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Dyslectic and Dysgraphic Learners in the EFL Classroom: Towards an Inclusive Education Environment

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Dyslectic and Dysgraphic Learners in the EFL Classroom:
Towards an Inclusive Education Environment

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Introduction

Learning foreign languages by learners with learning disorders is seen by some experts as "the ultimate foreign language education challenge" (c.f. DiFino & Lombardino, 2004). Its complexity and necessary interdisciplinarity (educational studies, medicine, special pedagogy, and special psychology) may be the reason why, comparing to other fields of language pedagogy, it remains the area with many open questions and a rather limited number of researchers looking for answers (e.g. Bernard, 2000; Cain & Oakhill, 2007; DiFino & Lombardino, 2004; Dinklage, 1971; Gajar, 1987; Ganschow & Sparks, 2001; Ganschow et al., 1991; Kormos & Kontra, 2008; Kormos & Smith, 2012; Schwarz, 1997; Sparks, 2001, 2005, 2006; Sparks, Ganschow, & Javorsky, 1998; Wight, 2015 and others).

Equally challenging is teaching foreign languages to these learners. Only recently, several important research studies and teaching manuals to support foreign language teachers have been published (Arries, 1999; Daloiso, 2017a, 2017b; Davis et al., 2004; Nijakowska, 2010, Nijakowska et al., 2013; Schneider & Crombie, 2003; Delaney, 2016).

In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the problem has increased in importance after both countries began introducing the principles of inclusive education (*School Act - Law No. 561/2004* in the Czech Republic and *School Act - Law No. 245/2008* in Slovakia) and after they both included an early start of teaching one foreign language as a compulsory subject (related mostly to teaching English as a foreign language) to the primary level of education. Both changes have been affecting a significant number of learners with various special educational needs who – before applying the new legislation – had mostly been excluded from foreign language classes (under a well-meant belief that they

should concentrate on gaining an appropriate level of literacy in their mother language or the state language instead).

Why have these two changes – otherwise highly valued and welcome – caused so many serious problems for practicing teachers in both countries? The (combined) results of the previous research studies (Janíková, 2007, 2009; Janíková et al., 2013; Jursová Zacharová, 2012; Hanušová, 2008, 2012; Hanušová & Mlýnková, 2007; Hurajová, 2012; Kostková & Píšová, 2012; Grenarová, 2012; Grenarová & Vítková, 2009, 2012; Cimermanová, 2015; Pokrivčáková, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2015; Vačková & Zaťková, 2003) showed the following problems, risks, and weaknesses of the existing systems:

1) A great majority of teachers of foreign languages who teach young learners (6–10 years) on the primary level of education were trained as teachers for secondary learners (10–18 years) without appropriate knowledge of the processes that are specific for primary education (developing initial literacy in the learners' mother language, biological and psychological characteristics of young learners, rules of developing foreign language communicative competences of young learners, etc.).
2) Nowadays, foreign language teachers at mainstream schools need to work with SEN learners in nearly every classroom. However, both Czech and Slovak teachers were (and in many cases still are) trained for the environment of homogenous mainstream classrooms without any practical training in teaching learners with SEN. It seems that most teacher-training universities still believe (as a consequence of the previous periods) that the area of treating and supporting learners with SEN should be reserved for experts only (special pedagogues and psychologists) and it is enough if teachers are informed only about theoretical basics.
3) Foreign language teachers have not been trained to deal with LD learners. The teachers desperately lack professional support and information and the situation calls for the update and innovation of university teacher-training courses.
4) The support provided by schools' special psychologists and consultancy centres was felt as insufficient. The cooperation between these institutions and foreign language teachers must be optimised and intensified.

The combination of previous reasons left foreign language teachers entirely unprepared, confused and frustrated about the situation they had suddenly found themselves in after adopting the new School Acts. The consequences may be dire, not only for themselves, but especially for SEN learners who – if not supported appropriately – may lose not only their motivation, but also their chances for adequate development of their educational potential.

Schwarz (1997, p. 1), one of the pioneers in research on foreign language education of learners with special needs, once aptly expressed the reason why more interest should be paid to the area of foreign language education to learners with SEN: "For the student unencumbered by a learning disability, foreign language study is indeed an enriching and rewarding experience. For the learning-disabled student, however, it can be an unbelievably stressful and humiliating experience, the opposite of what is intended". Ortiz (1998, p. 3) added that "these difficulties may become more serious over time if instruction is not modified to address the students' specific needs. Unless these students receive appropriate interventions, they will continue to struggle, while the gap between their achievement and that of their peers will widen over time".

Despite the gradually growing number of research outputs in both the Czech and Slovak contexts (Andreánsky & Andreánska, 2004; Grenarová, 2007; Grenarová et al., 2007, 2011; Grenarová & Vítková, 2012; Hanušová, 2008, 2009, 2012; Hanušová & Mlýnková, 2007; Homolová, 2010, 2012; Homolová & Ivančíková, 2013; Janíková, 2007, 2009, 2011; Janíková & Bartoňová, 2003; Pokorná, 1997; Pokrivčáková, S. et al., 2015; Vačková & Zaťková, 2003; Zelinková, 2005 and others), many aspects of the defined topic have remained scarcely discussed or utterly "untouched".

The main aim of this publication is to analyse the existing situation in selected aspects of teaching foreign languages to primary SEN learners in inclusive educational environment in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Special attention will be paid to dyslectic and dysgraphic learners of English as a foreign language since this group has been seen as the most numerous and most problematic by foreign language teachers (Cimermanová, 2015; Hanušová, 2012; Homolová, 2010; Grenarová, 2012; Pokrivčáková, 2015; Vačková & Zaťková, 2003). Drawing on the structure of foreign languages taught in primary classrooms in both countries, the research will focus on teaching English.

The first chapter introduces in more detail the general context of teaching foreign languages to SEN learners in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, including the legislation frameworks, applied approaches to SEN learners' education, and tendencies in the development of inclusive education in both countries.

The second chapter discusses the particularities of SEN learners' education related to learning and teaching foreign languages.

The third chapter pays attention to the needs of foreign language teachers who teach SEN learners included in mainstream classrooms. The chapter introduces original results of the research conducted between 2015–2017 among Czech and Slovak primary teachers.

The fourth chapter focuses on the extent and quality of expert support provided in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia to primary teachers who teach in inclusive foreign language classes.

The last chapter summarises the recommended accommodations for primary teachers of inclusive foreign language classes.

Finally, the author would like to acknowledge the help of all the students, colleagues and primary school teachers who participated in the research. Many activities were possible only thanks to the project KEGA 055UKF-4/2016 funded by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

Author

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Teaching foreign languages to learners with special educational needs in the Czech Republic and Slovakia: basic context and terminology

1.1 Legislation

Both countries which are in focus of this monograph – the Czech Republic and Slovakia – have more in common than any other two countries. Both are relatively small post-communist countries in Central Europe. Until 1993, they were part of one state: Czechoslovakia. On January 1, 1993, they split and became independent nations recognised by the United Nations and its member states. After their breakup (as one of the consequences of the "Velvet Revolution" in 1989), both countries reformed all their public systems, including the school systems. In 2004, both countries became member states of the EU, and as such they needed to adopt principles of the united European legislation towards foreign language education (e.g. "M+2" rule, according to which each European citizen should be able to communicate in his/her mother language and at least two other languages). This repeatedly led to numerous system changes in both educational systems.

Like in other European countries, foreign language education has become one of the priorities. They have been in line with the long-lasting and systematic reforms.

The legal frame of learners with special educational needs in the Czech Republic is established by five legal norms (for more details, see Grenarová, 2017):

- **School Act - Law No.** 561/2004 on pre-school, primary, secondary, higher vocational and other education (MŠMT, 2004; in this publication, the version valid from the period from September 1, 2017 until August 31, 2018, is considered and quoted);

- **Regulation 72/2005** on providing consulting services at schools and school consultancy institutions (recently updated with the Regulation No. 197/2016).
- **Regulation No. 27/2016** (MŠMT, 2016) on the education of learners with special educational needs and talented learners (in its version valid from January 1, 2018), including its amendments:
- **Regulation No. 270/2017** on education of learners with special educational needs and talented learners (furthermore "the first regulation amendment");
- **Regulation No. 416/2017** on education of learners with special educational needs and talented learners (furthermore "the second regulation amendment").

In Slovakia, the basic framework for the contemporary Slovak education system is set by **Law 245/2008** (School Act), which defines the conditions for securing equal chances for learners with special educational needs in all areas of education, including foreign language education. It is supplemented by:

- **Regulation No. 307/2008** on education of learners with intellectual talent;
- **Regulation No. 322/2008** on specials schools;
- **Regulation No. 325/2008** on school institutions of educational consultancy and prevention.

The main aim of all the mentioned legislative norms was to create conditions for securing equal chances for learners with special educational needs in all areas of education, including foreign language education. Both countries pledged to do so in many international directives and doctrines, e.g. Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Declaration of Human Rights, Human Rights Agreement, Antidiscrimination Acts, etc.

Despite many good efforts and agreements, the contemporary situation of mainstream schools in both countries is far from ideal, however not much worse than in many other European countries. The situation might be characterised by the word from the publication entitled *Organisation of Provision to Support Inclusive Education* (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2013, p. 7–8): "Mainstream schools often find it difficult to provide high quality support for learners with disabilities. In some contexts, the systems of provision to support these learners and their families lack flexibility and fail to take local contexts and cultures into account. Learners' needs may not be identified and assessed until late in the learner's school career and parents may not have enough information about the services available, while bureaucracy and a lack of funding may create further barriers. Further difficulties arise as the number of learners identified as having disabilities and being referred for statutory assessment increases – sometimes as a way for schools to obtain more support both in terms of human and economic resources."

1.2 Terminology used

Both School Acts defined **mainstream learners** as learners able to follow the curriculum without requiring any special treatment. **Learners with special educational needs** (SEN) were learners whose conditions required modifications of content, forms, methods, and approaches to the educational process that arose from the learner's health status, learning disabilities, or socially disadvantaged environment in which learners live.

It is important to note that terminology of inclusive special education is often inconsistent. The terms such as "disability", "disorder", "disadvantage", "handicap", "impairment", "limited ability", "anomaly" and "defect" are sometimes used sysnonymously, other times they distinguish various grades or levels of a learner's "disability". For the purposes of this book, the above-mentioned terms will be used with the following meanings:

- **disorder** – is a learner's status caused by any abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function, or its loss (c.f. Polakovičová & Turzák, 2013), it is not specific to the situation of conditions;
- **disability (impaired, limited ability)** – is a specific condition which generally does not cause problems (in every environment and under any condition). The effect of the level of any disability is determined by the quality of assistance provided (c.f. Pasch, 2005);
- **disadvantage and handicap** – are used synonymously, meaning the learner's state that limits his/her individual's performance compared to the majority (Vašek, 2008);

Terms as an **anomaly** or **defect** that may carry some stigmatising and pejorative connotations (c.f. Lechta, 2010) are not used in the book at all.

In Slovakia, learners with SEN are listed under one or more of the following categories:

- **a disabled learner** (which might be an ill learner, or a learner with a mental, hearing, sight, or physical impairment; disturbed communication skill, autism or other pervasive developmental disorders, learning and attention disorders);
- **a learner from a socially disadvantaged environment** (i.e. an environment that does not support the learner's optimal development and progress, which may lead to a risk of the learner's social exclusion);
- **a gifted learner** (with above-average intellect, music or sport skills).

In 2017, the Czech Republic (through the amendment of § 16 of the School Act) brought a change in the definition of children and learners with special

educational needs, abolishing the distinction between children and learners with health disability, health inequity and social inequity. In its new wording, the learner or pupil with special educational needs is a person who needs supporting measures to fulfil his/her educational possibilities or to enforce or use his/her rights on an equal basis with others. The School Act amendment newly defines supporting measures as necessary adjustments in education and school services corresponding to the state of health, cultural environment, or other life conditions of a child or learner. The enumerative list of supporting measures is provided in appendix no. 1 of Regulation No. 27/2016, on the education of pupils with special educational needs and gifted pupils (cf. Grenarová, 2017, p. 6/35).

In both countries, 3 educational approaches to SEN learners' education can be distinguished: segregation, integration, and inclusion.

a) Segregation

Until 1989, in the undemocratic educational system of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, segregation (grouping learners according to their health status, level of their skills, proficiency, competence, etc.) of learners with special educational needs was the only approach applied. The situation has been changing gradually – at present, it is mostly under the influence of the EU educational legislation. Nowadays, only learners with grave difficulties or handicaps are disengaged from mainstream education and attend special schools (both primary and secondary) where foreign language education is not a compulsory part of their curriculum.

The strategy of foreign language exemption was frequently applied until the first half of the 2000s. It was widely believed that learners should be "freed" from learning a foreign language so that they can concentrate all their energy on gaining communicative and academic competences in their mother language.

Recently, the policy of granting foreign language exemptions has been discussed in detail by Wight (2015). She claims that "numerous students with disabilities, both within the United States as well as in other English-speaking countries, are exempted from foreign language study solely because they have been diagnosed as having special learning needs. This means that many students with disabilities do not benefit from this educational opportunity" (p. 39), they are denied education equal to learners without any special learning needs, although it is guaranteed to them by the national pedagogical document entitled Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004).

The policy of exemption has been widely criticised by many education authorities, since the exemption, as Wheelden (2001, p. 2) has it, "is an easy solution that ignores the problem and may deprive the student of important

educational experiences" and, equally, of the important knowledge necessary for better chances in the job market.

The effort to avoid such deprivation stands behind the changes in both the Czech and Slovak school legislations (2004 and 2008 respectively) which established compulsory foreign language education for all learners (including all learners with special learning needs), preferring the policies of their integration or inclusion to mainstream schools and classes.

b) Integration

Integration, as an approach to education of SEN learners, is defined only in the Slovak education legislation. It is based on involving learners with SEN to mainstream schools and classes for intact learners. They become regular students, however, they follow their individual learning plans, which means that SEN learners spend part of their school day with other learners within a regular school class completing regular school tasks as others, while in the remaining part of the school day, they learn individually (either in special classes with special teachers, or completing tasks in the mainstream classroom with their assistants). Integrated learners follow the same curriculum and target standards as mainstream learners. The school management is responsible for equipping the classes and other school environment, so that it meets the special needs of these learners: modification of school buildings' design, classroom equipment, compensating teaching aids etc. Typically, individual learning plans are designed by adapting educational objectives, reducing or extending content, applying different timing, etc. The aim of foreign language education with this group of learners is to compensate the existing problems and disorders to such an extent as to make it possible for them to manage at least basic syllabus, so they could lead a productive and successful life in the future.

c) Inclusion

Following the principles of equal access to quality education, in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia all learners with special needs should be, ideally, fully included into mainstream education. During the entire course of their education, they should be taught by mainstream teachers alongside mainstream learners, which brings important social consequences for future life of all the subjects involved, since the experience usually has an enriching effect on both learners with SEN and intact learners (for more, see Ainscow, 2006; Bernard, 2000; Stubbs, 2002 and others).

This type of organisation, which is in the Czech Republic called *common education* (*společné vzdělávání*) and in the Slovak Republic *included education* (*inkluzívne vzdelávanie*), relies heavily on the expertise of the teacher who must be skilled

to differentiate the learning objectives and manage mixed-ability group activities, based on solidarity and as team work.

In the Czech legislation, the learner with SEN is defined as a learner who needs to be offered various supporting measures, e.g. necessary changes in education and school services in dependence on their health status, cultural environment or other life conditions.

The supporting measures (always free of charge) may have the form of:

a) consultancy by the school or school consultancy centre,
b) adapting the organisation, content, assessment, teaching forms, teaching techniques, and school services, including prolonging the schooling by two years,
c) adapting both the acceptance criteria and graduation criteria,
d) using compensating aids, special textbooks and special teaching aids,
e) adapting the expected learning outcomes,
f) education in accordance with an individual education plan,
g) using the help of teacher's assistant,
h) using the help of other persons, such as interpreter, scripter, reader, etc.,
i) education in adapted spaces.

These supporting measures are divided into 5 levels according to their organisation, pedagogical and financial demandingness. The supporting measures of Level 1 can be applied by the school without any recommendation by the school consultancy institution. Based on its own diagnostics, the school prepares a plan of pedagogical support (PPS). According to the Czech School Inspection's data (ČŠI, 2017), in the school year 2016/17 the supporting measures at the 1st level were provided to:

- 1.6 % of pre-school pupils (ISCED 0),
- 4.4 % of learners at primary schools (ISCED 1 + ISCED2),
- 3.7 % of learners at secondary schools (ISCED 3).

The supporting measures of higher levels (2–5) may be applied only after the recommendation issued by the school consultancy institution.

1.3 Inclusive education in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

The process of introducing inclusive education into Czech schools has been monitored by the Czech School Inspection (CSI). Since the school year 2016/17,

they have visited schools, analysed and assessed how the new legislation has been adopted in everyday educational practice. The latest CSI report (ČŠI, 2017) indicates the following numbers of learners with SEN:

- 3.5% of pupils at nursery schools (ISCED 0);
- 11% of learners at primary schools (ISCED1 + ISCED2);
- 5% of students at secondary schools (ISCED3).

It also monitored the continual and significant decrease in the number of both special schools and schools with special classrooms (as representatives of the segregation approach). While the number of special nursery schools has remained basically unchanged, the number of primary special schools has fallen from 9.4 % to 8.4 %, and the number of primary schools with special classrooms has decreased from 13.8 % to 12.9 %. The numbers of both secondary special schools and secondary schools with special classrooms have gone down as well (from 11.6 % to 10.6 % and from 16.9 % to 16.7 % respectively).

According to these data, the Czech Republic could very soon join the group of countries (such as Finland, the Netherlands, etc.) with a lower ratio of learners educated in special classrooms or schools (2 to 4 %). The CSI documented the following numbers for the Czech Republic:

- nursery schools: 2,929 children (2.2 % of all pre-school pupils);
- primary schools: 22,934 learners (2.5 % of all primary and lower secondary learners);
- secondary schools: 5,900 students (1.4 % of all secondary students).

While in 2000/2001 the data of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education ranked the Czech Republic, together with Belgium, Switzerland and Germany, among the countries with the highest proportion of pupils in special schools and classrooms at the level of ISCED 1 and 2 (over 4 %), and ten years later, it still belonged to this group (recently the group has also been joined by Denmark, Estonia and Latvia). Current data indicate that the Czech Republic could do better by one group (with 2 to 4 % of pupils educated in special classrooms/schools) and join the group of the countries which includes, for example, the Netherlands and Finland. Most pupils are jointly educated, for example, in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and in Malta or Cyprus (over 99 %) (The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education., n.d.).

The CSI report also points to the many system weaknesses and failures (with typical teething problems of any new project) which have been overcome mostly due to enormous efforts and responsibility of individual schools. The schools were only just learning how to include SEN learners and how to administer all the legislative changes.

Unfortunately, there are no statistics specifically mapping the numbers of learners learning foreign languages.

In the Slovak Republic, the development is rather different, as it was illustrated in detail by the only published analysis (Pokrivčáková, 2015). The analysis mapped and compared the situation in 2009 and 2014. The data were gained from the official *Statistical Yearbooks* (UIPŠ, 2010, 2015).

While in the Czech Republic the number of SEN learners educated in special schools and classrooms has been decreasing, in Slovakia - despite the general efforts to integrate/include as many learners with SEN to mainstream education as possible - the amount of special schools/special classrooms and their learners has been growing (Tab 1).

Tab. 1: Comparison of numbers of special schools and their learners in Slovakia in 2009 and 2014 (source: Pokrivčáková, 2015).

Special primary schools			**Learners**	
	2009	**2014**	**2009**	**2014**
Public	185	178	15,740	21,619
Private	9	10	201	332
Church	5	6	263	349
Total	**199**	**194**	**16,204**	**22,300**
Special secondary schools			**Learners**	
	2009	**2014**	**2009**	**2014**
Public	112	127	5,824	5,986
Private	2	6	21	199
Church	5	5	47	71
Total	**119**	**138**	**5,892**	**6,256**

Foreign language education is not a compulsory part of special schools/special classrooms curricula; however, learners can opt for learning two foreign languages. Tab. 2 indicates the numbers of primary school learners (Tab. 2) and secondary school students (Tab. 3) who learned foreign languages at special schools/special classrooms in the school year 2013/14. Again, the exact numbers were gained from the statistics provided in the official *Statistical Yearbook* (UIPŠ, 2015).

Tab. 2: Numbers of special primary school learners who learned foreign languages in 2014. Note: since learners usually learned the combination of two languages (English + another foreign language), the total numbers in the column do not equal the sums of numbers in individual lines (source: Pokrivčáková, 2015).

Special primary schools Learners learning foreign languages in 2014							
	Total	**English**	**German**	**Spanish**	**Russian**	**French**	**Italian**
Public	4,547*	4,496	1,504	9	426	37	29
Private	639*	639	129	0	121	21	0
Church	37*	37	15	0	0	0	0
Total	**5,223***	**5,172**	**1,648**	**9**	**547**	**58**	**29**

Tab. 3: Numbers of special secondary school learners who learned foreign languages in 2014. Note: since learners usually learned the combination of two languages (English + another foreign language), the total numbers in the column do not equal the sums of numbers in individual lines (source: Pokrivčáková, 2015).

Special secondary schools Learners learning foreign languages in 2014							
	Total	**English**	**German**	**Spanish**	**Russian**	**French**	**Italian**
Public	1216*	1104	550	92	39	5	0
Private	13*	13	13	0	0	0	0
Church	10*	10	9	0	0	0	0
Total	**1,248***	**1,127**	**572**	**92**	**39**	**5**	**0**

Even though the growing number of learners in special schools could evoke the expectations of the inverted development in the number of learners who were integrated/included into mainstream education, the reality is different and - similarly to the situation in the Czech Republic - the number of Slovak SEN learners integrated into mainstream education has been growing as well. Integration here means that SEN learners become regular students, however, they follow their individual educational plans (designed by both the consultancy

centres and schools). As for the organisation of their "integration", SEN learners spend part of their school day with other learners within a regular school class completing the regular school tasks the same as others, and in the remaining part of the school day they learn individually (either in special classes with special teachers or completing tasks in the mainstream classroom with their assistants). Integrated learners follow the same curriculum and target standards as the mainstream learners. The school management is responsible for equipping the classes and other school environment, so it meets the special needs of these learners: modification of school buildings' design, classroom equipment, compensating teaching strategies and aids, etc. Table 4 shows the number of such "internally" integrated learners at all types of Slovak schools. It does not include either the number of talented learners or the number of learners from socially disadvantaged environments.

Tab. 4: Amounts of SEN learners in Slovakia who were integrated into the mainstream education (source: Pokrivčáková, 2015).

Type of school	Number of integrated learners	
	2009	2014
Nursery schools	446	557
Primary schools	20,246	21,168
Grammar schools	518	909
Conservatories	44	53
Secondary vocational schools	4,770	5,725
Total	**26,024**	**28,412**

It is important to add that all "integrated" learners learn foreign languages as compulsory subjects in the same way and according to the same study programmes as mainstream learners.

Although the Slovak legislation defines the third approach to SEN learners' education ("inclusion"), under which SEN learners are involved in regular school activities during the entire time and they are taught by mainstream teachers alongside mainstream learners, unfortunately, there are no documents or statistical data related to this group of learners.

Similarly to the Czech Republic, in Slovakia, the transformation of the school politics on SEN learner education brought many difficulties, problems and

failures which have been overcome by everyday efforts of school managements, teachers, special education consultancy centres and parents.

In conclusion, the data compared for both countries have shown that:

- the number of learners requiring special educational support has been continually growing and the tendency is not expected to change in the near future (many medical reports and statistics point to a growing number of babies born with various developmental disorders);
- introducing the principles of inclusive education puts extra responsibilities on teaching practitioners who work with SEN learners.

Moreover, the latter conclusion supports one of the early research findings that "the severity of a student's learning disability is less important for success during the first semester than are the instructor's ability to modify course requirements and the student's ability to persevere and maintain motivation" (Downey, 1992, cited in Barr, 1993, n.p.). This highlights the facts that teachers of SEN learners must be adequately trained for this task and need continual support of other experts. This is the reason these two areas will be discussed in the next chapters of this publication.

2/

Teaching foreign languages to primary learners with special educational needs

2.1 Introduction

Any special educational needs affect both the processes of learning and of teaching foreign languages. While some learners' health states require only partial adaptations of learning/teaching aids (e.g. some special visual and audial aids for learners with sight and hearing impairments), others may require quite complex changes and adaptations (using special teaching techniques for sight and hearing impaired learners).

Special educational needs have a negative influence on the learners' performance in all subjects and study fields, thus also in foreign language teaching. For teachers of foreign languages, the group of learners with specific learning disorders which affect their processing of verbal messages (dyslexia and dysgraphia) is especially challenging. These learners may be severely affected in receiving, processing and producing verbal information, either spoken or written, which creates quite complicated conditions in the foreign language classroom.

Zelinková (2006, p. 26–29) names the following areas where SENs significantly affect the processes of foreign language learning:

- deficits in mother language development;
- deficits in phonematic hearing development;
- deficits in visual perception;
- deficits in automatisation processes;
- the rate of cognitive operation processing.

In the acquisition of a foreign language, manifestations of the difficulties caused by SEN are "similar as in the acquisition of reading and writing in the mother

tongue" (Zelinková, 2003, p. 162). It is the deficit in the perception of sight and hearing, in the analysis and synthesis of sight and hearing, then the pronunciation deficit, articulatory awkwardness, and so on. The acquired foreign languages also have influence on specific language and cognitive functions, such as short-term verbal memory, aural and visual working memory, phonological awareness, verbal associations, feel for grammar. Teachers perceive these symptoms mostly with the children with dyslexia and dysgraphia, since they are automatically projected to other fields of learning as well (Janíková et al., 213; p. 58).

Dyslectic and dysgraphic students create the most numerous group of SEN learners at mainstream schools and, moreover, this group is also seen as the most problematic by foreign language teachers (Cimermanová, 2015; Hanušová, 2012; Homolová, 2010; Grenarová, 2012; Pokrivčáková, 2015; Vačková & Zaťková, 2003).

Dyslexia is a language-based learning disorder where the learner's brain has problems with receiving and processing verbal signs (letters, words, sentences) and, as a result, the learner cannot comprehend the message easily or correctly. In a more complex explanation, *"dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterised by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge" (International Dyslexia Association, n.d.).*

Dysgraphia is a learning disorder that affects coding a verbal message into writing. The warning signs of dysgraphia include: tight, awkward pencil grip and body position; illegible handwriting; inconsistent spacing; poor spatial planning on paper; poor spelling; tiring quickly while writing; unfinished or omitted words in sentences; difficulty organising thoughts on paper; difficulty with syntax structure and grammar, and so on (acc. to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2015).

When learning a foreign language, dyslectic and dysgraphic learners typically struggle with:

- learning a new alphabet or a graphical system if it differs from the mother tongue graphical system (e.g. azbuka, Hebrew letters, or Chinese characters);
- comprehending a sound-symbol system of a foreign language (tasks involving distinguishing written symbols and sounds, putting sounds/letters together to create a meaningful verbal unit, dividing the stream of sounds/letters into comprehensible units);

- lower sensitivity to grammatical dimensions of a language,
- lower syntactic abilities (use and understanding of the grammatical rules of a foreign language),
- foreign language semantics (e.g. understanding idioms, metaphors, phrases, etc.),
- tasks that require involvement of a short-term verbal memory.

Spear-Swerling (2006, n.p.) adds the following patterns in learners' performance that may suggest possibility of a learning disability:

- The child has a history of oral language delay or disability in the native language.
- The child has had difficulty developing literacy skills in the native language).
- There is a family history of reading difficulties in parents, siblings, or other close relatives.
- The child has specific language weaknesses, such as poor phonemic awareness, in the native language as well as in a foreign language.
- The child has had research-based, high-quality reading intervention designed for foreign language learners, and is still not making adequate progress relative to another, similar foreign language learner.

Difficulties commonly experienced by students with dyslexia at primary school (acc. to Oxford Teachers' Academy, 2016):

General

- spoken and /or written language is slow;
- concentration is poor;
- has difficulty following instructions;
- forgets words.

Writing

- written work is messy and of a lower standard than oral ability;
- is confused by letters which look similar, e.g. b/d, n/u;
- has poor handwriting with badly formed letters;
- spells a word in several different ways in one piece of writing;
- writes letters in wrong order, e.g. tired for tried;
- work is badly placed on the page;
- has poor pencil grip;
- makes unusual spelling mistakes for their age/ability;
- uses unusual sequencing of letters or words.

Reading

- makes slow progress in learning to read;
- has difficulty recognising syllable division and the beginnings and ends of words;
- pronunciation of words is unusual;
- comprehension is poor;
- is hesitant when reading aloud and adds no expression;
- misses out words when reading, or adds extra words;
- fails to recognise familiar words;
- loses the point of a story being read or written;
- has difficulty picking out the most important points in a text.

Numeracy

- lacks confidence with number order, e.g. units, tens, hundreds;
- is confused by symbols such as + and x signs;
- has difficulty remembering anything in a sequential order, e. g. multiplication tables, days of the week, the alphabet.

Time

- has difficulty in learning to tell the time;
- shows poor time keeping and general awareness of time;
- has poor personal organisation;
- has difficulty remembering days and dates;
- shows lack of understanding of "yesterday", "today", and "tomorrow".

Skills

- has poor motor skills, leading to weaknesses in speed, control, and accuracy of the pencil;
- has a limited understanding of non-verbal communication;
- is confused by the differences between left and right, up and down, east and west;
- has indeterminate hand preference;
- performs unevenly from day to day.

Behaviour

- employs work avoidance tactics to delay starting work;
- seems to "dream" and does not seem to listen;
- is easily distracted;
- is the class clown or is disruptive or withdrawn;
- is excessively tired.

Although there are many research studies listing reasons and learners' symptoms why teaching foreign languages to SEN learners may be exceptionally challenging and difficult, none of them claimed or proved that learners with these learning disabilities cannot be successful in learning a foreign language if provided with adequate support.

2.2 Is there any such thing as a foreign language learning disorder? (FLLD hypothesis)

More than 50 years ago, researchers (Pimsleur, Sundland, & Mclntyre, 1964) started studying the so-called foreign language "underachievers" – the learners who failed or were performing less well in foreign language courses. Looking for reasons hidden behind their lack of success, they identified a weaker "auditory ability" (i.e. the ability to process sounds and perform sound-symbol learning).

Probably the first research work discussing the connection between difficulties in foreign language learning and learning disabilities entitled "The inability to learn a foreign language" was published in 1971. Its author, a clinical psychologist Kenneth Dinklage, studied the cohort of Harvard students who – despite being otherwise very successful, highly motivated, and hard working - dropped out of their degree programmes because they were unable to satisfy the university's foreign language requirements. He distinguished three groups among these students:

1. Students in the first group demonstrated difficulties with written language. Their problems were most apparent when reading aloud, in spelling and pronunciation. To mark the group, Dinklage used the Orton's (1964) term *strephosymbolia* (from Greek *strephein* = to twist and *symbolos* = a symbol).
2. The second group in Dinklage's research project was formed by students who had problems with auditory discrimination. These students were "handicapped in telling the differences between similar but different sounds" (Dinklage, 1971, p. 195) and/or they could not comprehend sentences uttered in a foreign language at normal (for them too rapid) conversational speed. This type of disability/disorder was later studied and discussed by Tallal (2000) and Tallal et al. (1996). Dinklage also pointed to a direct influence of teaching techniques and teaching strategies on students' success. For example, he observed that these students had no problems with learning a foreign language when following the procedures of the very traditional academic-focused Grammar Translational Method (GTM). After transferring

to the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) which focuses on listening exercises and pronunciation drills, these students experienced serious difficulties.

3. The third group included students with verbal memory difficulties (more specifically with the affected working verbal memory). In other words, they "could remember what they saw in print but not what they heard spoken in a foreign language" (DiFino & Lombardino, 2004, p. 392). This type of learning difficulty was later studied by Baddeley, 1986; Brady, 1986; Liberman et al, 1982; Palladino & Cornoldi, 2004; Palladino & Ferrari, 2008; Swanson & Siegel, 2001; Torgesen et al., 1994.

Since 1971, Dinklage's conclusions have been discussed - and proved true - by almost all researchers who have continued in his research of learners' difficulties in foreign language learning. Moreover, the possibility of the occurrence of a new type of disability named "the foreign language learning disability" has been considered by both learning-disorders and foreign-language pedagogy sources (beginning with Arries, 1999 and Sparks, Ganschow, & Javorsky, 1998).

Their efforts have been fuelled by the continually reported observations of many foreign language teachers and special education tutors who pointed out to the fact that some learners with learning disabilities may be quite successful in other subjects (even mother language classes) but their difficulties occur specifically when learning a foreign language. In recent years, the idea has been elaborated by many authors (in both foreign language education and learning disability studies), which has led to the birth of the hypothesis about the existence of a new learning disability – **a foreign language learning disability** (FLLD, compare for instance Arries, 1999; DiFino & Lombardino, 2004; Downy & Lynn, 2000; Palladino & Cornoldi, 2004; Palladino & Ferrari, 2008; Sparks, Ganschow & Javorsky, 1998).

In 2006, Sparks published the paper entitled "*Is there a 'disability' for learning a foreign language?". In reaction to* increasingly common usage of the term FLLD and *growing number of research papers on the topic, he questioned the sole existence of the concept and claimed that* no empirical evidence had been published to support the hypothesis. After confronting the term with the current definitions and diagnostic criteria for learning disabilities, Sparks, who was given the credit for identifying this disability, argued that the use of the term "was premature, and, in retrospect, incorrect." He claimed the right on such conclusion as the author and co-author of several studies in which foreign language performance by students with and without learning disabilities and with and without IQ-achievement discrepancies were compared and no evidence of FLLD was found. "Our studies have shown consistently that students classified as having LD enrolled in FL courses do not exhibit cognitive and

academic achievement differences (e.g., in reading, writing, vocabulary, spelling) when compared to poor FL learners not classified as having LD," (Sparks, 2006, p. 546). The good news for all foreign language teachers was the Sparks' conclusion supported by his research results that **all types of learners could be successful in language classes, given the right stimuli and assessments**.

2.3
Using links between mother and foreign language learning

There is a need to pay attention to one more aspect of foreign language education to learners with learning disabilities/special learning needs, which is using links between mother and foreign language learning and avoiding negative interference between them.

Although many research results (mostly by educational and cognitive psychologists) showed that there is a strong link between **mother and foreign language learning** (e.g. Dufva & Voeten, 1999; Hulstijn & Bossers, 1992; Kahn-Horwitz, Shimron, & Sparks, 2006; Koda, 2005; Meschyan & Hernandez, 2002, Sparks & Ganschow, 1993a, 1993b, Sparks et al, 2006, etc.), the previously widely agreed expectation that if learners learn to compensate for deficits in their mother language during the very early stages of their schooling (or even pre-schooling stages), they will be able to use these compensation techniques automatically when learning one or more foreign languages were proved wrong. While this may be true for some dyslectic and dysgraphic learners; the experiences of many learners and teachers pointed to the very opposite: when learning a new foreign language, many dyslectic and dysgraphic learners went literally back to step one: their reading/writing deficits resurfaced and the compensatory strategies which they were once able to use successfully in their mother language acquisition, occurred as inaccurate and inadequate when learning a foreign language (Bilyeu, 1982; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991). Moreover, some special psychologists described disturbing cases of learners who - when exposed to teaching techniques and strategies of teaching a foreign language which were inappropriate for learners with special educational needs – not only kept failing in their foreign language learning, but also their communication problems in mother language re-appeared and even magnified (Bilyeu, 1982). This should act as both a warning and an appeal to all school stakeholders, foreign language teachers, and even parents to be very careful when selecting teaching strategies and techniques for inclusive classes or learning at home.

3/

Primary teachers of foreign languages in inclusive classrooms: their opinions, attitudes and needs

When discussing foreign language education, SEN learners are not the only group who face new situations and challenges. New legislation (see Chapter 1) makes all teachers responsible for supporting SEN learners and creating adequate conditions for their schooling. It may be exceptionally problematic when foreign language teachers have not been sufficiently informed about and trained in dealing with the problems and difficulties the SEN learners may face when learning foreign languages. Therefore, research on various aspects of teaching foreign languages to SEN learners is extremely important and necessary, as well as the application of its new findings into teacher-training courses.

3.1 Previous research in the Czech Republic

The first relatively complex analysis of opinions and needs of Central European foreign language teachers was introduced by Hanušová (2012, p. 9–34). The research was carried out in 6 European countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland, United Kingdom) for the purposes of the project DysTEFL (Nijakowska et al., 2013). The research team administered questionnaires to 412 teachers from all 6 countries, 106 of which were teachers teaching foreign languages to primary learners (6–10 years). The results showed that a significant majority (more than 80%) of respondents felt the need to gain more information on teaching languages to SEN (specifically dyslectic) learners and they would read any source on teaching FL to SEN learners if they found it.

75% of respondents said they would welcome the possibility of further training in teaching FL to SEN learners. The lowest ratio of teachers agreed with the following statements:

"I know how to develop learning strategies of my dyslectic learners."

"I learned how to teach English to dyslectic learners during my university study."

"I developed my own techniques of teaching English to dyslectic learners."

These results point to the lack of self confidence in FL teachers and more importantly to the lack of information and proper training. Consistently with these results, 95% of respondents explicitly expressed their interest in further training in teaching foreign languages to dyslectic learners. When asked to choose the preferable topic for the training, the 3 most preferred items were:

- *FL teaching techniques that help dyslectic learners;*
- *general tips for teaching and managing classes with dyslectic learners;*
- *designing materials for teaching dyslectic learners.*

In general, Hanušová's research results proved the existence of a discrepancy between the level of expectations put on the teachers and their limited capacity to meet these expectations, mostly due to the lack of adequate training. The research also showed that the length of teaching practice had no significant effect on the self-confidence of the teachers with teaching practice longer than 10 years, which led the author to the conclusion that the lack of training on teaching dyslectic learners (and SEN learners in general) cannot be replaced intuitively.

In their study focused on the assessment of SEN learners, Kostková and Píšová (2012) mapped, among others, "what happens in reality at schools". They documented that there was no systematic approach to teaching SEN learners at Czech schools. The responsibility was left solely on the teachers. The authors warned that this otherwise highly valued teacher's autonomy could be hurtful if combined with the lack of systematic approach and no expertise support. And that was exactly the situation they had observed. The teachers without adequate training and support are prone to resort to the procedures, however well-meant, that could be more damaging than helping, and generally "dilettante". The authors conclude that without systematic preparation of teachers the society cannot expect any effective improvements in neither near nor more distant future.

Foreign language teachers' opinions, attitudes and needs were also reflected in the already cited report (ČŠI, 2017). In the school year 2016/17, school

inspectors visited and interviewed teachers from 757 nursery schools, 559 primary schools and 161 secondary schools. The group of responding teachers included the foreign language teachers but their number was not specified.

The CSI's conclusions may be summarised as follows:

1) The teacher's individual approach to pupils was recorded, in case of primary schools, in four fifths of the lessons visited (the increase documented was by 12 % when compared with 2015/2016) and in over two thirds in case of secondary schools (the increase was by 24 %). However, foreign languages were among the subjects in which the teacher provided the least individual support to SEN learners. The personally degrading and didactically unacceptable situations (i.e. the situations when the teacher makes communicational mistakes, violates the partnership and respecting approach, when the development of teaching competences is limited, especially because the teaching is didactically wrong) occurred only marginally in the lessons visited.
2) Generally, teachers understood the need for further professional training and they complained about the lack of sensible possibilities for further study. Even though the participation in further education aimed at the area of inclusive education (organised mostly by NIDV = the National Institute for Further Education) is increased, it does not adequately cover the need for the education of all the teachers who teach the pupils requiring supporting measures.

In case of preschool and secondary education, the situation is even significantly worse than in primary education. Some courses had to be cancelled because of little interest shown. The reason for an inadequate interest by schools may also lie in the fact that these educational activities are not free of charge, and the thematic orientation of the courses includes, in most cases, only partial aspects of inclusive education, and thus to get complex information, the teachers would need to take part in several courses.

The schools also expressed dissatisfaction with the information acquired at training sessions – saying that it is varied, was inconsistent, sometimes unclear, or inadequate, this being the case also in the courses of the National Institute for Further Education led by certified lecturers.

All three research studies consistently pointed to the same 3 problems: the discrepancy between the legislation and school practice, lack of teachers' self-confidence and the growing need for adequate teacher training, both for pre-service and in-service teachers.

3.2
Analysis of SEN teachers' needs in Slovakia

To compare the situation in the Czech Republic with the one in Slovakia, the original research based on qualitative analysis of professional needs expressed by Slovak foreign language primary teachers who teach SEN learners in inclusive classrooms was conducted in the period November 2016 – November 2017.

Research questions

1. How do the respondents evaluate the level of their preparation for teaching SEN learners?
2. What sources of information on teaching languages to SEN learners do they use?
3. How do they evaluate the following aspects of their professional performance:
   - organising lessons with differentiated tasks;
   - finding suitable teaching materials;
   - motivating SEN learners;
   - evaluating learning outputs of SEN learners;
   - adapting teaching materials;
   - cooperation with school managements;
   - cooperation with parents?

Method

To explore teachers' opinions, attitudes and experience of subjects and to achieve the defined research objectives, the **survey research** was opted for. The research was conducted through **the questionnaire method** in a one-shot design (the data were collected from one respondent only once).

The questionnaire (Attachment 1) consisted of 4 items, 3 of which were semi-open items with and 1 five-level interval scale consisting of 7 items. After filling out the questionnaire, a target group of teachers were interviewed (follow-up interviews) to explain or complete their answers, if necessary.

Sampling

The target population was defined as teachers who teach any foreign language (mostly English) at mainstream primary schools (grades 1–9) in Slovakia in inclusive classes. By mainstream schools are meant schools that draw on the general national curriculum, as defined by the Ministry of Education (mainstream schools do not include bilingual schools, special and alternative schools). Questionnaires were distributed from November 2016 to November 2017 to a group of respondents formed out by simple random sampling techniques. First, the

invitation to participate in the research was sent in an electronic form (e-mails) to all primary schools registered by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter MESRS). Schools were contacted using their e-mail addresses (recorded by MESRS). Out of 1927 schools registered in the school year 2016/17 (CVTI, 2017, online), 489 addresses did not operate. 1189 schools did not respond. 67 schools (represented by their directors) were not interested in participation. 249 directors agreed with participation and were sent the questionnaire. By the end of November 2017, the final research sample was constituted, consisting of 141 teachers who taught primary school classes that included at least one SEN learners with dyslexia or dysgraphia.

Despite the high level of non-response, the group of respondents consisted of teachers of both genders, all age groups and with various lengths of teaching practice (ranging from 3 months to 35 years, in average 15.46 years). The respondent group included teachers from large urban areas (Bratislava, Košice), district towns of middle size (Trnava, Nitra, Trenčín, Banská Bystrica, Prešov, Martin and others), as well as from villages of all sizes. 6 teachers taught at schools in small remote villages consisting of just one classroom ("malotriedka"). The research sample thus covered "all existing relevant varieties of the phenomenon (*saturation*)" (Jansen, 2010, p. 6).

In the evaluation stages of the survey, the teachers were treated as a set of 'loose entities' that stand as individual units of data collection, based on methodological individualism as defined by Bryman (1988, p. 38–40).

Analysis

The first question asked whether the teachers feel to be adequately prepared for providing support to learners with SEN during their foreign language classes. All 141 respondents provided their responses that may be divided into 5 groups (see Tab. 5).

Only one teacher stated she was very well prepared for the task. She added that she was the teacher of English and psychology who taught only English at primary school. 3 years prior to the research, she attended specialisation training at Comenius University in Bratislava and afterwards she worked as a part-time school special psychologist. Nearly two thirds of respondents evaluated their preparedness for the task as insufficient and lacking.

Tab. 5: Being prepared to support SEN learners – primary teachers

Prepared to support SEN learners?	responses	%
Very well	1	0.70
Sufficiently	47	33.33
Insufficiently	**77**	**54.60**
Unprepared	12	8.51
Other	4	2.84
Total	141	100.00

Some teachers expressed their frustration coming from the lack of proper training in the last part of the questionnaire (the open questions on their future needs). One teacher even wrote: "NOBODY EVER PREPARED US for teaching dys- learners!" (appendix 2 b).

When asked about sources of their existing knowledge on teaching foreign languages to SEN learners, the respondents offered a relatively wide range of answers that could be organised into five groups (see Tab. 6):

a) **I learned about SEN during my university study:** it was obvious from more elaborate answers to this question that older teachers meant here the general courses in special pedagogy. Answers related to specific courses on teaching foreign languages to SEN learners appeared only on questionnaires filled out by teachers who finished their university study not longer than 3 years prior to the research. This documented the fact that the first university courses preparing future teachers for inclusive education started appearing in 2013 (University of Prešov, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra).
b) **I learned about SEN from an expert in special pedagogy/special psychology:** was the most frequent answer, which should be a comforting result. However, ideally, all the teachers should have to cooperate with special pedagogues or psychologists. One can only wonder who provides the professional expertise support to the half of teachers who did not mark this option. This result forecasts the problems that are fully exposed in Chapter 4;
c) **I learned about SEN during my continual study:** one fifth of the respondents attended the continual teacher-training programmes at universities or methodological pedagogical centres. Many teachers added also the dates of their studies and, similarly to the answers in point b, the vast majority of them graduated the courses not longer than 3 years prior to the research;
d) One fifth of the respondents claimed they had **no information** whatsoever;
e) **other:** more than one fifth of the respondents named various sources,

mostly colleagues and school directors, learners' parents, even neighbours and friends. Some named self-study of internet sources (for parents of SEN learners), Wikipedia, blogs and TV programmes.

Tab. 6: Sources of information for SEN teachers

Sources of information	responses	%
During my university study	43	30.50
From an expert in special pedagogy	**72**	**51.06**
During my continual study	27	19.15
I have got none information	29	20.57
Other sources	30	21.28
Total	**201**	**142.56**

In the second part of the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to evaluate the demandingness of individual aspects of teaching foreign languages to SEN learners. The item was organised as a five-level interval scale (1 = the least demanding; 5 = the most demanding) with 7 items.

Organising lessons with differentiating tasks was evaluated as very demanding (see tab. 7). Only one teacher thought that this part of teacher's work was not demanding at all. The obvious majority of answers (60.99%) was set to the scale between the choices 3 (= demanding) and 4 (= very demanding).

Tab. 7: Demandingness of organising lessons with differentiating tasks

	responses	%
1 = the least demanding	1	0.71
2 = moderately demanding	10	7.09
3 = demanding	44	31.21
4 = very demanding	**62**	**43.97**
5 = the most demanding	24	17.02
Total	**141**	**100**

Finding suitable materials for SEN learners was evaluated as equally difficult (see tab. 8). The results were very similar to the previous item. However, it is important to mention that the acute need for ready-to-use teaching materials was by far the most frequently cited need in the last (open) item of the questionnaire.

Tab. 8: Demandingness of finding suitable materials for SEN learners

	responses	%
1 = the least demanding	0	0.00
2 = moderately demanding	7	4.96
3 = demanding	47	33.33
4 = very demanding	**63**	**44.68**
5 = the most demanding	24	17.02
Total	141	100.00

Adapting materials for SEN learners is another activity that was generally and very expressly evaluated by the respondents as very demanding (see tab. 9).

Tab. 9: Demandingness of adapting materials for SEN learners

	responses	%
1 = the least demanding	0	0.00
2 = moderately demanding	8	5.67
3 = demanding	**57**	**40.43**
4 = very demanding	**64**	**45.39**
5 = the most demanding	12	8.51
Total	141	100.00

Motivating learners with SEN was the item with more distributed answers. The activity was evaluated as demanding (see tab. 10), but less so if compared with other aspects of SEN teacher's work.

Tab. 10: Demandingness of motivating learners with SEN

	responses	%
1 = the least demanding	4	2.83
2 = moderately demanding	18	12.77
3 = demanding	**70**	**49.64**
4 = very demanding	42	29.79
5 = the most demanding	7	0.49
Total	141	100.00

Evaluating learning outputs of SEN learners was assessed nearly identically as motivating SEN learners from the previous items (see tab. 11). These results are surprising comparing to the earlier findings by the Czech authors (Hanušová, 2012; Kostková & Píšová, 2012; Janíková et al., 2013 and others), according to which, assessing and motivating SEN learners could be one of those activities the teacher struggles with most.

Tab. 11: Demandingness of evaluating learning outputs of SEN learners

	responses	%
1 = the least demanding	2	1.49
2 = moderately demanding	13	9.30
3 = demanding	**70**	**49.65**
4 = very demanding	40	28.39
5 = the most demanding	13	9.30
Total	141	100.00

The last two items in the questionnaire were aimed at finding out how teachers evaluate their cooperation with school management and parents of SEN learners. Drawing on the comparison of teachers' answers, it can be stated that cooperation with school management was evaluated more positively (see tab. 12 and 13). More than two thirds of teachers evaluated this type of cooperation (and implicitly support) by grades 2 (= easy to manage) or 3 (= manageable). The average score was **2.25**.

Tab 12: Demandingness of cooperation with school management

	responses	%
1 = the least demanding	32	22.70
2 = moderately demanding	**52**	**36.88**
3 = demanding	**48**	**34.04**
4 = very demanding	7	4.96
5 = the most demanding	2	1.42
Total	141	100.00

Tab. 13: *Cooperation with parents*

	responses	%
1 = the least demanding	8	5.67
2 = moderately demanding	26	18.44
3 = demanding	66	46.80
4 = very demanding	30	21.28
5 = the most demanding	10	7.09
Total	141	100.00

Cooperation with parents was evaluated as slightly more difficult when nearly half of the respondents evaluated it as "manageable", with the average score of **3.02**.

Collaborative partnership with parents is an essential component of effective support to SEN learners. In addition to the fact that parents must agree with any measurement or intervention the school takes, they could, and should, be actively involved in the learner's support in various forms, e.g. sharing information about the learner, taking part in home preparation and helping to monitor the learner's response to the undertaken accommodations and intervention, etc. Parents' help is expected because no one invests more in the child's success than the parent. However, many teachers have reported, individually, less than ideal relationships with parents. Here are some selected utterances:

"Parents are worse than learners".

"The worst are the parents who refuse to accept that their children have any special needs".

"I have children whose parents just do not care. I tried to help but I cannot do it by myself".

The claims that could be summarised as "some parents believe that if their children have SEN papers they should be preferentially assessed, regardless of the real level of their knowledge and skills" were quite common.

The last item of the questionnaire was the open question: What would you like to learn about teaching foreign languages to learners with dys- disorders?

The answers ranged from very short, but expressive ("Everything"; "From A to Z"; "How to survive"), to very elaborate ones (see Appendices 2a–2o).

Many answers were related to the items in the second part of the questionnaire.

The teachers' responses could be divided into several groups:

- need for practical materials (ideally video-recordings) showing examples of good practice directly in classrooms;
- need for general tips of practical teaching techniques and activities that "work" (tested in and proved by teaching practice), so that mainstream learners were not negatively affected (neglected);
- need for tips how to organise classes with mixed ability learners;
- need for information how to maintain SEN learners' motivation since they appear more stressed and more prone to failure than other learners;
- need for instructions how to support "multi dys- learners";
- need for ready-made and ready-to-use teaching materials (teachers felt exhausted by the need to adapt materials for each and every class and for each and every learner);
- need for textbooks (at least partially) adapted for SEN learners;
- need for clear and unambiguous guidelines for assessing SEN learners;
- need for teachers' assistants.

Some (not few) respondents expressed their belief that many SEN learners should not be included into mainstream classes because of two reasons: a) mainstream school cannot provide them with adequate assistance; b) mainstream learners are held back or neglected when too much time and energy has to be directed to SEN learners.

Conclusions

In general, primary foreign language teachers in the research group were extremely disappointed by the contemporary situation in classrooms in which more than two students typically require special educational care, since they have never been trained to deal with SEN learners. They feel "caught in a trap", unprepared and unsure of themselves. Teachers also frequently mentioned their fear that by adapting teaching techniques and tempo to learners with SEN, they would negatively influence and limit progress of intact learners. None of the responding general teachers expressed satisfaction or feelings of being successful.

The research results were consistent with those gained in the Czech Republic (Hanušová, 2012; Janíková et al., 2013; Kostková & Píšová, 2012; ČŠI, 2017) and other countries worldwide, such as Cyprus (Angelides, Stylianou, & Gibbs, 2006), Greece (Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014), Belarus (Smantser & Ignatovitch,

2015), Poland (Starczewska, Hodkinson, & Adams, 2012), Romania (Ghergut, 2010; Unianu, 2012), Serbia (Kalyva, Gojkovic, & Tsakiris, 2007), South Africa (Hay, Smit, & Paulsen, 2001), the United Kingdom (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000). They proved that Slovak teachers, like their colleagues in other countries, find teaching foreign languages to SEN learners an ever-demanding task exceeding their knowledge and skills gained during their university teacher training or teaching practice. Only one third of the respondents felt prepared for the task. More than half of the respondents claimed they felt unprepared. These mostly negative feelings were further emphasised by the dominant sentiment of lack of adequate teacher training (both in-service and pre-service), quality SEN-focused information sources, and ready-made teaching materials.

When analysing teachers' attitudes in detail, it was found that the most demanding aspects of their work with SEN learners were "finding suitable teaching materials for SEN learners" (the average score = 3.74) and "organising lessons with differentiating tasks" (the average score = 3.70). Other aspects of teacher's practice were also assessed as very demanding: "adapting materials for SEN learners" (the average score = 3.57), "evaluating learning outputs of SEN learners" (the average score = 3.28), "motivating learners with SEN" (the average score = 3.21) and "cooperation with parents" (the average score = 3.04). The only aspect evaluated with the score lower than 3.00 was "cooperation with school management" (see Tab. 14).

Tab. 14: Teachers' opinions, attitudes and needs analysis – conclusions

Item		Average score
1	organising lessons with differentiating tasks	3.70
2	finding suitable materials for SEN learners	3.74
3	adapting materials for SEN learners	3.57
4	motivating learners with SEN	3.21
5	evaluating learning outputs of SEN learners	3.28
6	cooperation with school management	2.26
7	cooperation with parents	3.04
	Average score	**3.26**

All in all, our research focused on the teaching of SEN learners has shown that there are similar trends in many European countries. They could be summarised, also based on other research projects mentioned in this work, by stating that the adoption of legislative measures in this field is not accompanied by

sufficient SEN-related teacher training at all levels and this is the real problem which should be immediately addressed. The results of some research studies (e. g. Downey, 1992 cited in Barr, 1993) proved that the severity of a student's learning disability is less important for success in foreign language learning than are the instructor's ability to modify course requirements and the student's ability to persevere and maintain motivation.

In addition, universities and other teacher training institutions should become fully aware of the growing importance of the general teacher in inclusive education. They cannot be seen as clients passively receiving from special pedagogy, on the contrary, they need to become an important and equally active component of inclusive educational environment. Their preparedness for inclusion had become the priority of contemporary teacher training curricula in many countries because, as found by some research studies (Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999), the increasing knowledge of legislation and policy related to inclusion did not likewise address their stress and concerns about having students with disabilities in their classes.

4/

The expertise support provided to primary foreign language teachers

4.1
Possible ways of expert support and advice to SEN teachers

Current classrooms are far from homogeneous groups of learners of the same age and relatively comparable characteristics. More often, they are highly diverse groups of children of various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, socioeconomic and disability status and their resulting achievement levels. To orchestrate such groups respecting needs of all individual learners simultaneously, the teacher cannot act separately and in isolation. Even in supporting just one SEN learner, the teacher must consider many variables, including family and developmental history, educational history, levels of native language proficiency and literacy skills, levels of foreign language proficiency and literacy skills, cultural factors that may influence school performance, and many others.

Because of these reasons, SEN teachers must cooperate with experts and act as members of wide-scale high-performing teams consisting of other teachers, school psychologists, special pedagogues, counsellors, and parents. These teams are responsible for designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the chosen interventions. For instance, in the U.S.A, one of the pioneers and a leading country in inclusive education, the strategy of creating **Intervention Assistance Teams** (IAT) has been promoted. The IATs are groups of experts the role of which is "to identify, analyse, and suggest interventions in order to increase teacher effectiveness and support students experiencing difficulties" (Burns, Riley-Tillman, & Rathvon, 2017, p. 7). They usually consist of school personnel including administrators, teachers, and counsellors who work with learners or their parents to identify possible ways to overcome potential problems and help

the child experience greater success. Despite the fact that IATs brought many positive changes to American schools, numerous research studies identified their methodological risks and weaknesses (they were mostly summarised in Burns, Riley-Tillman, & Rathvon, 2017):

1) The interventions provided by IATs were often simplistic and low quality.
2) Rather than making practical recommendations for teachers to make substantive changes in their instructional or behaviour management practices, IATs tended to emphasise recommendations that focused on counselling and after-school tutoring.
3) Teachers often made little or no effort to implement team recommendations, often due to two facts: a) that the teams failed to provide adequate follow-up and support to teachers after recommending interventions, and b) the teams ignored teacher's input during the problem-solving process.
4) Teams typically devoted too little time to gathering and reviewing information to help define problems and moved too rapidly to discussing intervention alternatives;
5) Once interventions had been implemented, teams and teachers alike often failed to employ objective evaluation procedures to determine whether the intervention had been implemented as planned (i.e., to assess treatment integrity) or to assess changes in student performance;
6) Even when some form of follow-up was provided, teams seldom used direct measures of student outcomes, such as curriculum-based assessments or classroom behavioural observations;
7) Teams often do not include educational specialists, such as reading teachers or speech–language pathologists, which limited the teams' ability to design effective interventions, especially strategies targeting academic performance.
8) There was a lack of knowledge of evidence-based interventions and effective problem-solving processes by team members. For example, over 90% of school psychologists who responded to a survey indicated a need for more training in interventions (Nelson & Machek, 2007), and a large majority of special education teachers reported that they continued to use interventions for which there was a questionable research base.

To overcome the above-mentioned weaknesses of IATs, many schools currently establish **problem-solving teams** (PSTs). They are the teams of professionals from different disciplines who cooperate to suggest interventions for individual students based on systematic analysis of objective data.

Another improvement of the concept of IATs are groups of teachers and school personnel called **professional learning communities** (PLCs). They work collectively to find possible reasons of learners' difficulties, implement best practice

for student achievement, and utilise a cycle of inquiry to promote continued improvement (Burns, Riley-Tillman, & Rathvon, 2017; du Four et al., 2004).

Ortiz (2001) adds two more sources of information and expert advice support to SEN teachers:

a) **collaborative school-community relationships:** based on the acceptance of the fact that the SEN learners' parents can be valuable resources of information and "engines" of school improvement efforts;
b) **peer or expert consultation:** peers or experts work together with general education teachers to address students' learning problems and to implement recommendations for intervention. For example, teachers can share instructional resources, observe each other's classrooms, and offer suggestions for improving instruction or managing behaviour. In schools with positive climates, faculty function as a community and share the goal of helping students and one another, regardless of the labels students have been given or the programs or classrooms to which teachers and students are assigned.
c) **teacher assistance teams (TATs):** consist of four to six general education teachers and the teacher who requests assistance. They design interventions to help struggling learners and teachers resolve problems they routinely encounter in their classrooms. "Team members work to reach a consensus about the nature of a student's problem; determine priorities for intervention; help the classroom teacher to select strategies or approaches to solve the problem; assign responsibility for carrying out the recommendations; and establish a follow-up plan to monitor progress. The classroom teacher then implements the plan, and follow-up meetings are held to review progress toward resolution of the problem" (Ortiz, 2001, n. p.).

The above defined ways may inspire SEN teachers in countries where inclusive education is at its beginning. In the following part, we will analyse what expertise advice and consultancy is available to SEN teachers in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

In the Czech Republic, the forms and extent of expertise support that is provided to schools, teachers, and learners are defined in **Regulation 72/2005** on providing consulting services at schools and school consultancy institutions (recently amended by Regulation No. 197/2016). The regulation was further amended by two more regulations:

- **Regulation No. 270/2017** on education of learners with special educational needs and talented learners (henceforth as "the first regulation amendment") which defines in more detail the tasks of individual types of consultancy centres;

- **Regulation No. 416/2017** on education of learners with special educational needs and talented learners (henceforth as "the second regulation amendment") which adds and defines in detail the position, roles and tasks of teachers' assistants.

4.2 Expert support of SEN teachers of foreign languages in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

As far as these legislative documents are concerned, teachers are supported by 3 types of institutions which are responsible for a) providing methodological support both to the learners and teachers, and b) for "developing teachers' special pedagogical knowledge and professional skills".

1) **School advisory services** (školské poradenské zařízení): are located directly at schools. They usually employ an educational consultant, a school consultant of prevention, a school psychologist and/or a special pedagogue. Together, they assist both teachers and SEN learners. They identify at-risk learners, provide SEN learners with supporting accommodations (of the 1st level), they collaborate on composing the individual plans of pedagogical support, and document the effectiveness of these accommodations.
2) **Pedagogical-psychological advisory services** (pedagogicko-psychologická poradna, PPP): their portfolio includes: a) psychological and special-pedagogical diagnosing, b) psychological and special-pedagogical intervention and c) informing, methodological support and preparing recommendations to support educational accommodations.
3) **Special pedagogical centres** (speciálně pedagogické centrum, SPC): provide highly specialised support for learners with individual special educational needs or their combinations.

It is obvious that the quality of supporting measures for SEN learners directly depends on the quality of cooperation of teachers and consultancy centres which have the exclusive task to diagnose learners and propose the intervention and supporting measures (for example, adapting the content, organising the tasks, adapting conditions, tempo of work, organisation of teaching, possibility of relaxation, minimal differentiation of approach, etc.). So far, no systematic research on the quality and effectiveness of the expertise support has been conducted. However, these aspects were partially covered by the already cited report (ČŠI, 2017) which documented the results of visits and interviews

carried out by school inspectors who visited and interviewed teachers from 757 nursery schools, 559 primary schools and 161 secondary schools in the school year 2016/17. As mentioned above, it must be noted that the group of responding teachers included those who teach foreign languages, but their number was not specified.

The interviewed teachers complained that some recommendations issued by school consultancy centres (SCC) were ambiguous and some of them were in direct conflict with valid legislation. Also, the situations were recorded when SCC recommended supporting measures without the previous discussion with the school, that is, they suggested measures which could not be carried out in the school (however, after an agreement with the parents the substitutive ones were ensured), or the measures which have already failed. These were also the reasons why 8 % of kindergartens, 11 % of primary and secondary schools did not apply the recommendations issued by SCC in such a way as they were published.

Inspectors of CSI reflected also on the Regulation No. 416/2017 and the newly defined roles and responsibilities of teachers' assistants. CSI documented the shortage of teacher assistants, which could be the result of both a little interest in this work (low salaries, lower teaching loads) and an insufficient number of adequate applicants (the assistants often lack necessary qualification or enough experience). Because of this, schools were often forced to accept unqualified assistants who complemented their own qualification only after they were given the job, or as assistants were used the tutors in school clubs and fresh graduates of teacher training colleges. Teacher assistants were also leaving during the school after they found out what their work really obtains and how it is paid. This causes not only personal problems at the level of school, as well as problems directly related to the integrated children and pupils (for example, the ones with the impairment of autistic spectrum). In some schools, in addition, the cooperation between teachers and teachers' assistants was very weak and the atmosphere nearly hostile.

In Slovakia, the legislative frame of expertise support is stated in Regulation No 325/2008 on school institutions of educational consultancy and prevention which defines two such institutions:

a) **Centres of pedagogical and psychological consultancy and prevention** (Centrá pedagogicko-psychologického poradenstva a prevencie, CPPCP) which provide complex psychological, special-pedagogical and diagnostic consultancy to both schools/teachers and learners. CPPC's services are free of charge for both. Regarding learners with SEN, they are responsible for diagnosing the learners and working out their individual educational plans.

Moreover, they furnish schools/teachers with methodological instructions, special teaching materials and compensation aids, if necessary.

b) Teachers, school managers and parents can also consult the **special needs counselling centres** (centrá špeciálno-pedagogického poradenstva, SNCC) which focus on searching for and diagnosing learners with various disabilities or disorders. Moreover, they assess the prognosis of learners' progress and recommend the optimal form of intervention/education. In addition, schools (if they include more than 20 SEN learners) may employ **school special pedagogues, school special psychologists, or educational consultants**.

4.3 Analysis of SEN teachers' evaluation of the available expert advice

As part of the previously introduced original research on professional needs of Slovak foreign language primary teachers who teach SEN learners in inclusive classrooms (see chapter 3.3), the level of teachers' satisfaction with provided expert advice support was analysed.

Research questions

4. What support do the respondents - primary foreign language teachers of SEN learners - use?
5. How do they evaluate the quality and extent of consultancy support provided by the consultancy centre?

The method and sampling

To gain basic data, teachers' responses to items 2 and 3 of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) for a **qualitative survey** were analysed. Responses originated from the same group of 141 primary teachers as in chapter 3.2. The questionnaires were distributed from November 2016 to November 2017.

Analysis

When asked about sources of their existing knowledge on teaching foreign languages to SEN learners (item 2), the most frequent answer was "*I learned about SEN from an expert in special pedagogy/special psychology*" (see Tab. 7 in chapter 3.2). Being the most frequent answer, this result could point to a good collaboration between foreign language teachers and special pedagogy experts. However, the number very close to 50% cannot be considered a sufficient one.

Normally, all the teachers should have to cooperate with special pedagogues or psychologists.

Even more alarming can be the fact that more than one fifth of the respondents claimed they use other sources of knowledge and expertise. Some teachers rely on their colleagues and superiors; some consult with parents; and others use sources which cannot be considered as reliable ones (self-study of internet sources, Wikipedia, blogs and TV programmes).

In the questionnaire (item 3), the respondents were asked to evaluate the recommendations they obtain from consultancy centres, special pedagogues or special psychologists. The results are summarised in Tab. 15.

Tab. 15: Evaluation of the expert support provided by special pedagogues and psychologists

	responses	%
Clear and spot on	27	14.75
Too general and vague	36	19.67
Just as free guidelines	24	13.11
Depend on each individual case	76	41.53
Other	20	10.93
Total	**183**	**100**

The respondents were asked how they evaluate recommendations obtained from consultancy centres (the research tool did not recognise between CPPCPs and SNCCs). Respondents covered all 4 pre-structured responses ("they are clear and spot on", "they are too general and vague", "I see them just as free guidelines", "My evaluation depends on each individual case"). In their free responses, teachers mostly pointed to problems related to the cooperation with special education experts. In their comments, respondents complained about:

- reports which are made "according to a uniform pattern", not respecting individual characteristics of a child. One teacher wrote: *"One year I got reports for 8 SEN learners – all of them included recommendations which were copy-pasted from the same report without the slightest change!"*
- reports which do not respect new legislation (*"Our CPPCP issue reports citing the School Law from 1964"*),
- reports which issue accommodations incompatible with the current State Educational Programme, e.g. when the centre forbids (!) any writing either in mother or foreign language or recommends reductions of minimal required educational contents;

- reports which recommend accommodations not applicable at a particular school;
- reports which recommend segregation of learners (organising learners in stable special groups during foreign language classes);
- vague or incomprehensible recommendations *"Their recommendations are full of may, can, would – I need to know exactly what I need to do"*;
- One teacher wrote: *"Our special pedagogue and his recommendations are out of reality. Often they contradict each other and they contradict the pedagogical documentation."*
- In addition, many teachers expressed their deepest disbelief in the centre's conclusions.

The respondents' comments did not prove the existence of ideal collaborative relationships between teachers and special education experts. When teachers expect very precise, tailor-made directions with concrete teaching techniques, CPPCPs provide them only with general and framework instructions. However, their close collaboration is very important because – as documented by evidence-based experience and examples of good practice - only their joint efforts and problem-solving orientation can be beneficial to both the SEN learners and their teachers. Finding mutual professional trust is probably the most important task and challenge facing the developers of inclusive education in Slovakia.

5/

Strategies and supporting accommodations: ideals and reality in foreign language classes

5.1 Introduction

Learners with special educational needs can be defined as learners who can fulfil their educational potential when provided with specific educational support. The support to SEN learners and prevention of their failure involves two critical elements:

a) **creating educational environments that foster academic success and empower students** (Cummins, 1989). The support may be directed to necessary adaptations of school services depending on learner's health status, cultural environment and other living conditions. The supporting measures may include the following: adaptation of criteria for both admitting to and graduating from the school, prolonging the study, using compensation aids, organisation of learning according to individual learning plans, using the help of a school assistant and others. Ganschow & Spark (2001) recommend **adapting organisation of foreign language courses** by reducing the syllabus to essential elements, slowing the pace of instruction quite considerably, reducing the vocabulary demand, providing constant review and incorporating as much visual/tactile/kinesthetic (i.e. multisensory) stimulation and support as possible;

b) **using teaching forms and techniques which have been empirically proved to be effective with these students** (Ortiz, 1997; Ortiz & Wilkinson, 1991). This aspect also includes adaptation of content, evaluation strategies, and educational methods.

In the following chapter, the outline of possible research-based strategies, methods, and techniques will be introduced. Although the final list of strategies may seem long and sufficient, the teachers' decisions must never be mechanical and routine. It is necessary to remember that no single solution is good for everybody. This rule is even more acute when dealing with and treating any at-risk learners (including SEN learners).

When creating the outline of verified techniques, the following eight **criteria for an effective SEN intervention ha**s been taken into account (adapted acc. to Burns et al):

1) **Documented evidence of effectiveness**
   Only interventions with empirical evidence of effectiveness in improving the behaviours they were designed to address were considered for inclusion. In analysing experimental and quasi-experimental research to determine which interventions are effective, researchers commonly used the method of meta-analysis.
2) **Consistent with an ecological perspective**
   Focusing on internal deficits in the child as the sole cause of a student's school problems provides little information or direction for designing school-based interventions. In contrast, an ecological approach views student problem as arising not only from child characteristics but also from mismatches between student needs and environmental variables, including classroom management and instructional practices. Adopting an ecological perspective to academic and behaviour problems not only expands the analysis of factors that may be contributing to those problems but also yields a broader range of targets for school-based interventions. Also, in keeping with an ecological perspective, the interventions are designed to be minimally intrusive so that they can be implemented in general classroom settings without singling out individual students or unduly disrupting teachers' typical instructional and behaviour management systems. Interventions that require major alterations in classroom ecologies are unlikely to become integrated into teachers' routines or to have the desired effects on student performance.
3) **Alignment with the function of the problem (causal variable)**
   Interventions also had to align with the function of the problem, which we refer to as the causal variable. In other words, we avoid comprehensive interventions in favour of those that target specific problems. It is preferable to select interventions based on student specific needs than to deliver a comprehensive intervention. An intervention should be designed to teach the skill initially (through modelling, explicit instruction, and corrective feedback) for students in the acquisition phase, or to build proficiency (through repeated practice and feedback at speed), or to enhance generalisation.

4) **Emphasis on a proactive approach to the problem**
   Priority should be placed on strategies that help teachers to prevent problem behaviour from occurring rather than on strategies that are applied after problem behaviour has already occurred.
5) **Capable of class wide application**
   Traditional intervention assistance approaches were directed at single low-performing learners. Nowadays, teachers need strategies that can enhance the academic performance and social competence of all the students in a classroom. Teachers should use interventions that were either originally designed to be implemented on a class wide basis or that could be readily adapted to that format while, at the same time, accommodating students with special needs within that group.
6) **Capable of being easily taught through a consultation format**
   Practical interventions that can be easily taught and learned should be preferred.
7) **Capable of implementation using regular classroom resources**
   The recommended interventions should be delivered using resources that are already present in the typical classroom or can be prepared or obtained with minimal cost and effort. Interventions have been selected that capitalise on the human and material resources already present in general education settings, including teachers, peers, a regular curriculum, and available classroom typically resources. Strategies requiring substantial additional human or material resources, such as extra staff, special services personnel, supplementary curricular materials, and special equipment, or that require the removal of students from the regular classroom, were either modified or excluded from consideration should be used as rarely as possible.
8) **Capable of being evaluated by reliable, valid, and practical methods**
   Consistent with the evidence-based intervention movement, the interventions should target concrete, observable student behaviours that can be objectively measured over time. Observational and evaluation measures should be designed to be as practical as possible so that they can be easily implemented by regular classroom teachers, consultants, or other school personnel.

In conclusion, SEN teachers need to have knowledge and skills to be able to create classroom environments that promote learning progress of all learners in diverse classrooms (not only of SEN learners), as well as to develop and maintain appropriate social behaviour of learners. Early intervention strategies must be implemented as soon as learning problems are noted. Moreover, the said teacher's knowledge and skills must be based on available research results, not intuitive decisions, subjective habits, or school myths.

5.2
Research-based instructions recommended for dyslectic and dysgraphic learners

In general, dyslectic learners may profit from the following techniques**:** multi-sensoric learning, mnemonics, audiobook, dividing the tasks into smaller portions, shortening and simplifying reading assignments, giving extra time, advance lecture notes, and advance notice of reading in a class. As for **dysgraphic learners**, it has been well documented that they benefit from pre-organisation strategies, allowing writing on computers, allowing the use of various digital devices and word processor (including a spell checker), organising oral exams instead of written ones, reducing copying aspects of work, providing alternatives to written assignments (outlines, mind maps, video-taped reports, audio-taped reports, etc.), or using colour-coding (for more details see Pokrivčáková, 2013).

Several studies (Ortiz, 2001) have suggested that foreign language learners with any learning disorder can benefit from interventions known to be beneficial when learning a mother language. These interventions include **explicit phonemic awareness instruction**, structured and systematic phonics instruction, and explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. Ganschow and Sparks (2001) proved that by being taught phonological skills in their mother language, the learners improved their phonological awareness in a foreign language, too. Moreover, many learners with specific learning disorders have phonological deficits even in their first language. That is why it is recommended to help these learners by introducing the sound system of the foreign language in a very explicit way (e.g. with many visual, kinaesthetic and tactile aids, with a lot of practice and meaningful input).

Multisensoric approach integrates receiving information through seeing**,** hearing, and moving or touching. In some cases, even smells and tastes can be incorporated into learning. This opens multiple pathways for the information to reach the learner's brain and increases chances of a learner to comprehend the verbal message. One of the tools that can be used effectively both in and outside the classroom are **audiobooks** that allow learners read and hear the text at the same time (for more see Dafčíková, 2015; Gulliver, 2015).

Since dyslectic learners rely heavily on memorisation, **mnemonic devices** can be excellent help for their memory (for more see Pokrivčáková, 2013, p. 67–69). A typical example includes the mnemonics for remembering standard word order of an English sentence: SVOMPT (S = subject, V = verb, O = object, M = manner, P = place, T = time).

Learners may be introduced to **pre-organisation strategies**, such as the use of graphic organisers. Dysgraphic learners have problems with spatial planning

of their written task on paper. Paper with a colour-coded pre-writing structure of paragraphs and other parts of the text will help the learner to organise and complete the written assignment.

Writing a full, cohesive text consisting of several dozens of sentences with appropriate grammar and syntactic structures may make the task too demanding for a dysgraphic learner. Therefore, a teacher may replace such a writing assignment by writing **an outline** of the text instead of its full version. The outline should be brief and very clear, made of key words and expressions (for more on outlining, see Pokrivčáková, 2013, p. 70). To get used to this technique, the teacher can prepare the partial outline first and then ask learners to complete the missing parts of the outline (see the example below).

Taking notes is a very important part of both a learning process and professional life. Therefore, all learners, including those with dysgraphia, should be skilled enough to take notes on their own (although dysgraphic learners can be allowed to use various less orthodox aids such as their own abbreviations, pictures, symbols, etc.), using **alternative types of note taking**. Dysgraphic learners require more time and support to learn how to take notes. At the beginning, the teacher can either:

a) provide learners with a copy of pre-completed notes so that they can only fill in missing parts; or
b) provide learners with a partially completed outline so that they can fill in the details under major headings.

Mind mapping was originally a tool used to organise mental concepts and ideas. Unlike outlining where only words are used, mind maps fuse together key words and pictures (Buzan & Buzan, 1996). Mind maps enable dysgraphic learners to structure, organise, and better express their own thoughts without long and tiring writing. As a teaching technique, mind mapping is highly valued by cognitive pedagogy since it stimulates memory by creating strong associations. To avoid handwriting completely, **several mind** mapping software applications can be used, e.g. iMindMap (for more see Pokrivčáková, 2013, p. 64; Liptáková, 2015; Szombathová, 2015).

5.3
Research on teaching techniques in SEN classrooms in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Institutional research on teaching foreign languages to learners with special educational needs in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia is extremely rare.

It might be caused both by the extended requirements on theoretical preparation of the researchers (they unquestioningly need to integrate knowledge and methodologies of several disciplines: language pedagogy, special pedagogy, special psychology, cognitive sciences, and others) and the problems related to finding subjects (and their parents) open to long-term cooperation.

Quite untraditionally, the most important sources of new knowledge in the field are research products by university students and in-practice teachers with the characteristics of academic research reports, such as doctoral theses, rigorosa theses, and diploma theses. Despite some limitations (e.g. reduced extent of samples), their methodological appropriateness was secured by the fact that their authors were supervised by expert teacher trainers and double-checked by university teachers. The first results of the meta-analysis were published in Pokrivčáková (2015).

In the following part of the chapter the results of qualitative content analysis of 33 rigorosa and diploma theses (the complete list is given in Attachment 2) on the defined topic are presented. The diploma and rigorosa theses were written by students of 2 universities in Slovakia (Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and Catholic University in Ruzomberok) and 1 university in the Czech Republic (Tomas Bata University in Zlin) in the period between January 2010 – December 2015). All authors of the theses were either pre-service teachers or in-service teachers. The theses were written as part of their state exams and were reviewed by at least one reviewer. All of them were supervised by the author of this publication, which secured the united methodological processes followed by all authors. The impossibility to secure the united procedure caused that theses from other universities were not included into the research.

When analysing the theses (= academic research reports), 5 codes were identified: types of learning disorders in foreign language classrooms, attitudes of foreign language teachers, training on SEN learners, cooperation with CPPCPs, and applied SEN interventions.

A vast majority of the analysed theses focused on types of **learning disorders** (1) in classes and how they affect the learner's progress in learning foreign languages. Namely, dyslexia, dysgraphia, and ADHD occurred as the most necessary to be dealt with, since they directly affect the learners' performance in the foreign language class. One diploma thesis studied the particularities of teaching English to sight impaired learners and one diploma thesis considered the particularities of foreign language education of gifted learners. No thesis focused on teaching foreign languages to learners from socially disadvantaged environments.

All the analysed theses included surveys of various kinds (e.g. interviews and questionnaires) to identify **attitudes of foreign language teachers** (2) to foreign language education of learners with SEN. The teachers' general attitude may be concluded as: "In theory everything is great, but in practice, it is very problematic". Teachers mostly expressed their frustration caused mainly by the lack of proper training in the field, the lack of sufficient information, the lack of adapted teaching materials and the omniscient time stress. What occurred in nearly all the theses is the conclusion that foreign language teachers were extremely disappointed by the contemporary situation in classrooms, where more than two students typically require special educational care. However, foreign language teachers have never been **trained to deal with SEN learners** (3). They feel "caught in a trap", unprepared and unsure of themselves. Teachers also frequently mentioned their fear that by adapting teaching techniques and tempo to learners with SEN, they would negatively influence and limit progress of mainstream learners. None of the teachers questioned in 33 theses expressed satisfaction or feelings of being successful.

Teachers also complained about less-than-ideal cooperation with centres of pedagogical

and psychological consultancy and prevention and sometimes very problematic relationships with parents who are not willing to accept "otherness" and any special needs of their children. By comparing their statements to the programmes of **CPPCPs** (4), it is obvious that teachers expect very precise, tailor-made directions with concrete teaching techniques, while CPPCPs provide them only with general and framework instructions.

Observations described in the theses refer to the fact that in practice the integration and inclusion of learners with SEN usually end behind the classroom's door. The authors observed the wide spectrum of unwanted or even **harmful teachers' acts** (5):

a) excessively tolerant approach when SEN learners do not need to do anything because "they have disorders",
b) formally tolerant approach when teachers do not provide any special care to SEN learners, and when doing final assessment at the end of the school year they improve their marks, irrespective of their real knowledge;
c) deprecating or doubting approach when teachers are not willing to accept SEN learners and to adapt their pedagogical performance so that these needs are fulfilled,
d) incorrect or even harmful re-education, e.g. when teachers ask dysgraphic learners to copy long writing exercise, etc.;
e) inappropriately comparing SEN learners' outcomes to those of mainstream learners;

f) "internal" segregation of SEN learners when they are constantly singled out and appointed different learning tasks.

Reading from the above-mentioned results, it is obvious that the situation is far from satisfying. However, it is important to emphasise the fact that teachers make these mistakes unintentionally. All of them expressed their wish and determination to help SEN learners. More probably, their actions resulted from the generally criticised lack of information and proper training. In this context it is very important that teachers also expressed that they are willing to get new information and undergo specialised teacher training.

Conclusion and implications

Foreign language education of learners with special educational needs is one of the fields of language pedagogy constantly demanding more attention from teachers, researchers, teacher trainers, education-system decision-makers and managers. Despite the growing number of research outputs, their systematic summary is still necessary.

The objective of the publication was to offer a relatively systematic picture of the current status and organisation of foreign language education provided to learners with special educational needs in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Detailed attention was paid to 3 defined areas: the legal framework and organisation of foreign language education of learners with special educational needs in both countries; b) the extent of support provided to foreign language teachers; and c) the reflection of Slovak language education of learners with special educational needs in research.

The results showed that while the legislation and state documents related to education are in accord with international standards, and thus create standard conditions for the development of foreign language education of the target group, the existing situation at schools is not very optimistic. The results also pointed to the areas in which a set of important measures needs to be adopted:

1) Learning more about real situation at schools requires further empirical research.
2) The courses on foreign language education of learners with SEN (focused mostly on classroom management in mixed-ability classes and internal differentiation) should be integrated in all pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes.
3) General SEN teachers feel the lack of expertise support. More intensive cooperation between teachers, schools and consultancy centres is necessary.

4) The appropriate evaluation instruments for the objective evaluation of learners with SEN should be designed and validated as soon as possible.
5) What is needed is even more are theoretical sources, teaching materials, and practical handbooks, as well as other information sources.
6) New organisational measures need to be developed, which would lead to the fulfilment of the general aim: to improve foreign language education of learners with SEN while keeping the appropriate demandingness and attractiveness of foreign language education of intact learners in the same classroom.

Last but not least, the aim of the research was to propose a set of research-based and teaching practice-grounded recommendations/implications which would help:

- foreign language teachers to optimise their teaching practices,
- school managers to enhance the building of inclusive education environments at their schools;
- and teacher training institutions to update and up-grade foreign language teacher-training courses so that they would reflect the real needs of foreign language teachers.

Ultimately, the results of the research are expected to enforce support provided to SEN teachers and learners.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:
The questionnaire on teacher's needs

Dotazník

Vážení kolegovia,
v roku 2017 pripravujeme vydanie metodických príručiek pre učiteľov cudzích jazykov k vyučovaniu jazykov u žiakov so špeciálnymi edukačným potrebami. Prosíme Vás preto o spoluprácu. Vaše odpovede na nasledujúce otázky nám pomôžu prispôsobiť publikácie skutočným potrebám Vás – učiteľov.

Dotazník je prísne anonymný. Neuvádzajte, prosím, žiadne údaje, podľa ktorých by bolo možné Vás alebo Vašu školu identifikovať. Prvá časť dotazníka je štatistická, druhá sa týka vyučovania cudzích jazykov u dyslektikov a dysgrafikov. Na každú otázku môžete odpovedať voľne. Ak sa rozhodnete zakrúžkovať niektorú z možností, ku každej doplňte svoj slovný komentár.

Za Vaše názory a pomoc Vám ďakujeme!

I. Základné údaje
Dĺžka Vašej pedagogickej praxe (v rokoch):
Stupeň vzdelávania, na ktorom pôsobíte (zakrúžkujte): 1. / 2.
Predmety, ktoré vyučujete:

…

III.Žiaci s dysgrafiou a/alebo dyslexiou (ďalej ako: dys- poruchami)

Zvolené odpovede zakrúžkujte (vždy môžete zvoliť viac odpovedí).

2) Na prácu so žiakmi s dys- poruchami sa cítim pripravený/á:
a) vynikajúco
b) dostatočne
c) nedostatočne
d) vôbec

3) Potrebné informácie o vyučovaní jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami som získal:
a) počas vysokoškolského štúdia
b) počas kvalifikačného vzdelávania
c) od špeciálneho pedagóga/psychológa
d) inak
e) nemám žiadne

4) Odporúčania, ktoré mám od špeciálneho pedagóga/psychológa/poradenského centra, vo všeobecnosti hodnotím ako:
a) adresné a jasné
b) voľné námety na ďalšiu prácu
c) neadresné a vágne
d) záleží na konkrétnom prípade
e) iné

5) Ohodnoťte jednotlivé zložky Vašej práce so žiakmi s dys-poruchami tak, že v tabuľke označte príslušný stĺpec krížikom (1 = nenáročné; 2 = ľahko zvládnuteľné; 3 = zvládnuteľné; 4 = náročné, 5 = veľmi náročné):

Položka	1	2	3	4	5
Organizácia vyučovacej hodiny s diferencovanými úlohami					
Hľadanie vhodných materiálov pre žiakov s dys- poruchami					
Upravovanie materiálov pre dys- žiakov					
Motivovanie žiakov s dys- poruchami					
Hodnotenie výsledkov žiakov s dys- poruchami					
Spolupráca s vedením školy					
Spolupráca s rodičmi					

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

Appendix 2: Selected questionnaire responses on the SEN teachers' needs questionnaire (chapter 4)

[a]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

Všetko.!!! Nakoľko som už 16. rokov v praxi a tento šk. rok učím 1.x na ZŠ, kde som sa stretla s integrov. žiakmi, bola som zúfalá.?! Podľa mňa, špeciál. pedagóg a jeho odporúčania sú mimo vyučovacej REALITY! Mnohokrát si odporúčania odporujú a nie sú v súlade s tým, čo má žiak vedieť a ako má byť hodnotený.
Existujú vôbec nejaké špeciálne PLÁNY pre takéto integrované deti.???
Podotýkam, že veľa škôl si nemôže dovoliť mať asistenta na škole.
A taktiež, myslím, že sa príliš veľa pozornosti venuje týmto žiakom (ich práva a povinnosti učiteľa/ved. školy!) a potláčajú sa školní žiaci v triede.!!! Nie je to len môj názor, ale stretávam sa bežne s takýmto názorom.

[b]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

Ako ich učiť a následne hodnotiť.
Veľmi náročné pre pedagóga (teda pre mňa).
Uvítali by sme (píšem v mene viacerých kolegov) konkrétnu ukážkovú hodinu na prácu s dys- nás NIKDY NIKTO NEPRIPRAVOVAL!
Ďakujem!

[c]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

Pomohli by pripravené aspoň niektoré lekcie pre žiakov s dys... pre najbežnejšie používané učebnice.

Celkovo považujem ~~za~~ to také masívne zaraďovanie integrovaných žiakov do obyčajných škôl za absolútne nevhodné. Učitelia podľa môjho názoru nie sú pripravení (odborne, časovo, pomôckami...) na prácu s takýmito žiakmi. Vyžadujú si podľa mňa individuálny prístup, ktorý im nemôžme poskytnúť a ak sa im viac (časovo, náročnosťou a pod.) venujeme je to na úkor ~~ostat~~ iných detí v triede.

[d]

- väčšina žiakov nepatrí na základnú školu, sú tam prípady, ktoré brzdia učiteľa i ostatných
- bez asistenta tam sedia zbytočne / môžete ich diferencovať ako chcete.

[e]

→ lebo každý prípad je iný

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

Dostupných informácií je dostatok. Za hlavný problém považujem zloženie tried. Jeden slabí žiaci + začlenení žiaci + priemerní + vynikajúci žiaci v jednej skupine. Kvôli zloženiu tried, nenapredujú žiaci tak, ako by mohli, keby bola hodina prispôsobená ich tempu. Samozrejme dá sa to aj v zmiešaných, ale potom je príprava učiteľa veľmi časovo náročná.

Len môj názor a moje postrehy :)

[f]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

ako naplniť ciele odporúčanými metódami
ako zabezpečiť prácu v menších skupinách
a použitie vhodných učebníc, keď
ich neschvaľuje MŠ SR
motivácia týchto žiakov
koniec koncov akékoľvek rady a návody
či metódy by mi pomohli, lebo si
myslím, že je veľmi špecifické a
náročné s nimi pracovať efektívne
ak nechceme znižovať nároky

Ďakujem

[g]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

- AKO TVORIŤ MATERIÁLY PRE ŽIAKOV S RÔZNYMI ALEBO NÁSOBNÝMI PORUCHAMI
- AKO HODNOTIŤ INDIVIDUÁLNE PRÍPADY PORÚCH TESTOM, ÚSTNE...
- AKO HODNOTIŤ NEKOMUNIKUJÚCEHO ŽIAKA – NEHOVORÍ – PORUCHA KOMUNIKÁCIE

[h]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

Ako pracovať a pripraviť žiakov
na maturitu, keď maturitný test
na úrovni B2 nezohľadňuje poruchy
učenia, len čas je predĺžený
test je identický.

[i]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

Ako hodnotiť dieťa, ktoré je schopné sa naučiť len slovíčka a nič viac, nedokáže pochopiť a používať jazyk, absolútne! Po vyskúšaní slovíčiek ich zabudne a nemôže ich viac použiť. Školský psychológ mi radí aby som použila srdce. Podľa mňa žiačka by mala byť na osobitnej škole, ale matka to nepripúšťa. Navštevuje 5ročník. Ona je celkovo slabučká a len na trvanie matky sa vlastne drží na škole (podľa mňa). Mám viac integrovaných žiakov a sú znášanlivý a dá sa s nimi pracovať úplne v pohode.

[j]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

AKÚ NEZVLÁDNUTÉ UČIVO (NAPR. V 5. ROČNÍKU), AKO S NÍM ĎALEJ PRACOVAŤ V 6. ROČNÍKU?

AKO HO OHODNOTIŤ, KEĎ NEZVLÁDNUTÉ ANI UČIVO ĎALEJ V JEHO IVVP?

[k]

Moje skúsenosti sú také, že nie je čas sa s nimi zvlášť dlho zaoberať. Potrebovali by človeka/učiteľa len pre seba. A skúsenosti hovoria, že ich je stále viac v triede, často s inými poruchami.

[l]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

Ako hodnotiť u dyslektika čítanie, ak nie je schopný čítať s porozumením ani rodný jazyk? Texty mu čítam ja, ale aj tak má problémy porozumieť.

[m]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

ČO NAVIAC – práca s deťmi je náročná a pripojenie týchto žiakov do aktívnych činností celej triedy a zároveň udržať aktivizáciu celej triedy je veľmi náročné na čas a koordinačnú práce.

[n]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

- ako na bežnej hodine venovať čas im aj ostatným žiakom a pritom to nerobiť na úkor jedného z nich.

+ ? A čo s nadanými žiakmi? Tí tiež majú právo na špeci. prístup. Ak si to uvedomíme do dôsledkov – neexistuje, aby to 1 učiteľ zvládol na každej hodine.

[o]

Čo by ste sa chceli o vyučovaní cudzích jazykov u žiakov s dys-poruchami dozvedieť?

Moje skúsenosti sú také, že mi je čas sa s nimi zvlášť dlho zaoberať sa. Potrebovali by človeka/učiteľa len pre seba. A skúsenosti hovoria, že ich je stále viac v triede, často s inými poruchami.

Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

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