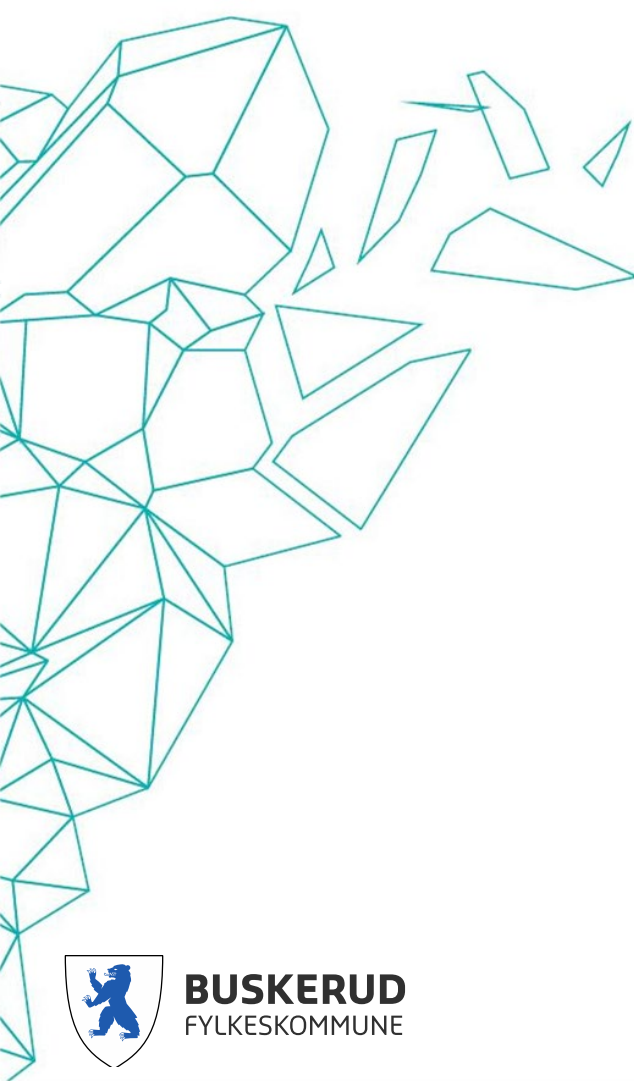




“Well, I’m not sure” User testing texts with youth

Plain, 26 September 2019



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- How do teenagers read texts from the public sector?
- Which strategies do they apply to grasp the message, and are they interpreting the texts correctly?
- Are there any differences in how an adult and a teenager read and perceive texts from the public sector?

Who are we?



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ORD SKAPER
VIRKELIGHET

«Words create our
reality»

Who are our target groups?

We have many target groups, but language-wise, we need to have in mind **youth aged 16 to 19**. They represent the modern reader:

- They are impatient.
- They are curious.
- They are not dazzled by fancy words.
- They are provoked if the language is difficult.





Students
– an important target
group

Lier Upper Secondary School

- Lier is a vocational school.
- It has around 625 students.
- Around 20 % of the students come from a family with a different mother tongue than Norwegian.
- 26 different languages were present at the school last year.



Methods and texts



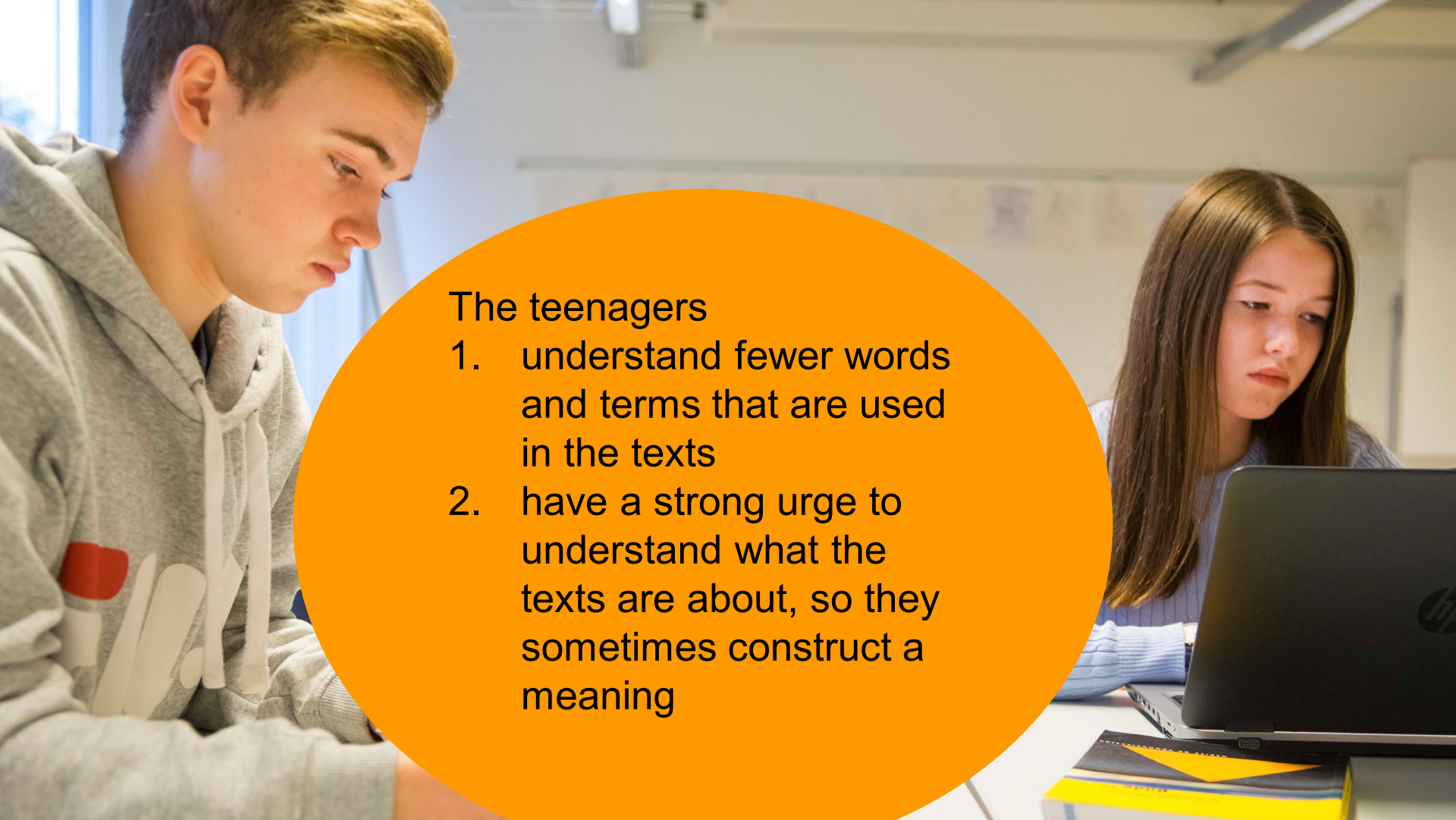
- Six texts
- 40 test participants, most of them aged 16 to 19
- In-depth interviews and “guerrilla tests”

The teenagers confirm the plain language principles

The students

- think that a clear structure, subheadings and bullet points make the text easier to read
- think that the informal *you* makes the texts more personal and understandable
- prefer texts with a friendly and accommodating tone of voice
- perceive the legal references as something that is safe to have, but prefer that they are listed in the end of the text





The teenagers

1. understand fewer words and terms that are used in the texts
2. have a strong urge to understand what the texts are about, so they sometimes construct a meaning

The language is not adapted to the target group

- The texts contain many words that the students do not understand.
- The students describe the language as *adult-like* and *formal*.
- The style of the language makes the students miss the main message.

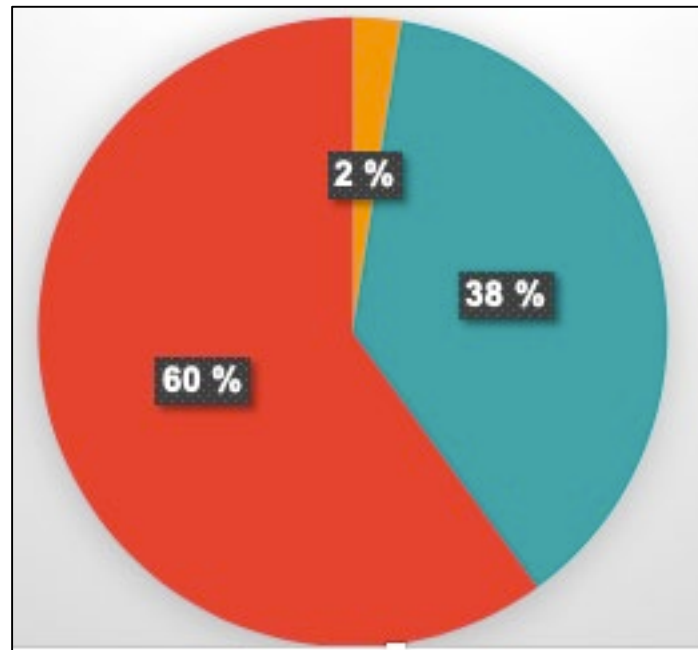
“There were a lot of complicated words that I hadn’t heard before.”

“The words were adult-like and not very common today. The text seemed like it was written by a 60 or 70 year old.



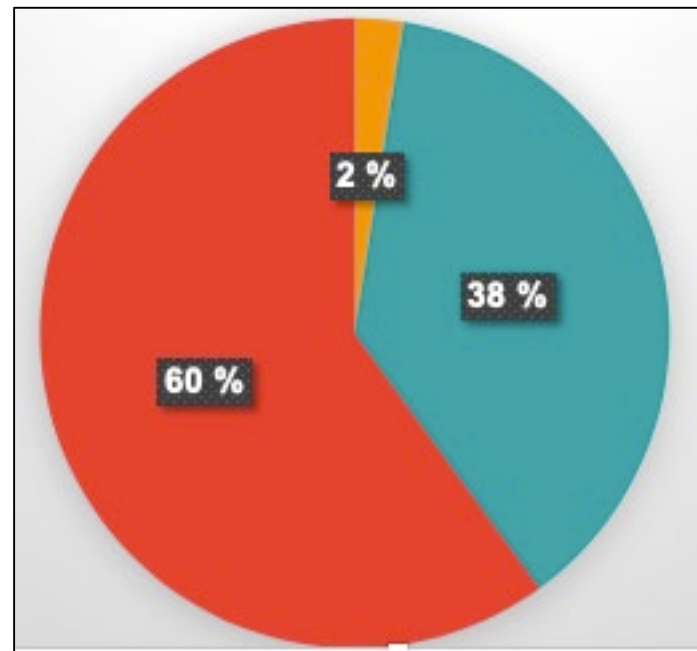
Three main groups of readers

1. The ones who are able to grasp the main message.
2. The ones who understand that they do not understand what the texts are about (and therefore ask for help).
3. The ones who misinterpret the texts.



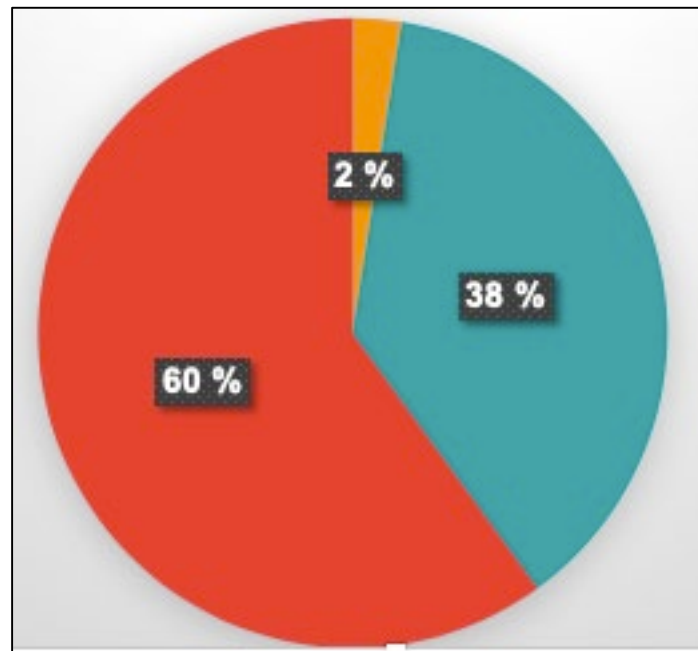
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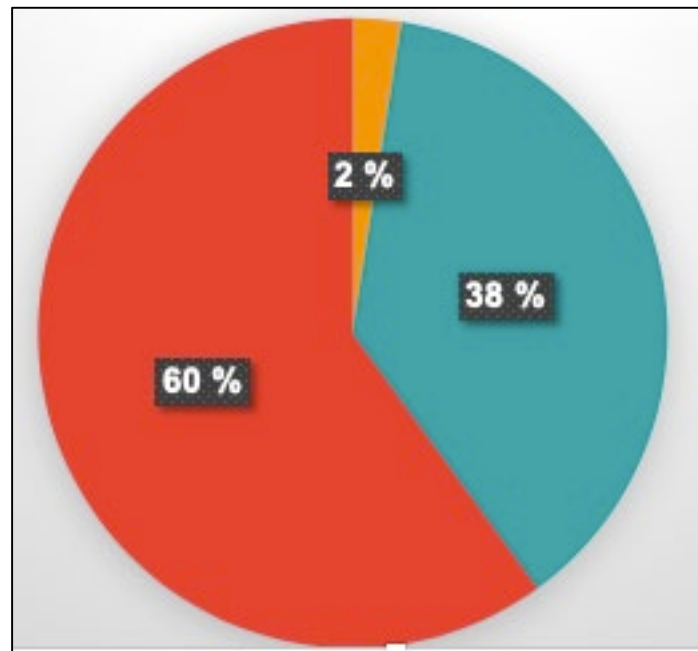
“Well, I’m not sure.”

“I would have asked my father, who is a lawyer.”

“I am not sure what this means. I would have asked my teacher. I would have asked someone who is more able to read it than me.”

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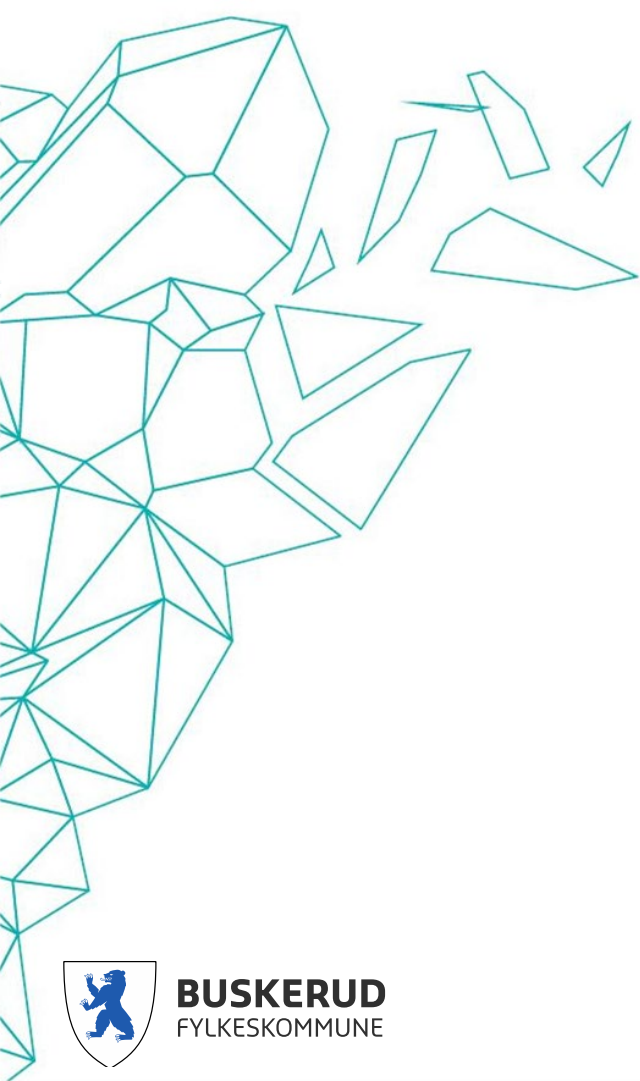


What have we learned?

- The texts need to be adapted to their users.
- There is a large will to understand in this target group.

“We learn more about how to analyse poems than how to read such letters.”





Thank you!

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