding decrease cognitive load.

# An example of cognitive load

- Imagine you are driving
- a car with manual transmission
- filled with people
- who are all arguing
- and are all related to you
- in a foreign city
- while reading a map
- and you have to get to the airport to catch a plane
- you are late
- and you have to pee.

# Cognitive load

Each element of a task can increase cognitive load:

- new vocabulary
- new language structures
- new reading text
- new literacy skill
- familiar skill at an increased level
- new format
- new task instructions
- longer task
- less support or scaffolding
- more distractions
- numeracy requirements
- technology requirements

“A very good rule when you are thinking about cognitive load is to only introduce one new thing at a time. Choose which outcome you are working towards and intentionally design your task to focus on that outcome. All other aspects of the task should be familiar to learners.”

*(Bow Valley College, 2018)*

# How readers use their energy

**Beginning readers:**

Decoding

Recognizing  
sight words

Comprehension

**Proficient readers:**

Comprehension

Fluency

Decoding

# Independent level, instructional level, and frustration level

Emmett A. Betts (1946) developed the concept of reading levels.

Every reader has three reading levels:

- Independent level
- Instructional level
- Frustration level

These reading levels are personal to each reader.

Reading levels help determine productive reading instruction.

The texts at each level change over time as reading skills improve.



## Independent Level

The texts you can read with 99% accuracy and comprehension

*"I can do it!"*

"A satisfying and successful reading experience."

Lems, Miller & Soro (2010, p. 152)

## Instructional Level

The texts you can read with 95% accuracy and comprehension

*"I think I can do this...with help."*

"Addresses students at the edge of their knowledge and challenges them to move ahead with support."

Lems, Miller & Soro (2010, p. 152)

## Frustration Level

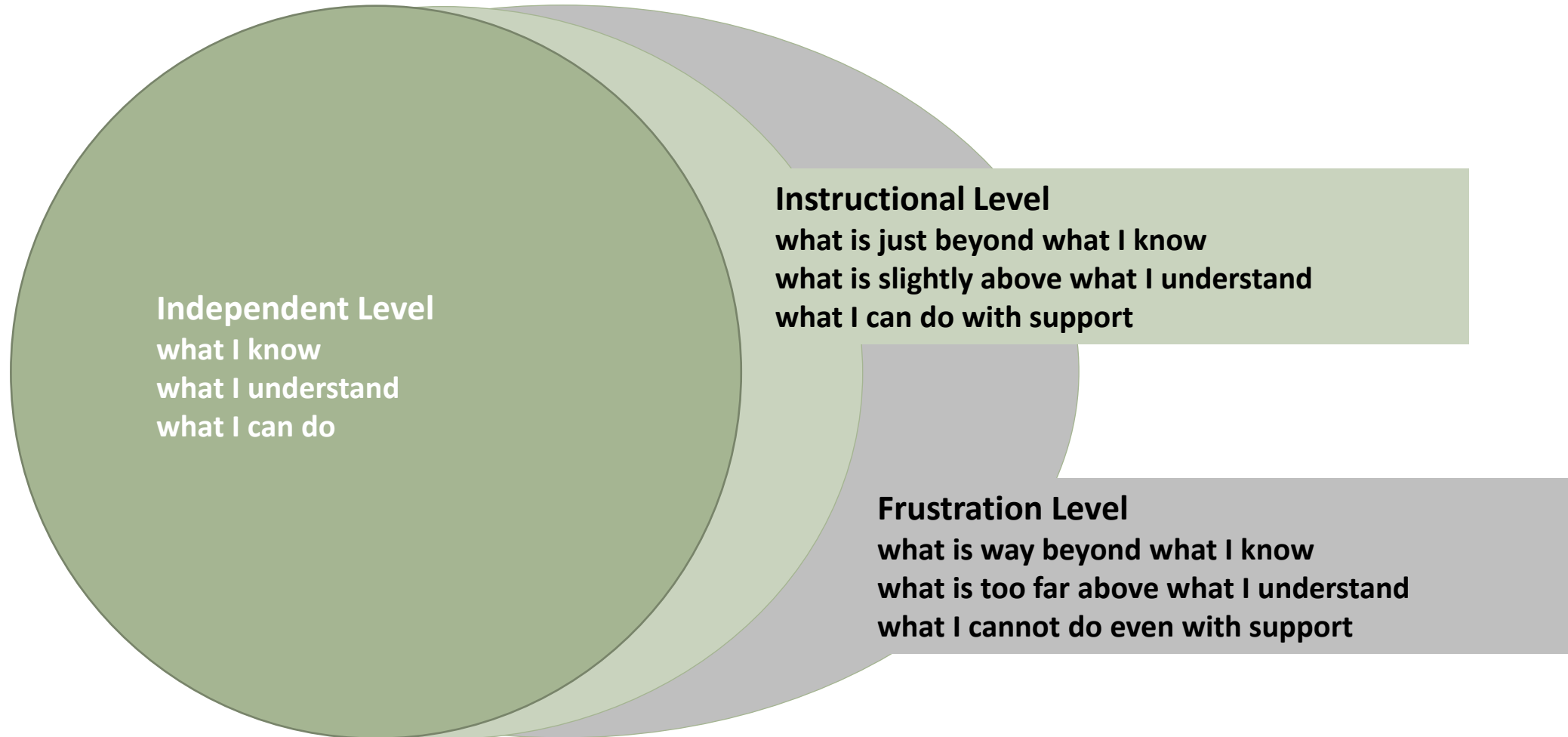
The texts you can read with less than 90% accuracy and comprehension

*"I can't do this."*

"Can frustrate students and cause them to give up."

Lems, Miller & Soro (2010, p. 152)

# Reading levels as zones of development















































What do you read at independent level?













































What do you read at instructional level?









































































What do you read at frustration level?

# Simulation of frustration level (90%)

How to Repair a      

       the water    the sink. Close the sink  ; cover it with a   to catch dropped parts.   the jaws of your   with a layer of duct   to avoid   the fixture. Establish a place to lay out parts in order of    . Use distilled white vinegar and a soft scouring pad for       mineral deposits on     parts.

There are four kinds of    : compression,         disk, and ball      . Each     is illustrated here. Except for the ball-     , there are two     for each. The less     version will identify the kind you have. The more     one will help as you repair your sink    .

A compression     relies on rubber     to   the valve seat. Rubber     wear out and must be     occasionally. The other    , often called    , last longer but they too can develop    . When these    ,    -disk or ball-                        the     that's causing the     or   the entire assembly.

# Simulation of frustration level (90%)

## Comprehension Questions

What are you fixing?

Why do you put a ☐☉♍ over the ♀☐☉♁■?

What are the different ◆☒☐♐◆ of ♀☉◆♁♐◆◆?

What kinds of ♀☉◆♁♐◆◆ have ◆☉◆♁♐☐◆?

# Simulation of frustration level (90%)

1. Could you understand the main idea?
2. Could you understand the details?
3. How long did it take you to read the text?
4. What strategies did you use?
5. How many of the words could you guess from context?
6. Could you answer the comprehension questions?
7. How did you feel reading at frustration level?

# The benefits of reading at instructional level

## Classroom reading activities

- whole-part-whole
- focused reading or guided reading

## Developing literacy skills

- decoding skills
- comprehension skills

## Practicing reading strategies

- prediction
- making connections to things you know
- self-monitoring
- retelling
- finding context clues

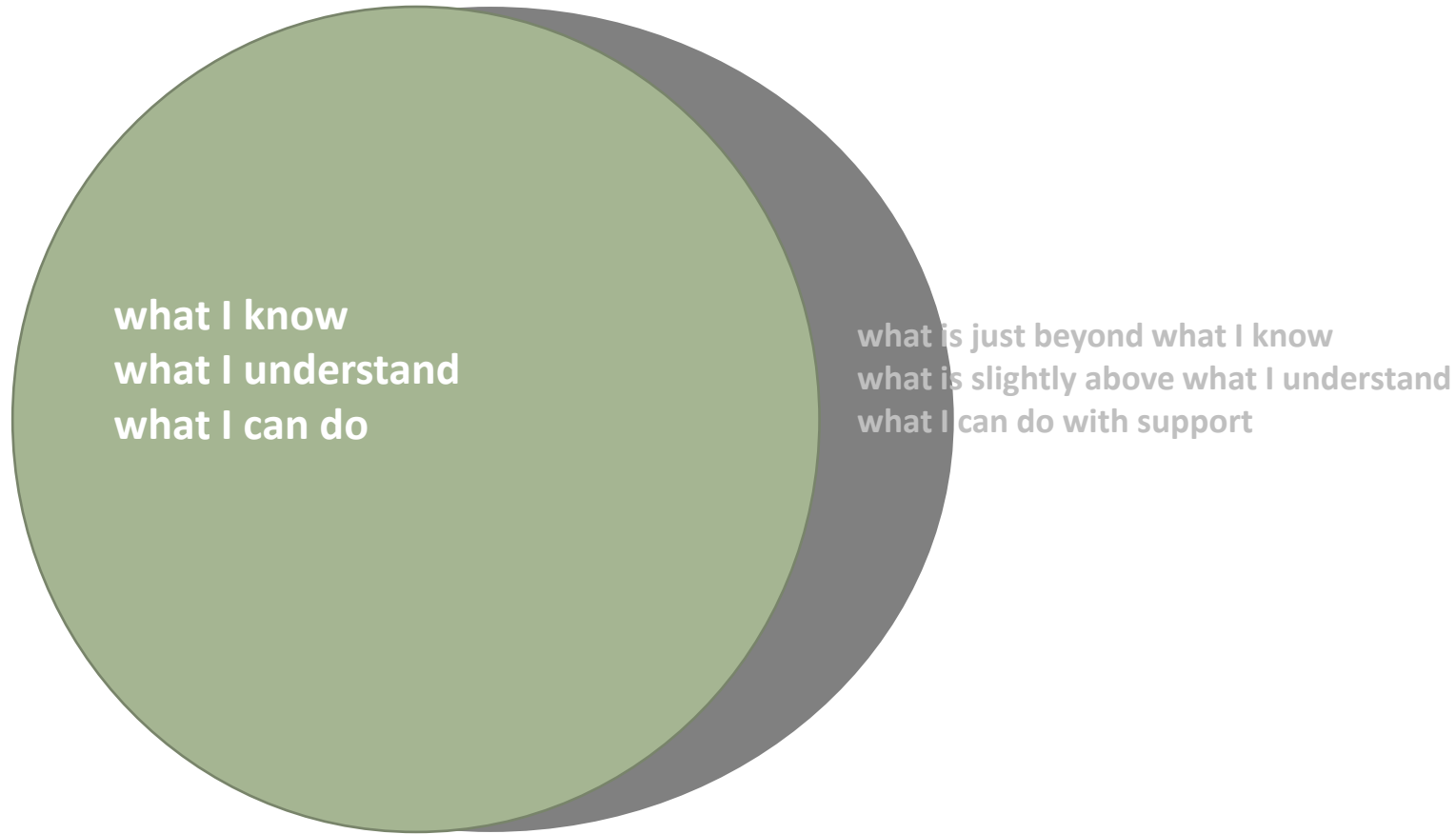


# The benefits of reading at independent level

- Reading for pleasure
- Seeing yourself as a reader
- Reading for new information
- Practicing new reading strategies
- Reading to others
- Developing fluency
- Building confidence



# Reading at independent level: The case for consolidation of learning

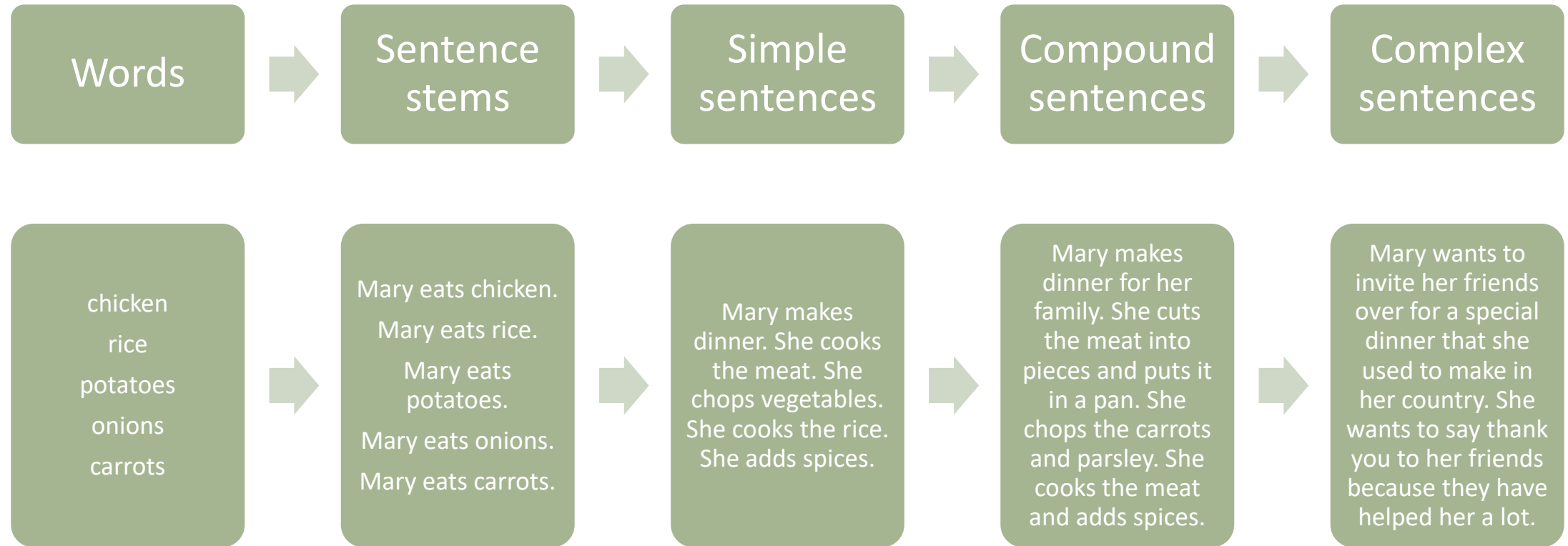


# Factors that affect text difficulty

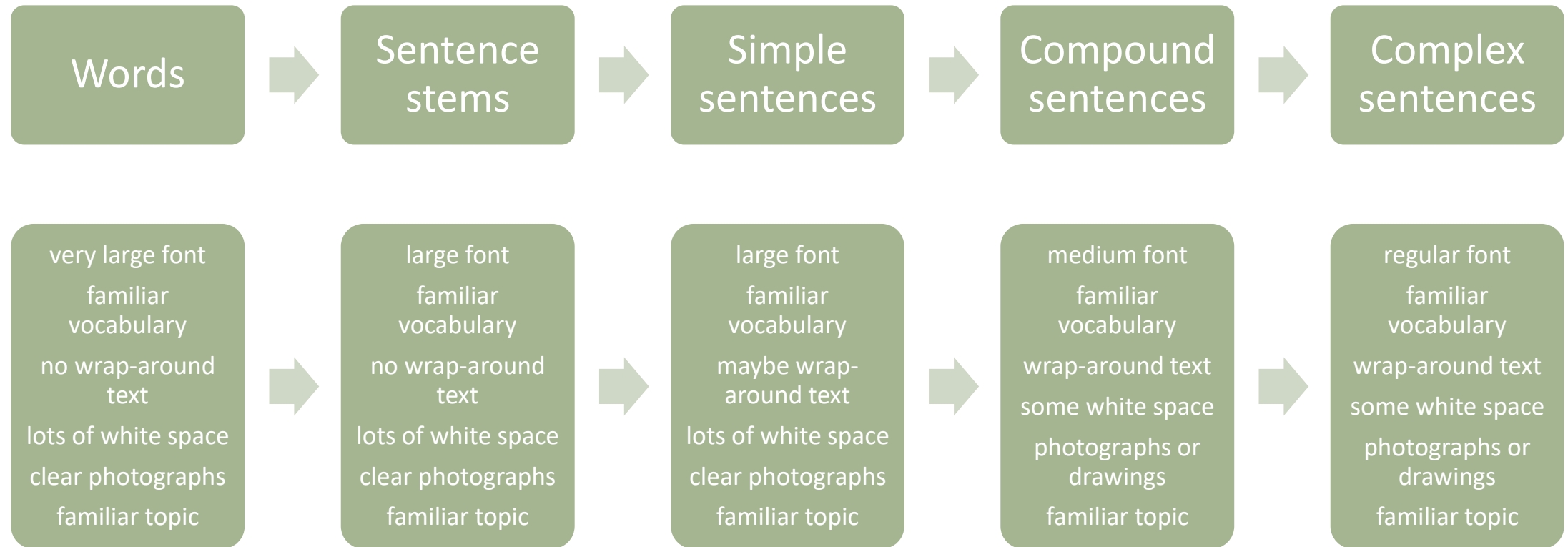
1. vocabulary
2. font, font size, white space
3. sound and letter complexity
4. pictures
5. wrap around text
6. sentence length, complexity, and variety
7. familiarity of topic



# The development of sentence reading



# The development of sentence reading



# Instructional approaches that support reading at the right level

1. Language Experience Approach
  - uses students' own words to create a text
  - by design it is working with familiar language
2. Classroom library/book box with books at a variety of levels
  - encourage students to choose books that are at the right level for them
  - collect/produce high-interest adult literacy texts at the a variety of levels, including far easier than the level you are teaching
3. Use online sources with texts at a variety of levels
4. Re-reading texts
  - Read the same text in class many times in different ways

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