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CROATIAN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT DYSLEXIA AND TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA: IS THEIR PRACTICE INCLUSIVE AND DYSLEXIA-FRIENDLY?

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Abstract: Dyslexia is a frequent language-based learning difficulty, and therefore, it may significantly affect learning an additional language. Students with dyslexia often struggle in a language classroom if the teacher does not alter teaching approaches and provide adequate accommodations. In the present study, we investigated the teaching practices of 16 Croatian primary and secondary school English as a foreign language teachers to see whether they are inclusive and dyslexia-friendly. The analysis of qualitative data collected through an in-depth interview, which, among others, included situational tasks, suggests that participants used inclusive practices only to some extent and their use varied depending on the phase of education (primary or secondary school). The results thus corroborate the findings of previous studies with a similar research focus. The paper also discusses participants' beliefs about accommodations and teaching approaches that are recommended for students with dyslexia.

Keywords: dyslexia, EFL, teachers' knowledge, teachers' beliefs, inclusive practices

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El conocimiento de los profesores croatas de inglés como lengua extranjera sobre la dislexia y la enseñanza a estudiantes con dislexia: ¿su práctica es inclusiva y amigable con la dislexia?

Resumen: La dislexia es una dificultad de aprendizaje frecuente basada en el lenguaje y, por lo tanto, puede afectar significativamente el aprendizaje de un idioma adicional. Los estudiantes con dislexia a menudo tienen dificultades en un aula de idiomas si el profesor no altera los enfoques de enseñanza y proporciona las adaptaciones adecuadas. En la presente investigación, analizamos las prácticas de enseñanza de 16 profesores de inglés como lengua extranjera de escuelas primarias y secundarias croatas para ver si son inclusivos y amigables con la dislexia. El análisis de datos cualitativos recolectados a través de una entrevista en profundidad, que, entre otras, incluyó tareas situacionales, sugiere que los participantes utilizaron prácticas inclusivas solo en cierta medida y su uso varió según la etapa de la educación (primaria o secundaria). Los resultados corroboran así los hallazgos de investigaciones anteriores con un enfoque similar de análisis. El documento también analiza las creencias de los participantes sobre las adaptaciones y los enfoques de enseñanza recomendados para los estudiantes con dislexia.

Palabras clave: dislexia, inglés como lengua extranjera, conocimiento de los profesores, creencias de los profesores, prácticas inclusivas

1. Introduction

The concept of inclusion has been enshrined in the educational system of many European countries (the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019) as a result of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (2006) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Guidelines for Inclusion (2005). Its main principles are "addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners" by means of "changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children (…)" (2005, 13).

The full realisation of these principles in a current language classroom requires teachers to make accurate pedagogical decisions and to be familiar with the context of learning and learners (Macaro, Graham & Woore, 2016). Regarding dyslexia, which is the most common specific learning difficulty or difference (the European Dyslexia Association – EDA, 2019) that can affect foreign and second language (L2) skills development in many ways (Kormos, 2017), language teachers who teach students with dyslexia need to have extensive knowledge about both foreign language acquisition and special education (Kormos & Kontra, 2008). Many quantitative studies, however, reported a lack of such adequate knowledge (e.g., Fišer, 2019; Fišer & Dumančić, 2014; Nijakowska, 2014). In contrast, qualitative studies concluded that language teachers created an inclusive learning environment, yet only to some extent (Kałdonek-Crnjaković & Fišer, 2017; Kormos, Csizér & Sarkadi, 2009). Since such studies are scarce, this study investigated knowledge about the effect of dyslexia on foreign language learning and inclusive practices of Croatian primary and secondary school English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers through an in-depth, semi-structured

interview. The findings contribute to the current understanding of language teachers' inclusive practices for students with dyslexia.

Our study is novel in some respects. The interview included situational tasks, which asked participants about how they would remedy a specific difficulty in the context of learning and the use of different language skills and subskills. We also asked about whole-class teaching methods to triangulate the data about particular approaches recommended in teaching students with dyslexia to see whether participants' teaching practice is inclusive on both the classroom and individual levels. Also, the cohort of participants was specific. Participants worked in state-funded schools in different regions of Croatia, including city and rural areas. To investigate potential differences in teaching practices, we included teachers of both primary and secondary phases, teachers with extensive teaching experience and novice teachers, and those who were experienced in teaching students with dyslexia.

2. Literature review

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty or difference (SLD) that affects literacy skills development (EDA, 2019; the International Dyslexia Association – IDA, 2019). Since its characteristic features are difficulties in phonological awareness, verbal memory, and verbal processing speed (Lyon, Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2003; Snowling, 2000; Rose, 2009), skills development in a foreign language will be affected (Kormos, 2017; Nijakowska, 2010).

When learning L2, students with dyslexia will experience difficulties in developing all language skills and subskills, and they will lag behind their peers (Crombie, 2000; Helland & Kaasa, 2005). Both students with dyslexia and their teachers have reported difficulties in spelling, written and spoken expression, acquiring listening and reading skills, vocabulary and grammar learning (Fišer, 2019; Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2017; Kormos & Kontra, 2008; Kormos & Mikó, 2010 in Kormos & Smith, 2012: 67-68).

Regarding spelling, for example, students with dyslexia may misspell a range of basic curriculum words, such as 'could', 'high', 'beautiful' (Kormos & Mikó, unpublished data in Kormos & Smith, 2012: 76), 'water', 'fish', or 'was' (Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2015). In learning vocabulary, these students may have difficulty memorising new phrases, which will mainly affect the progress in productive knowledge of vocabulary, both in written and spoken contexts (Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2019; Pfenninger, 2015). When doing the listening and reading comprehension tasks, they may provide incorrect or incomplete answers (Kałdonek-Crnjaković & Fišer, 2021; Kormos & Smith, 2012).

There is a common agreement that teaching L2 language skills to learners with dyslexia should be based on the Multisensory Structured Learning (MSL) approach (e.g., Kormos & Smith, 2012; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). Many studies have evidenced its positive effect on developing EFL skills (e.g., Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2015, 2019; Nijakowska, 2008, 2010; Pfenninger, 2015; Sarkadi, 2008).

Since contemporary language teaching is learner-oriented and in a "post-methods era" (Celce-Murcia, 2014: 10), the MSL is not a completely distinct approach; however, it requires consistent use of five specific elements, which are: (1) explicit explanation of linguistic patterns, including constructive analysis and a synthetic approach; (2) a structured presentation of language concepts, where a more complex idea is built on an easier one, concerning the previously learned information; (3) multisensory practice, which is the simultaneous use of the visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic and tactile channels; (4) frequent practice and drills of the learning material; and (5) a metacognitive approach to raise the learner's metalinguistic awareness with the means of dynamic assessment to develop effective learning strategies for self-regulation and monitoring (Schneider & Evers, 2009). Examples of the MSL approach include asking thought-provoking questions, using flashcards, colour-coded and puzzle cards for learning vocabulary, sentence structure or spelling, mnemonic devices, pre-task activities, shaping letters and words in the air or on the desk for learning specific spelling patterns, making a comparison between the student's native language (L1) and the target language, playing interactive games, and giving explicit feedback which provides the student with constructive advice and examples of how they can improve their work and make progress in learning (Butkiewicz & Bogdanowicz, 2006; Kałdonek-Crnjaković & Fišer, 2021; Kormos & Smith, 2012; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). Studies also evidenced that learners with dyslexia found beneficial the individualised approach, the adjusted pace of learning, explicit and well-structured explanation, ample revision opportunities, and multisensory practice (Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2017; Kormos *et al*., 2009).

Apart from the MSL approach, students with dyslexia can benefit from a range of specific accommodations that improve their learning experience. These include, for example, adjusting the light, temperature, and volume level, equipping the classroom adequately, arranging the seating appropriately, allowing individualised pace of work, modifying learning materials by adopting a different layout, reducing or chunking the content, and enlarging the text (e.g., Kormos & Smith, 2012; Nijakowska, 2010; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). It is also paramount that teachers create a positive atmosphere in the classroom, focus on what students' strengths are and what they can attain (Nijakowska, 2010), and apply motivational teaching strategies (Kormos *et al*., 2009).

Following the principles of the post-methods approaches that aim at responding to "stimuli" provided by learners (Loughland, 2019: 79), individual differences and specific needs of students with dyslexia should be accommodated in a classroom divergently, which, unfortunately, is difficult to achieve in a pre-established curriculum (Ribé, 2003). Yet, content presentation and the organisation of classroom activities are in the teacher's hands (Kormos & Smith, 2012). By making decisions based on ongoing teaching practice (Canagarajah, 2016), teachers can provide differentiation instruction considering the principles of the MSL approach and the recommended accommodations. Such inclusive practices of language teachers were reported by interview and lesson observation studies conducted in Hungary and Croatia. Kormos, Orosz and Szatzker (2010 in Kormos 2017: 116) observed that Hungarian primary

and secondary school German and EFL teachers, regardless of whether they had been trained to teach students with SLDs or not, used inclusive and dyslexia-friendly approaches. These included, among others, teaching in a multisensory way, making adjustments to meet students' specific needs, providing students with constructive feedback, adapting the organisation of the lesson flexibly depending on the progress of the students, and teaching vocabulary and listening learning strategies.

The Croatian study reported similar findings based on the data collected in lesson observations (Kałdonek-Crnjaković & Fišer, 2017). The researchers concluded that Croatian EFL teachers who participated in this study taught in a dyslexia-friendly way. They taught explicitly, in a multisensory way, provided accommodations, and raised metalinguistic awareness. However, there were noticeable differences between primary and secondary school teachers' practices regarding other approaches. Namely, multisensory and structured teaching was more present in the primary school setting, whereas secondary school teachers used the cumulative approach and met students' individual needs more frequently. Also, those who had a student with dyslexia present in their observed lesson more often met students' individual needs, taught in a cumulative and structured way and provided accommodations.

Quantitative studies, however, yielded different results as they found that language teachers had limited knowledge of teaching principles for students with dyslexia (Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2017, 2019; Fišer & Dumančić, 2014; Nijakowska, 2014). Consequently, this limited knowledge results in a low level of self-perceived efficacy to teach EFL to students with dyslexia and implement inclusive practices (Fišer, 2019; Kormos & Nijakowska, 2017; Nijakowska, Tsagari & Spanoudis, 2018).

Drawing on the findings of the previous studies, we wanted to know whether participants' teaching practice is inclusive and dyslexia-friendly. The following questions guided our study:

1. What do participants know about dyslexia and its effect in the context of foreign language learning, and how and/or where did they acquire the knowledge?
2. Will participants' whole-class teaching approaches be appropriate for students with dyslexia?
3. What teaching approaches would participants adopt when a student with dyslexia experiences a specific language difficulty?
4. Which recommended approaches and accommodations for students with dyslexia are present in participants' teaching practice?
5. What are participants' future teaching needs?

We hypothesised that teacher participants would have some knowledge of dyslexia and its effect on learning a foreign language. They would adapt teaching approaches and employ a range of accommodations to meet the specific needs of their students with dyslexia. Therefore, we presumed that participants would create an inclusive atmosphere, and their teaching practice would be dyslexia-friendly. However, this would be only to some extent because their practice would be more intuitive rather

than knowledge-based and specific for teaching foreign languages. Therefore, they would be willing to participate in further training on dyslexia and EFL.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Participants

This study involved eight primary and eight secondary school teachers who taught EFL in state schools in four regions in Croatia. (In Croatia, primary teachers teach students ages 7-14, whereas secondary teachers teach students ages 15-18.)

All participants had a university degree in teaching EFL obtained either from a university teacher training college (six primary school teachers) or a philology faculty at a university (two primary and eight secondary school teachers); two participants attended a post-graduate doctoral study in applied linguistics and teaching foreign languages at the University of Zagreb. Participants' teaching experience ranged between ten months and 29 years; five participants were novice teachers with up to five years of teaching experience. The majority of participants were females (13/16). Twelve participants had experience in teaching students with dyslexia; these were five primary (62.5 %) and seven secondary school teachers (87.5 %).

We recruited participants through private and professional networks. The teachers voluntarily participated in the study by giving consent to participate in an extended qualitative interview based on the description and the purpose of the study that we communicated by email, followed by a one-to-one in-person or telephone conversation. Participants were informed about the confidentiality of their voluntary participation.

3.2. Data collection

We interviewed participants separately using a five-part questionnaire either in Croatian or English, depending on their preferences. (The questionnaire had been piloted on one EFL teacher, and minor modifications were made to the structure and vocabulary used in the questions and statements to enhance their comprehension). The time of interviewing varied between 45 and 75 minutes.

The questionnaire was designed based on the methodology and findings of the previous studies that investigated EFL teachers' knowledge about dyslexia and teaching students with dyslexia, as well as studies that examined the difficulties students with dyslexia encountered while learning EFL. We also reviewed the literature on the recommended approaches and accommodations in teaching these students (Crombie, 1997, 2000; Fišer & Dumančić, 2014; Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019; Kormos & Smith, 2012; Nijakowska, 2010, 2014; Schneider & Crombie, 2003). The questionnaire was structured in a way it did not pre-determine the participant's responses about specific teaching approaches recommended for students with dyslexia.

The first section of the questionnaire contained eight open-ended background questions about participants' current workplace, teaching experience and qualifications,

and their experience in teaching students with dyslexia. Seven open-ended questions in the second section of the questionnaire asked about whole-class teaching approaches. In the third section, participants were asked to respond to 12 situational tasks, which presented possible difficulties a student with dyslexia may encounter while learning EFL (Appendix A). The seven questions in section four aimed at learning about participants' knowledge about dyslexia, its effect on EFL skills development, the source of information about dyslexia, effective teaching approaches, the feasibility of providing differentiated instruction and accommodations in a school setting, and their training needs regarding dyslexia in the context of EFL. In the last part of the questionnaire, we asked participants about different elements of the MSL approach and accommodations that are recommended for students with dyslexia. This paper reports on the data collected in all sections of the questionnaire but the fourth one.

3.3. Data analysis

The data yielded from the transcript of the audio-recorded interviews were analysed using software Nvivo-12. They were coded separately, and the results of coding were compared to solve discrepancies. The vertical analysis was used to analyse the responses of each participant, followed by a horizontal analysis to categorise the open-coded responses. As a result of the analysis, the following themes emerged: (1) knowledge about dyslexia and its effect on the development of EFL skills; (2) adopted approaches and accommodations; (3) beliefs about teaching approaches and accommodations recommended for students with dyslexia; and (4) future training needs.

Regarding the differences between participants, the main comparison will be drawn between primary and secondary school teachers. Other variables, such as the length of teaching experience or experience in teaching students with dyslexia, will be reported if significant.

The following codes will be used when discussing the results:

- T followed by numbers 1 to 16 to refer to each participant;
- T4, 6, 8, 11-14, 16 are primary school teachers; and
- T1-3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 15 are secondary school teachers.

4. Results

4.1. Knowledge about dyslexia and its effect on the development of EFL skills

All participants defined dyslexia as a difficulty in reading and writing. Many participants mentioned specific difficulties students with dyslexia might have, such as misspellings, letter and words omission while reading, mispronunciation, vocabulary memorisation, or illegible handwriting. Interestingly, one teacher participant defined dyslexia as "different language perception" (T7). It is also worth noting at this point

that those without experience in teaching students with dyslexia were less confident in their answers, saying either they did not know much about dyslexia or starting their answers with "I think" (T11, 14, 15, and 16).

When asked about the effect of dyslexia on EFL learning, many participants (7 out of 16 or 7/16) stressed that dyslexia, in general, made learning EFL more difficult. Also, most of the participants (11/16) reported reading, writing, and spelling difficulties. Primary school teachers stressed the effect on syntax, pronunciation and speaking, and listening comprehension, whereas the secondary school teachers mentioned the effect on learning new material and self-esteem. Many participants with experience in teaching students with dyslexia (10/12) stressed that their students with dyslexia had good speaking skills, no specific difficulties in listening skills, but poor reading and writing skills. Primary school teachers also reported specific difficulties such as mixing b/d and m/n letters when reading and writing, misspelling when copying, slow reading and mispronouncing words. In contrast, secondary school teachers noticed the difficulty in spelling, especially under exam conditions, structuring an essay, and slow and inaccurate reading, though infrequent. They also reported that their students with dyslexia needed more time to complete tasks in the classroom or understand new learning material, had a short attention span, and found learning vocabulary and grammar difficult.

Many participants said they learned about dyslexia during their studies (9/12), including all the novice teachers. However, they stressed that the course provided them with basic information about dyslexia and not specifically about its effect on EFL learning. Participants also said that they learned about dyslexia through media, especially from the internet (8/16), from their colleagues, either a school psychologist or a teacher with experience in teaching students with dyslexia (5/16), or attended workshops led by a psychologist or a speech and language therapist (3/16).

4.2. Adopted approaches and accommodations

When asked about recommended teaching approaches for students with dyslexia, many participants commented on their answers with "I don't know.", "I don't really know (…)", or "I am not really familiar with (…)" (6/16), and reported accommodations rather than teaching approaches, including avoiding writing and teaching and assessing students orally (8/16), allowing extra time (4/16), enlarging font size and space between lines in the text (4/16), or not considering misspellings in the written expression (2/16). This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

> "Honestly, I don't really know what exact methods. I know more about accommodations. What I do is rather what I noticed what worked with my students with dyslexia, (…)" (T7)
>
> "I know what to do when they find the text difficult to read. I can always give them more time to complete the task, but teaching methods (…) I don't know." (T2)

It is worth mentioning that only responses of two primary school teachers (T8, 13) suggested using teaching approaches, that is, using interactive games based on the multisensory approach and overlearning.

Teaching grammar was approached explicitly by most of the participants (12/16), including discussing grammar rules (9/16), providing models and examples (10/16), and comparing L1 and L2 structures (10/16). When asked about vocabulary teaching, secondary school teachers reported using a meaningful context so that their students could deduct the meaning of a new word (8/8), translation into Croatian (6/8), synonyms and antonyms (5/8), defining it in English (4/8). Primary school teachers used flashcards for introducing new words and for vocabulary revision (4/8), pictures (4/8), and multiple repetitions of the new word after the teacher (4/8).

Many participants reported using pre-task activities when teaching listening (12/16), speaking (11/16), reading (11/16), and writing skills (8/16). In reading comprehension tasks, participants reported pre-teaching the vocabulary from the text (11/16) and ensuring that students understood the questions about the text (7/16). Primary school teachers mainly reported using translation into Croatian (4/8). For essay writing, many participants said that they discussed the structure and layout of the essay (10/16), gave students key vocabulary and topic sentences (8/16). Secondary school teachers also provided their students with examples and model answers (2/8).

However, pre-listening and pre-speaking activities were mainly reported by secondary school teachers (8/12 and 8/11, respectively). They included pre-teaching vocabulary, discussing and explaining questions in listening tasks, providing students with key vocabulary and exemplary sentences, and brainstorming for ideas. Many primary school teachers reported activities during listening, such as re-playing the recording or translating parts of the recording (6/8), practising correct pronunciation by listening to a recording and repeating the key words after the speaker or teacher (6/8).

In contrast, post-tasks activities were not reported by many participants. Vocabulary tasks were used by three primary and two secondary school teachers as post-reading activities. Also, five primary school teachers reported post-listening activities, such as role-play and reading and/or translating the script together for key vocabulary and sentence structures. Two secondary school teachers said they provided oral and written feedback in writing activities.

Most of the participants reported teaching spelling (11/16), including the explicit discussion of spelling rules, for example, prefixes and suffixes and the employment of double letters. However, secondary school teachers stressed that they taught spelling only occasionally and usually for words with complex spelling patterns. Primary school teachers also asked their students to copy new words into their books (4/8). However, it is worth mentioning that participants did the tasks confidently, answered without hesitation, and provided many specific examples of how they would alleviate specific difficulties.

In the situation when the student misspelt common words such as "was" (wos), most of the participants would just correct the mistake and ask the student to copy the correct version many times (15/16). In contrast, for the misspelling of the word

"water" (vater) and "fish" (fis), most of the participants would stress the difference in the pronunciation of the letters "w" and "v" and "sh" and "s", followed by different examples (12/16). However, these were mostly secondary school teachers (8/12); many primary school teachers would just correct the mistake and ask the student to copy the correct version (5/8). Similarly, for the misspelling of the word "fine" (fajn) and "dangerous" (dangerus), secondary school teachers would mainly stress the correct spelling of the sound and cluster, followed by examples of other words (6/8). In contrast, most primary school teachers would ask the student to copy the correct version many times and write sentences with the keywords (5/8).

In addition, many participants (10/16) would provide the student with post-correction practice opportunities, including reading aloud the correct version of the word, looking up words with similar spelling patterns in the dictionary, sorting out the words by the way they are pronounced, and copying sentences with the keywords; however, these were mainly primary school teachers (7/10).

In situations when the student had difficulty recalling the word or its correct pronunciation, many participants would alleviate the problem by directing the student to the correct answer and encourage self-correction. They would provide the student with synonymous or antonymous phrases (8/16), define the word in English or Croatian (8/16), translate it into Croatian (4/16), and model the correct pronunciation (14/16). Many participants also said they would give the student additional exercises that would help them to remember the word and its correct pronunciation (12/16), including filling-in exercises, playing vocabulary games or re-pronouncing the word during the lesson.

Similarly, in a situation when the student omitted the auxiliary verb when writing sentences in the present continuous tense, and in a situation when the student read some words inaccurately replacing them with words that sound similar, most of the participants would direct the student and encourage self-regulation. They would show a model sentence and ask the student to analyse the sentence they have written to spot the mistake and self-correct (12/16), stress the difference in the pronunciation of the words, and model the pronunciation of the keyword (11/16). Many participants (13/16) would also give additional practice, such as filling-in sentences with the correct verb form, copying model sentences, writing sentences based on the model sentence and with the keywords, looking up the words in the dictionary for their meaning or looking for the words in the text; however, these were mainly primary school teachers (10/13).

In a listening task, when the student answered questions incorrectly, most participants would alleviate the problem by re-listening to the recording (11/16). Only some would analyse the mistake the student made and explain the parts the student has not understood (6/16). Secondary school teachers would also ask the student to refer to the script of the recording either to find keywords or answers to the questions (4/8), whereas primary school teachers would guide the student to the correct answer by asking additional questions and giving keywords (3/8).

When the student had difficulty in organising their written expressions, most of the participants referred to whole-class teaching approaches. They said they would

explicitly discuss each part of the essay (11/16), brainstorm for ideas and give model sentences and key vocabulary (7/16). Secondary school teachers would also show good examples (2/8), whereas primary school teacher would also ask guiding questions (3/8). Only one primary school teacher would adopt a more individualised approach. She said that she would shorten the length of the essay or ask the student to write only some sentences (T12).

However, some participants would adopt a more individualised and structured approach when the student wrote short sentences and used a limited range of vocabulary in essay writing. Secondary school teachers would mainly provide the student with synonyms and connectives to develop their sentences (6/8). Primary school teachers would give exemplary sentences, do oral practice first with new vocabulary and then ask the student to write sentences (5/8).

When asked about the employment of specific approaches and accommodations that are recommended for students with dyslexia, all participants reported asking thought-provoking questions about grammatical concepts, including referring to the rules and patterns of different tenses and indicating a mistake for self-correction by asking, for example, "What is missing in your sentence?" or "Where did you make a mistake?" (T15), stressing sounds for spelling and pronunciation acquisition, including the pronunciation of vowels, words with silent letters, words with similar pronunciation, the spelling of typical adverb endings, prefixes and suffixes, the abbreviated form of "cannot", and irregular plural noun forms, allowing additional time for task completion or learning new material, and revision of previously taught grammatical concepts and vocabulary, especially at the beginning of the lesson (13/16). Regarding the latter, one primary school teacher (T6) stressed that revision of key vocabulary and grammar is important not only for students with dyslexia, and another (T8) suggested that "students with dyslexia should have a word book to write down new vocabulary and revise them at home. In this way, they will be prepared for revision in class".

Most of the participants reported asking differentiated questions, for example, simple questions to students with lower language skills (14/16), and modifying texts for students with dyslexia (13/16), yet only sometimes and mainly by increasing the font size and for formal assessments. Participants also mentioned pointing out spelling and grammatical mistakes to encourage self-correction (13/16), and using different colours of markers to stress grammatical points or parts of the word, for example, suffixes and prefixes, the abbreviated form of "cannot", or "s" in plural nouns (14/16).

Many participants (11/16) reported using puzzles and sentence/text structure patterns to introduce and practise the structure of different tenses and questions. The majority (11/16) would also arrange the seating plan according to students' abilities, for example, arranging mixed-abilities pairs and groups or seating students who struggle with learning English closer to the teacher. Some participants also mentioned that they used a seating plan to manage students' behaviour (4/16). Primary school teachers (6/8) also reported asking their students to shape letters in the air and using tinted paper, but only occasionally.

In addition, all participants, but one (T4) who had experience in teaching students with dyslexia reported that they adopted special approaches and provided accommodations for their students with dyslexia. These were one-to-one support, more practice for essay writing, ignoring spelling mistakes in a more extended written expression and in grammar and vocabulary tests, and an oral assessment instead of a written one. Secondary school teachers also allowed extra time to learn new material or complete a test and classroom activity. They would also differentiate learning and assessment resources, for example, by removing some tasks, chunking the text, enlarging the font size, or printing worksheets on tinted paper. It is, however, noteworthy that some teachers explicitly stressed that they had not provided "anything special" for their students with dyslexia (T1, 5, 10, and 12).

4.3. Beliefs about teaching approaches and accommodations recommended for students with dyslexia

Although the majority of participants (14/16) agreed that lessons for students with dyslexia should be differentiated and that such differentiation was possible in the state school setting (15/16), many reported barriers to accommodating specific needs of students with dyslexia. For example, the alteration to reading materials or preparation of puzzles and sentence/text structure patterns were reported time-consuming (4/16), and printing learning resources on tinted paper was regarded as impossible due to their school's limited financial resources (7/16). Moreover, some participants (4/16) said that modifications to learning materials were restricted by the curriculum and the content of textbooks. Also, one secondary school teacher stressed that providing accommodations such as assessing the student's skills orally instead of in writing might be sometimes impossible because of how the classroom work is organised and of the scope of the exam (T9). Similarly, allowing additional time for completing tasks in class may be infeasible. Only two teachers gave details about how they would organise the classroom work when different time pace is allowed; interestingly, these were teachers with no experience in teaching students with dyslexia (T14,15).

Secondary school teachers also believed that multisensory activities, such as shaping letters in the air or on the desk or explicit teaching of spelling rules, are more appropriate for primary school students. They also stressed that accommodations, such as using tinted paper, making alterations to reading materials, assessing orally, or arranging a seating plan, should be purposeful and the teacher needs to consider what awaits students once they leave school. These beliefs are illustrated in the following excerpts:

> "I don't enforce a seating plan. It can be demotivating for some students with dyslexia. I pair them with a stronger student only if it is beneficial, for example for reading comprehension." (T15)

> "I know that students with dyslexia should learn through listening and speaking, but in the real world they need to read and write. I assess them orally when we do tasks in the classroom, but exams need to be done in writing, so I need to prepare them for that." (T3)

> "I don't print work for my students with dyslexia on colour paper because no one outside the classroom would do it for them. I need to prepare them for what awaits them when they leave school." (T2)

> "I usually use the resources that are already available. I want that my students can manage authentic materials. They have to come up with a strategy how to handle the material if it is too difficult for them. This is what will need to do when they leave school." (T2)

Similarly, as commented by one primary school teacher, teaching approaches should vary depending on the current knowledge of the student: "I ask my student to correct their spelling mistakes only with the words we learnt and common words. With more complex words, I just correct the mistake and ask the student to copy the word many times. There is no point to ask students to correct such words on their own because they don't know the rules." (T8).

Additionally, when speaking about teaching specific skills and subskills, many teachers (5/16), the majority of whom were the participants experienced in teaching students with dyslexia (4/5), stressed the importance of focusing on the specific needs of students with dyslexia and adopting an individual approach in teaching them and arranging accommodations, as illustrated by this excerpt:

> "They [students with dyslexia] can perform really well in English. You just need to adopt an individual approach. It's all about the right support." (T8)

Also, more specifically, one secondary school teacher commented on the effect of an individual approach in essay writing, stressing little additional effort from the teacher's side: "One of my students struggled with the structure of the essay, but I just explained it again on a one-to-one basis and he started doing it correctly." (T10).

In this vein, some participants stressed the importance of discussing the accommodations with students; it is paramount to give students a choice whether they want to engage in a certain activity, as illustrated by these excerpts:

> "I provide accommodations only if the student wants. I think it's important because if you don't ask, the student can feel uncomfortable." (T7)

> "I don't force them to do dictation task if they don't wish. If they decide to write a dictation, I ask them if they are happy with the grade they got. If not, I don't write the grade down." (T3)

4.4. Future training needs

Many participants stressed that they lack knowledge of effective methods in teaching students with dyslexia (8/16), and the majority of them (6/8) were the participants who had experience in teaching students with dyslexia. Participants also wanted to know more on the effect of dyslexia on EFL learning, what students with dyslexia find easy and what difficult, how they can help these students, including how best to motivate them and what tasks to provide to ensure progress in learning.

5. Discussion

Our first research question enquired about participants' knowledge about dyslexia and its effect on foreign language learning. We also wanted to know where and/or how participants learned about dyslexia.

The definitions provided by participants were in line with the worldwide leading definitions (EDA, 2019; IDA, 2019; Rose, 2009). Similarly, participants listed many effects that dyslexia might have on learning EFL as provided in the literature on the topic (e.g., Crombie, 2000; Kormos & Smith, 2012; Nijakowska, 2008). Interestingly, though, many participants stressed that their students with dyslexia had good speaking skills and no specific difficulties in listening skills. This finding contradicts previous results to some extent (e.g., Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2019; Kormos & Mikó, 2010 in Kormos & Smith, 2012: 67-68).

The reported knowledge about dyslexia and its effect on EFL learning suggest that participants are familiar with the concept of dyslexia in the context of foreign language learning which, on the one hand, confirms our hypothesis; on the other hand, this finding contradicts the findings of quantitative studies to some extent (Fišer, 2017, 2019; Fišer & Dumančić, 2014; Nijakowska, 2014).

In the second question, we wanted to know whether participants' whole-class teaching approaches would be appropriate for students with dyslexia. Data analysis revealed that participants' whole-class teaching approaches included recommended approaches and accommodations for students with dyslexia. This finding confirms our preliminary assumptions and corroborates the results of the study in six European countries (Nijakowska, 2014): participants approached teaching students with dyslexia intuitively based on their teaching experience.

As to the third research question (What teaching approaches would participants adopt when a student with dyslexia experiences a specific language difficulty?), participants' responses to the situational tasks also revealed the employment of recommended approaches for students with dyslexia. However, it was only to some extent, and the responses of primary and secondary school teacher participants differed, which further corroborate the findings of the lesson observation study (Kałdonek-Crnjaković & Fišer, 2017). The findings of the situational tasks about spelling difficulties showed that secondary school teachers would adopt more metacognitive approaches where the student would be asked to use metalinguistic skills of information processing (Schneider, 1999). In contrast, primary school teachers would rely on multiple practices. This difference in approaching spelling difficulties may stem from teacher participants' beliefs about their students' spelling skills and knowledge of spelling rules.

Considering further participants' beliefs about adapting teaching approaches and providing accommodations to meet the needs of students with dyslexia, participants stressed that meeting the needs of students with dyslexia needed to be purposeful, mediated with the student, and considered the student's current knowledge and functioning outside of the school. It is however worrying that they reported many

limitations that stemmed from working conditions and the curriculum restrictions. It is important information for school management and parties involved in curriculum design. It seems that the realisation of the principles enshrined in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Guidelines for Inclusion (2005) requires the whole-system and school approach; it should not be solely the obligation of a classroom teacher.

In the fourth research question, we wanted to know about which recommended approaches and accommodations for students with dyslexia were present in participants' teaching practice. Participants reported using all key elements of MSL; however, there were significant differences between primary and secondary school teacher participants. Also, experience in teaching students with dyslexia was salient. Those with such experience stressed the importance of focusing on the specific needs of students with dyslexia and adopting an individual approach in teaching them and arranging accommodations. These findings corroborate the results of the lesson observation study (Kałdonek-Crnjaković & Fišer, 2017).

Regardless that the recommended approaches and accommodations were present in participants' teaching practice, the findings also suggest that participants may feel unprepared and inefficient to teach students with dyslexia; therefore, as we presumed for the fifth research question, they expressed willingness to extend their knowledge on dyslexia in the context of language learning and teaching, which was also evidenced by previous studies (Fišer, 2019; Fišer & Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2018; Kormos & Nijakowska, 2017; Nijakowska, 2014; Nijakowska *et al*., 2018).

The lack of preparedness among participants may stem from the fact that none of them received specific training on teaching foreign languages to students with dyslexia. Many participants were self-educated, and the sources of information about dyslexia and teaching students with dyslexia were reported in other studies in the Croatian context (Fišer, 2019; Fišer & Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2018). Though, it is noteworthy that all the novice teachers learned about dyslexia during their studies, which may suggest that many tertiary institutions that provide teacher training have relatively recently made the topic of specific learning difficulties part of their curriculum. This evidence is in line with findings of previous studies conducted in Croatia (Fišer, 2017, 2019) and other European countries (Nijakowska, 2014).

6. Conclusion

In this paper, using an in-depth and semi-structured interview with situational tasks, we investigated Croatian primary and secondary EFL teachers' knowledge about dyslexia and teaching students with dyslexia. We also examined different aspects of their teaching to see to what extent their practice was inclusive and dyslexia-friendly. Drawing on the findings, we can conclude that teaching practices of the Croatian primary and secondary school EFL teachers who participated in this study are dyslexia-friendly, yet to some extent and with the consideration of in-group

differences. This evidence corroborates our findings of the lesson observation study (Kałdonek-Crnjaković & Fišer, 2017).

Participants correctly defined dyslexia and could tell how it might affect the development of EFL skills. They also applied a range of MSL approaches and accommodated the needs of students with dyslexia in many ways. In this regard, participants also approached their practice reflectively, which resulted in considering students' individual strengths and weaknesses.

However, the intuitive approach to teaching students with dyslexia and accommodating their needs, expressing doubts when responding to some questions, as well as the differences in the knowledge and practice of primary and secondary school teachers, those with and without experience in teaching students with dyslexia, and experienced and novice teachers need to be noted in regard to participants' training needs. We believe that teachers, irrespective of the age group they teach and teaching experience, should be more familiar with the broader application of the MSL approach, and how to differentiate instruction in the classroom setting effectively.

Regarding the limitations of this study, the sample size may be a concern. Initially, we hoped to recruit more participants coming from different areas of Croatia; however, little interest was expressed in participating in the study, which we believe was due to voluntary participation and the potential time participants needed to devote for the interview. Such limited response was also found in the previous study in the Croatian context (Fišer & Dumančić, 2014), which may be worth investigating. Future research should also involve teachers of other languages than English.

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Appendix A

Part 3. Situational tasks

What would you do if your student ...

1. ... regularly wrote the word 'was' as 'wos'?
2. ... regularly wrote the word 'water' as 'vater?
3. ... regularly wrote the word 'fine' as 'fajn'?
4. ... regularly wrote the word 'fish' as 'fis'?
5. ... regularly wrote the word 'dangerous' as 'dangerus'?
6. ... had difficulty in learning vocabulary; for example, he or she cannot recall phrases that they learned in previous lessons?
7. ... did not frequently answer most of the questions correctly in a listening task?
8. ... did not read accurately and replaced some words with words that sound similar?
9. ... omitted the auxiliary verb 'to be' in its singular form 'is' and plural 'are' when writing sentences in the present continuous tense?
10. ... could not recall the correct pronunciation of the word he or she learned in the previous lesson?
11. ... had difficulty in organising his/her written expressions (e.g. an essay)?
12. ... wrote short sentences and used a limited range of vocabulary?