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Teaching English to Learners with Special Educational Needs at Higher Elementary School

Výuka angličtiny žáků se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami na druhém stupni základní školy

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

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PODĚKOVÁNÍ

PROHLÁŠENÍ

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SOUHLAS

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I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Abstract

The thesis focuses on the knowledge, opinions and teaching strategies of Czech higher elementary school teachers in relation to learners who have special educational needs (SEN); more specifically to students with ADHD and specific learning difficulties (SpLD). The data were drawn from interviews with two less experienced and two experienced teachers, and an anonymous online survey. The interviews were coded, emergent themes for each teacher were identified and broad thematic categories were developed; the categories were then further refined. Next, the themes for the two pairs of teachers – experienced and less experienced – were compared and contrasted in order to find shared patterns. Lastly, the four teachers were analysed jointly to find out whether the themes for the younger and the more experienced teachers differed. As for the survey, the data were analysed using qualitative, as well as quantitative methods. The qualitative methods included coding of the responses to the open-ended questions. The quantitative analysis was performed using several statistical tests. The findings show that most teachers seem to possess at least some degree of knowledge about the problems SEN students experience, and the strategies they can use to facilitate the learning process for them. Especially teachers who have the most experience with SEN learners are then the most likely to be interested in further education in the area of teaching SpLD and ADHD students. Conversely, teachers who have the most experience overall are the least likely to show an interest. As for the opinion on inclusion, there are significant differences only in the case of ADHD students. In this respect, teachers with three to ten years of experience appear to be the most likely to be in favour of inclusion, but also the most likely to be in support of special schools. Thus, there is considerable variation among this group. While both overall teaching experience and experience with SEN turned out to be significant predictors, the teachers' participation in specialised courses does not appear to play a significant role. The thesis has numerous implications for further research.

Key words: SEN, ADHD, SpLD, teaching strategies, interviews, questionnaire, courses

Abstrakt

Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na znalosti, názory a výukové metody českých učitelů základních škol v oblasti výuky žáků se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami (SVP); konkrétně na studenty s ADHD a specifickými poruchami učení (SPU). Data pro výzkum byla získána metodou rozhovorů se dvěma méně zkušenými a dvěma zkušenými učitelkami a prostřednictvím anonymního online průzkumu. Rozhovory byly nejprve „okódovány", na základě témat objevujících se v jednotlivých rozhovorech pak byly vytvořeny tematické kategorie, které byly dále zpřesňovány. Následně byla témata pro obě dvojice učitelů – zkušené a méně zkušené – porovnána s cílem identifikovat podobnosti a rozdíly. Nakonec byla porovnána témata pro všechny čtyři učitelky, abychom zjistili, v čem se mladší a zkušenější učitele liší a v čem se naopak podobají. V případě dotazníkového šetření byla data analyzována za použití kvalitativních i kvantitativních metod. Co se týče metod kvalitativních, šlo konkrétně o kódování odpovědí na otevřené otázky. Kvantitativní analýza pak byla provedena s použitím několika statistických testů. Zjištění ukazují, že většina učitelů má alespoň určitou míru znalostí o problémech, se kterými se studenti SEN potýkají, a o strategiích, které mohou použít, aby jim proces učení usnadnili. Zejména učitelé, kteří mají se studenty se SVP nejvíce zkušeností, pak mají největší zájem o další vzdělávání v oblasti jejich výuky. Nejmenší zájem projevují naopak učitelé s nejdelší pedagogickou praxí. Pokud jde o názory na inkluzi, významné rozdíly byly zjištěny pouze v případě studentů ADHD. Dá se očekávat, že nejvíce učitelů, kteří jsou pro, ale i proti inkluzi těchto studentů bude patřit do skupiny učitelů středně zkušených (tři až deset let praxe). U této skupiny byla zjištěna značná variabilita. Celkové pedagogické zkušenosti i zkušenosti se SVP se ukázaly jako významné prediktory; účast učitelů na specializovaných kurzech naopak nehraje výraznou roli. V závěru práce jsou navržena východiska pro další výzkum v této oblasti.

Klíčová slova: SVP, ADHD, SPU, výukové metody, rozhovory, dotazníkové šetření, kurzy

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List of abbreviations

ADD – Attention deficit disorder

ADHD – Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

APA – American Psychiatric Association

CLT – Communicative language teaching

DAD – Dyslexic Automatization Deficit

EFL – English as a foreign language

IEP – Individualised educational plan

L1 – First language (mother tongue)

L2 – Second, foreign or other language

LCWC – Look – cover – write – check

MLAT – Modern Language Association test

MSL – Multi-sensory learning

PSTM – Phonological short-term memory

SEBD – Social emotional behaviour disorders

SEN – Special educational needs

SpLD – Specific learning difficulties

SPU – Specifické poruchy učení

SVP – Speciální vzdělávací potřeby

TEFL – Teaching English as a foreign language

WM – Working memory

1. Introduction

In today's globalised world, the ability to speak a second language has become a necessity. People who can't communicate in a language other than their mother tongue are seriously disadvantaged in the labour market, and sometimes other areas of life. Consequently, measures are being taken to promote multilingualism. Member states of the European Union have agreed to "enhance the learning of languages so that more young people will speak at least two European languages in addition to their mother tongue" (EUCO, 2017).

But learning a second language poses many challenges. Even more so, if the student was experiencing difficulties in acquiring and developing language-related competencies in their L1. This tends to be the case with students who have special educational needs[1] (SEN). Such students have problems in areas which are crucial for language processing, most notably general working memory, and phonological short-term memory (Kormos, 2017; Kormos and Smith, 2012; Kormos and Sáfár, 2008)[2]. In addition, they often struggle with anxiety and lack of motivation (Kormos, 2017). It is therefore up to the teacher to employ effective teaching strategies which can facilitate the learning process.

But more often than not, teachers, despite their willingness to help, are unsure how they should work with such students (Delaney, 2016; Kormos and Nijakowska, 2017; Nijakowska, 2019). This might be due to three different factors: first, they do not know enough about the nature of their students' problems; second, they are unaware of the strategies these students can

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[1] e.g. dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD; for a definition, see the next section
[2] For more information on general working memory, and phonological short-term memory, and the problems stemming from the deficit in these areas, see section 3.1.

use to cope with the difficulties they are experiencing; and third, they do not have an adequate repertoire of teaching tools and techniques (Kormos et al., 2009).

Research shows that raising awareness about SEN increases teachers' confidence and self-efficacy[3]. Nijakowska and Kormos conducted a study in which they investigated the beliefs about SEN of second language teachers[4] before and after they took part in a specialised online course. At the end of the course, the participants reported lower levels of anxiety about the implementation of inclusive practices in their language classroom (Kormos and Nijakowska, 2017). From that it follows that specialised courses can make a difference.

However, English teachers (and especially higher elementary school teachers) in the Czech Republic still do not have as many opportunities to enrol in such courses[5]. Consequently, they might experience anxiety similar to that of the teachers from the aforementioned study. And whilst abroad, there are studies such as the one mentioned[6], in the Czech Republic, the teachers' perspective has been largely ignored. There is some research which looks at inclusion from the teachers' point of view (e.g. Michalík et al., 2018; Pitnerová and Pančocha, 2010; Žáková, 2015), but it is scarce (Michalík et al., 2018, p. 167), and mostly focussed on teacher trainees. And yet, research with practising teachers could help improve the state of education in this country. It might bring valuable insight into the problems the teachers are experiencing, and thus contribute to the elimination of those problems. It could be especially important in the preparation of future courses, and methodological seminars.

This study aims to make a contribution in this field. It looks at inclusive education from the perspectives of Czech teachers of English at higher elementary schools. Its main objective is to find out to what extent the teachers are aware of the specific problems SEN students

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[3] For more information, see chapter 4.
[4] Before the course, 1187 teachers took part. After the course, the number of respondents was lower – 752.
[5] For a list of specialised courses and seminars aimed at this group of teachers, see section 7.1.
[6] A review of research is presented in section 4.1.

experience in the language classroom, and whether they are familiar with the teaching methods that can be used to help these students overcome the problems. It is also concerned with the teachers' experience[7] in this area, the role it plays in their ability to implement adequate educational practices, and the influence it has on their attitudes towards inclusion[8]. Lastly, the study aims to find out about the problems the teachers are facing, and what they feel would aid them to overcome these problems. The intended outcome is to provide practical suggestions which would help improve the quality of inclusive education in the Czech Republic.

The study consists of 4 main parts. The first part lays the foundations for the research. It defines SEN and discusses the areas which are impaired. It also presents the specific problems SEN students encounter in the language classroom, and explains how teachers can deal with these problems (i.e. provides examples of effective teaching strategies). Finally, it gives an overview of the materials and courses available to teachers in the Czech Republic. This part is followed by the method part, which describes the process of data collection. This was done through interviews with four higher elementary school teachers, and an anonymous online survey. The next section – the analysis part – consist in case studies of the four teachers, and an analysis of the survey responses. The final part then compares and contrasts the results of the survey analysis with the findings from the interview study. Finally, the conclusions are compared and contrasted with those of other research studies.

2. Definitions

2.1. WHAT ARE SEN?

In her book *Special Educational Needs*, Delaney defines SEN as follows: "Students have special educational needs if they have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the

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[7] i.e. how often they encounter SEN students in their classrooms, and if they took part in any specialised trainings

[8] I.e. whether teachers with more experience in dealing with SEN learners display more positive attitudes than teachers with little to no experience (compare with results of previous research presented in chapter 4)

majority of students of the same age and special educational provision has to be made for them." (Delaney, 2016, p. 12). This definition comprises five main categories of students: students with cognition and learning needs (specific learning difficulties – e.g. dyslexia, dysgraphia, and general learning difficulties – e.g. Down's syndrome); students with communication and interaction difficulties (mainly speech and language difficulties, and autism spectrum condition); students with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) (e.g. students with Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder – ADHD); students with medical conditions (e.g. asthma, diabetes); and students with sensory impairments. In addition, Delaney includes gifted and talented students, who do not have difficulty learning, but for whom special provisions should also be made (Delaney, 2016, pp. 18–21).

2.2. THE SCOPE OF THE THESIS

Evidently, the definition provided by Delaney is rather broad, and including all of the aforementioned categories is far beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, I will focus on two specific subtypes which have a significant impact on the students' performance in the language classroom: Specific learning difficulties (SpLD)[9], and ADHD. The reason for choosing these two particular subcategories is that there is a considerable overlap in the types of problems the students are experiencing (Kormos, 2017, pp. 4, 6, 48). Consequently, similar teaching strategies can be employed in dealing with them.

2.3. A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

In the thesis, the abbreviations SpLD and ADHD will be used to denote the two categories respectively. If the issue discussed applies to both, the term SEN will be employed. When citing research, the original terminology is always kept. Lastly, in the case of Czech studies, the term SpLD is used as the English equivalent of the term SPU[10]; SEN is employed

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[9] The terms Specific learning disorders, or Specific learning differences are also used (see Kormos and Smith, 2012). I prefer the term Specific learning difficulties, as I believe this best reflects the nature of the students' problems. When citing research, however, I will use the original terminology.

[10] Specifické poruchy učení – specific learning disorders

where the Czech term "speciální vzdělávací potřeby – SVP" was used, and SEBD replaces the label "poruchy chování".

2.4. SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (SpLD)

In the past, several attempts at defining SpLD were made. The first ones were based on a discrepancy between the students' IQ and their performance in tests of academic achievement. However, such a definition was problematic for a number of reasons. Mainly, the difference in performance in both tests had to be large, which led to children in the lower range of IQ being undiagnosed. Different criteria thus had to be established. The consecutive attempts were based on the concept of unexpectedness. Students were diagnosed with SpLD if they had persistent difficulties in one or more domains of learning despite "adequate cognitive skills, instruction, and socio-economic context" (Kormos, 2017, p. 6). However, though more useful than the definition based on IQ, this one also proved to be inadequate. The main problem was that the fact that the child was not successful in the academic domain could be caused by factors other than SpLD (Kormos, 2017, p. 7). More recent attempts at defining SpLD build on what is called the *processing strengths and weaknesses approach* (Kormos, 2017, p. 8). This new framework has also been adopted by American Psychiatric Association (APA). In their *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* they define SpLD as follows:

> Specific learning disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder with a biological origin that is the basis for abnormalities at a cognitive level that are associated with the behavioural signs of the disorder. The biological origin includes an interaction of genetic, epigenetic, and environmental factors, which affect the brain's ability to perceive or process verbal or nonverbal information efficiently and accurately (APA, 2013).

According to the area in which the student has trouble, they then distinguish between three main categories: *students with impairment in reading, students with impairment in written expression,* and *students with impairment in mathematics*. Within each of these types, further divisions are made to specify in which aspects the students struggle. The reading impairment category (traditionally known under the term dyslexia) comprises word reading accuracy,

reading rate or fluency, and reading comprehension. The written expression impairment is then an aggregate name for what we know as dysgraphia and dysorthographia; it includes spelling accuracy, grammar and punctuation accuracy, and clarity or organisation of written expression. The last category – traditionally known under the name of dyscalculia – involves number sense, memorisation of arithmetic facts, accurate or fluent calculation, and accurate math reasoning. The reason why APA chose to refrain from the traditional terminology (e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia etc.) is that the new framework enables for a more individualised approach. To give an example, dyslexic students are perceived as having difficulties in reading. However, they might also experience problems in other areas, such as math reasoning. This framework facilitates the identification of the specific areas of difficulty for each student, rather than just giving them a general diagnosis, which makes it more useful for the student, their parents, and their teachers alike.

Having provided this basic categorisation, APA then identifies the main features of SpLD. Firstly, the student experiences persistent difficulties in learning academic skills, such as reading, writing, or counting. Second, the performance of the student in the academic skills in question is below average in their age group. Third, the symptoms often become apparent at the onset of primary school. However, cases also exist in which the difficulties do not manifest until later school years, when the learning burden increases. Fourth, SpLD are not caused by lower IQ, sensory impairments, neurological or motor disorders, "global developmental delay", or environmental factors (e.g. economic or social disadvantage, schooling etc.). And last but not least, SpLD does not have to manifest in more than one of the aforementioned areas, e.g. word reading accuracy, or number sense. SpLD are not infrequent, with the prevalence among children estimated between 5 and 15% (APA, 2013, p. 70).

2.5. ADHD

The tell-tale sign of ADHD is "a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functional development" (APA, 2013, p. 61). This can manifest

as difficulty in following instructions and/ or staying on task, running around, fidgeting, inability to wait their turn, excessive talking, and impaired organisation skills. The condition for diagnosis is that several symptoms manifest before the age of 12. However, it is not uncommon for ADHD to remain undiagnosed until adulthood. When diagnosing adults, obtaining additional information is vital as the memory of their childhood behaviour tends to be unreliable (APA, 2013, p. 61).

As mentioned above, ADHD and SpLD share many features. The reason why they are treated separately is that students with ADHD will not necessarily have difficulty in learning the academic skills, but rather in performing them. Also, while often inattentive at school, a child with SpLD will not have problems with attention outside the academic environment. As for the frequency of occurrence, ADHD is less common than SpLD; the number of school children who live with this condition is estimated at 5% (APA, 2013, p. 61). It is also not uncommon for these two conditions to co-occur (APA, 2013, p. 74). Depending on the diagnostic criteria, the co-ocurrence of ADHD with dyslexia is estimated at 8%–39%; with dyscalculia, it is thought to be in the range of 12%–30%." (Frick et al., 1991 cited in Kormos, 2017, p. 23).

3. SEN students and language learning-related difficulties

3.1. WORKING MEMORY (WM)

One of the impaired cognitive functions in students with SEN is working memory (WM). WM plays a key role in the acquisition of foreign languages. But in order to realise its importance, it is essential to first understand how it works. The nowadays best-known model of WM has been proposed by Baddeley (in Kormos, 2017, pp. 48–49). In this model, there is a driver – a central system called *the central executive* – which directs and "coordinates" three subsystems: *the phonological loop*, *the visuo-spatial sketchpad*, and *the episodic buffer.*

The *phonological loop* is responsible for retaining auditory information for further manipulation. It remembers what we hear, and manifests as the voice in our heads when we "repeat" information that needs to be stored in the memory to ourselves. The *visuo-spatial sketchpad* then deals with visual input, e.g. colours, shapes, distance etc. This manifests in the form of images we are temporarily holding in our heads. Lastly, *the episodic buffer* integrates information from these two components, and converts it into a chronological sequence, e.g. a story. It also interacts with long-term memory. As to *the central executive*, it is responsible for attention control and planning. It enables us to multitask, or switch from one task to another (Monsell, 1996, cited in Kormos, 2017, p. 49). It also helps filter the information, and select what is relevant for us to complete the task successfully and efficiently. Finally, it blocks automatic responses, when they prevent successful completion of a task (Morris and Jones, 1990; cited in Kormos, 2017, p. 49).

For learners with SpLD and ADHD alike, the WM capacity is limited, and they exhibit problems with attention control. Students with diagnosed ADHD then also have less efficient control of the executive processes (Willcutt et al., 2005, cited in Kormos 2017, p. 49). This means they have difficulty in multitasking, or switching between different tasks. They will also have problems determining which information is relevant, and which is not.

Now that the functioning of WM has been explained, it is clear that it plays an important part in learning a language. It enables us to remember new information, and manipulate it, performing multiple mental operations at once. Regarding the specific areas of language it impacts, it has been discovered that general WM capacity affects the acquisition of syntax; students with high WM capacity are generally better at noticing syntactic regularities. The phonological short-term memory (PSTM) (aka *phonological loop*) capacity was then found to have an impact on the students' ability to learn new vocabulary (for a review of research see Kormos and Sáfár, 2008).

To further investigate the role PSTM and general WM play in the learning of L2, Kormos and Sáfár conducted a study with 121 Hungarian learners of English[11] (Kormos and Sáfár, 2008). To test complex WM, they used the backward digit span task, which requires participants to hold the information in their memory, as well as perform additional operations with it (i.e. recite or rewrite it backwards). The non-word repetition test was then used to assess PSTM. During this test, participants are simply asked to repeat what they hear, so it does not require the execution of complex cognitive operations as the backward digit span task does.

Interestingly, the researchers found that general WM and PSTM are distinct constructs, which play different parts in the process of foreign-language learning. The students' general WM capacity had an influence on their performance in reading, listening, speaking, and use of English tasks. This can be explained by the fact that such tasks involve holding the information, while simultaneously using it to perform other tasks. For instance, reading necessitates remembering what the student had already read while they continue reading the next section; the same principle applies to listening. At beginner's level, the learner's performance in the backward digit span test was also found to be a reliable predictor of overall language proficiency (Kormos and Sáfár, 2008, p. 267).

Regarding the PSTM, this does not play a considerable part at the beginning of the learning process. However, as the learners become more proficient (by pre-intermediate level) it has an impact on their ability to store new vocabulary, as well as access words they had already learned. Thus, higher PSTM capacity correlates with higher performance in writing tasks, as well as the students' overall fluency (Kormos and Sáfár, 2008, p. 269).

From what has been said, it follows that the deficit in general WM and PSTM in SpLD and ADHD students leads to a number of language-learning related difficulties. Many authors claim that SpLD will manifest most notably in the production and perception of speech

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[11] 100 participants were at elementary level, 21 were considered pre-intermediate

(Zelinková, 2006, p. 18). One of the most affected functions is then phonological awareness. This refers to the ability to distinguish between phonemes, and manipulate them. Students with reduced phonological awareness will have difficulty in making and recognising rhymes, decomposing words into phonemes, stringing phonemes together to make words, or even distinguishing one word from another. Consequently, the students are prone to having problems in the area of pronunciation. (If they have trouble distinguishing the phonemes, then, logically, they will not be able to correctly reproduce them.) The problems in these domains can then be attributed to the deficit in both general WM, which is responsible for performing more complex operation, such as combining the phonemes to make words, as well as PSTM, which is active during repetition tasks focussed on pronunciation.

In addition to phonology, the affected areas include the acquisition of syntactic structures and grammatical rules. However, the problem in this case does not lie in the students' inability to learn the rules. Rather, the students have difficulties when it comes to applying them. Morphology can then also prove hard, as they are often unable to divide words into their constituent parts (prefix, root, suffix), or find words which share the same root (Zelinková, 2006).

Problems also occur with the so-called rapid automated naming (RAN). This term refers to the students' ability to quickly retrieve words from long-term memory. In the language classroom, the deficit manifests in the student's searching for the right word, and being slow to respond. The problems with RAN are then related to another notable area of difficulty, which is automatization. If the word, phrase, or grammatical structure becomes automatized, the student uses it almost without thinking. This makes it possible for them to concentrate on other, more difficult tasks. However, students with SpLD often cannot reach this level of knowledge, and have to dedicate the same amount of energy to every task. Thus, they tire out a lot more quickly than learners with no SpLD.

While the difficulties in syntactic processing can be attributed to the deficit in general WM capacity (see above), the problems in morphology, rapid automated naming, and automatization are most likely due to reduced PSTM, as this component of the WM plays an important role in the process of recalling previously learned words. The last significant manifestation of both SpLD and ADHD, which can be attributed to the impaired functioning of WM, in this case *the central executive* – inattention – has already been discussed.

3.2. OTHER PROBLEMATIC AREAS

3.2.1. Visual perception and orientation in space

Students with SpLD often perceive space differently from their normally developing peers. This is partially linked to their problems in the area of visual perception. They often confuse similar shapes, have trouble separating a figure from the background etc. In addition, they tend to have problems distinguishing between left and right, and may also suffer from laterality disorders. The difficulties in visual and spatial orientation then make it hard for them to orient themselves in the school building (they may for instance struggle to find the classroom), as well as their textbooks or notebooks (Zelinková, 2006). However, regarding the latter, there are certain compensation tools which can help, e.g. reading windows.

3.2.2. Anxiety

In her book Second language learning processes of learners with SpLD, Kormos states that: "Communicating in another language might often invoke feelings of uncertainty and perceptions of a threat to one's self-esteem and self-concept." (Kormos, 2017, p. 77). It is the existence of such feelings in relation to L2 learning that led Horwitz to introduce the term "Foreign language anxiety". This kind of anxiety is then especially prominent in learners with learning difficulties, who report feeling "disappointed, frustrated, fed up, ashamed, sad, depressed, angry and embarrassed by their difficulties" (Riddick, 1996, cited in Kormos, 2017). This misery may result from several different factors.

In an interview study conducted with 15 Hungarian dyslexic learners (Kormos, Csizér and Sarkadi, 2009), the students mentioned assesment as one of the major stressors. They were especially worried about written assignments, as their teachers allegedly placed a high degree of emphasis on accurate spelling. Results also revealed that the students' self-esteem is negatively influenced by lack of understanding and negative attitudes of their peers (Kormos, Csizér and Sarkadi, 2009, pp. 121–122). The last significant anxiety-inducing factor was then the teachers' attitude towards the students, and their unwillingness to create an inclusive learning environment.

One of the participants reported: "I had the first shock in secondary school. I was in the first year and as early as September, the teacher told me that I was going to fail, and then I started hating English." (Kormos, Csizér and Sarkadi, 2010, p. 482). Another student described a similar experience: "They did not try to help me, but they emphasized that I am having problems, but not like wanting to help me but as a kind of humiliation." (Kormos et al., 2010, p. 482). Of course, not all teachers behave in this way, and there were participants whose relationship with their tutors seemed very positive. To quote one: "Then I got into this good language learning group and got a good teacher. This completely changed my views about English. And now I really like English. The good thing is that I learnt how to study from this teacher and what the structure of English is like." (Kormos et al., 2010, p. 482).

Interestingly, all students tended to see their teachers in a rather black and white manner, i.e. they were perceived as either brilliant, or really poor (Kormos et al., 2009, p. 122). An important thing can thus be inferred from the students' answers: the teachers' attitude towards the learners has a significant impact on how the learners feel about learning the language. A friendly, helpful, and competent teacher will create a safe learning environment, which will lead to reduced learning anxiety, and likely increase the students' motivation as well.

3.2.3. Motivation

Persistent difficulties in learning L2 may not only lead to "Foreign language anxiety", but may also have a negative impact on the students' motivation. This results in a vicious circle, as the lack of motivation breeds even more challenges and difficulties (Kormos, 2017; Kormos et al., 2010). The question that needs to be asked therefore is: "What can the teachers do to motivate SpLD students?". The aforementioned interview study tried to provide an answer. The findings showed that one of the important factors which increased the students' motivation to learn English in particular was its status as an international language. One student went as far as saying: "Without speaking English, you are nobody." (Kormos et al., 2010, p. 477). The teachers should therefore stress that the students will be able to communicate with people from all over the world. However, the thing that is worth noting is that the position of English as lingua franca does not have to be motivating for all students. Out of the 15 participants, there were two on whom it had the contrary effect (Kormos et al., 2010, p. 477).

Besides the prominent status of English, another key motivator was the desire to obtain an international certificate, which would give the students an advantage when they attempt to get into university, or look for a job (Kormos et al., 2010, p. 477). From that it follows that it might be a good idea for teachers to help students prepare for international exams, i.e. practise some of the exercises, and introduce some useful strategies for reading and listening comprehension tasks. In addition to these two factors, some learners also mentioned enjoying films in English (Kormos et al., 2010, 477). The teachers can, of course, take advantage of this fact, using short clips from films as teaching material (e.g. lead-in activities). However, from time to time, they can also play a film, or an episode from a TV show just for their students' enjoyment. In the end, giving them something they enjoy may be the best strategy for motivating the students. (They may, for instance, take pleasure in the fact that they are able to understand parts of their favourite film, which will make them want to learn more.)

The thing that, on the other hand, most undermined the participants' motivation for learning the language, was their dyslexia. Most viewed English as a difficult language, due to its non-transparent orthography, and only 4 of the 15 participants displayed "exclusively positive attitudes" towards it (Kormos et al., 2010, p. 478). When compared to their non-dyslexic peers, dyslexic learners were found to have considerably more negative attitudes towards language learning in general (Kormos et al., 2010, p. 478).

The second factor which significantly affected the learners' motivation, and as a result, their success in learning the L2 was the way they perceived themselves. In the study, only four learners reported having positive self-perceptions, thinking about themselves as successful language learners; the self-images of the remaining 11 were negative. Lastly, as stated above, the teachers were also found to play a crucial part in motivating the students.

4. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education

4.1. A REVIEW OF RESEARCH

In the previous section, it was made clear that teachers' attitudes towards the learners have a significant effect on the students' self-perceptions, and motivation. Consequently, they may impact the students' overall language performance (Kormos et al., 2009, p. 122). But what is the opinion of most teachers on inclusion? How do they view SEN learners?

There is a body of research attempting to answer these questions. As early as 1989, Coates conducted a study investigating teachers' views on full inclusion. Then, most teachers were in favour of the pull-out programmes (Coates, 1989, cited in Avramidis et al., 2000, p. 280). Seven years later, further research on the matter was carried out. The findings confirmed those of Coates' study – the attitudes of the majority of teachers towards inclusion were on the negative side. The teachers often described the views of the proponents of inclusion as unrealistic, and "out of touch with classroom realities" (Vaughn et al., 1996, cited in Avramidis, et al., 2000, p. 280). However, what requires pointing out is that the participants had no

experience with inclusive education whatsoever. The attitudes of those who did have the experience were actually positive (Villa et al., 1996; Le Roy and Simpson, 1996; both cited in Avramidis et al., 2000, p. 280). What can be inferred from the outcomes of the above-mentioned studies, is that experience plays an important part in forming teachers' attitudes. This claim was then confirmed by further research, which demonstrated that when teachers learn more about SEN students through specialised training, their attitude towards inclusion improves[12].

The studies discussed so far all focussed on practising teachers, but research also exists which examines the perspective of teacher trainees. Avramidis et al. conducted a study, in which they investigated the views of 135 student teachers on inclusion. The researchers found the participants' attitudes to be positive. However, they reported being unsure as to how to treat students with more severe SpLD, or SEBD. When asked what they would need to develop more positive views on the issue, 60% of participants responded that they would like to know more about the problems of SEN students, and the strategies they can employ to help them. Similar number of participants (56.2%) responded that they would have liked to gain more experience with SEN students in the training phase, i.e. during the course of their university studies (Avramidis et al., 2000).

More recent studies then support previous findings about the need for providing the teachers with more training in this field. One such study was carried out by Nijakowska, who investigated the views on teaching dyslexic learners of 292 pre- and in-service teachers of English from six European countries (Nijakowska, 2014). The majority of the participants (70%) believed they knew about the problems dyslexic learners experience in the EFL classroom, and felt confident in their ability to correctly define the term dyslexia. Interestingly, student teachers reported having more knowledge on these issues than their more seasoned colleagues. But as Nijakowska points out, this is likely be due to the fact that learning about

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[12] For a review of the studies, see Avramidis et al. (2000).

students with special educational needs has become part of the curriculum at educational faculties (Nijakowska, 2014, p. 143). Even so, despite being aware of the problems dyslexic learners may encounter, more than 80% of respondents were at a loss when asked about specific strategies they could employ to help them. The same situation occurred with the question about assessment; as many as 70% of teachers felt unsure as to how they should assess dyslexics' performance in an EFL classroom.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that 80% of the participants, irrespective of their experience, reported the need for further training in this area. They felt they needed more instruction on which tools and teaching strategies they should use, and even mentioned being prepared to read materials on this subject. However, it could be argued that their professed readiness to engage in self-study is questionable as there is so much material disponible both on the internet, and in print that they would have gone through some of it before taking part in the questionnaire, had they actually wanted to; especially if they often taught dyslexic students as 30% of them reported. This discrepancy between teachers' self-reports and actual state of affairs can be explained by what Washburn et al. refer to as "social desirability bias" – in self-report studies, participants may provide answers which do not reflect reality, but are more socially acceptable (Washburn et al., 2011, cited in Nijakowska, 2016). In addition, teachers are often unable to accurately determine their own level of knowledge and skills (Cunningham et al., 2009, p. 428). For these reasons, self-report studies must be interpreted with caution. The findings of Nijakowska's study have, however, been validated by means of detailed desk research. The results of the self-reports, including the need for professional training have been confirmed (Nijakowska, 2016, p. 53).

Following the outcomes of the desk research and the aforementioned questionnaire-based study, the DysTEFL course was designed. It is a face-to-face course, whose primary focus lies in teaching English to learners with dyslexia. However, other SpLD (e.g. dyspraxia), and

ADHD are also mentioned. The course works with the model of a "teacher as a reflective practicioner" (Wallace, 1991 cited in DysTEFL2, 2014, p. 8). It not only provides the teachers with useful information, it also gives them hands-on tasks to try. It consists of 10 units which can be divided into three modules: *the foundations module, general teaching principles module,* and *specific teaching and assessment techniques module*. Each module builds on the information learned in the previous one. The units follow the "reflective cycle". They start by the activation of previous knowledge, after which new information is presented. These two stages are followed by the "hands-on phase", where trainees perform a set of tasks; collaboration is encouraged as many of the tasks are designed as pair-work or group-work. The trainees then receive feedback from both trainers and their peers. Finally, each unit terminates by the quiz phase, in which the trainees revise what they had learned (DysTEFL 2, 2014, pp. 8 – 10). This course has won numerous awards (DysTEFL 2, 2014, p. 2), and has been welcomed by teachers, teacher trainers, and EFL experts alike (Nijakowska, 2016, pp. 53–54).

As mentioned above, the DysTEFL course is designed as face to face. This was a good idea, given the fact that in the self-report study, the majority of the teachers (42%) actually stated this mode of training as the preferred one. The second most-preferred mode (30% of respondents) were then online materials for self-study. The third group of teachers also preferred to learn through reading informative materials, but they wanted to have them in print. The DysTEFL course is not primarily designed to be used in this way, but it can be beneficial for both groups, as there is a free booklet that can be both read online and printed. In addition, there was also a fourth group that voted for the option of receiving the training in the form of an online learning course (e.g. through Moodle) (Nijakowska, 2014, p. 144).

And though this was the least preferred method, it too has been proved to be effective. As mentioned in the Introduction, Kormos and Nijakowska conducted research on the effectiveness of online courses in raising teachers' awareness about and increasing their

confidence in teaching learners with SEN (Kormos and Nijakowska, 2017). Results showed that after the completion of the course the participants' self-efficacy was higher, and they were less worried about their inability to successfully implement inclusive practices. The results in both aspects were even better for trainees that were more active, and completed more tasks during the course. As for the impact the course had on the teachers' attitudes, only a slight improvement could be observed. However, this is due to the fact that the attitudes of the teachers had been quite positive[13] even before they decided to undergo the training (Kormos and Nijakowska, 2017, p. 36).

4.2. THE SITUATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

In the book *Specifické poruchy učení na 2. stupni základních škol* (SpLD at higher elementary school), Jucovičová et al. sum up some of the most frequent comments on inclusive education they hear during meetings with teachers. Unfortunately, some of the teachers' attitudes are downright negative. To quote a few examples[14]:

> I don't believe in SpLD. I think that if the students tried harder, their results would be better. I don't accept SpLD, and I do not take them into account (Jucovičová et al., 2007, p. 64).

> These children shouldn't be allowed in secondary schools. They are selective schools (Jucovičová et al., 2007, p. 66).

Other teachers then do not display such negative feelings. Rather, they are unsure as to how they should work with the students. These are some of their concerns:

> A child with SpLD has a right for a different treatment, but I have 30 students in my class, so I am not sure how to make it work for all of them. I don't want to pay more attention to one child at the expense of others (Jucovičová et al., 2007, p. 65).

> The level of knowledge in L2 in children with SpLD is often catastrophic. I have tried everything, but with no success (Jucovičová et al., 2007, p. 65).

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[13] There are some limitations of the study, see the reference to Washburn above.
[14] The book is written in Czech. All translations are my own.

In 2018, Michalík et al. decided to take a deeper look at the teachers' perspective. They carried out questionnaire-based research on the attitudes of Czech educational workers towards inclusion (Michalík et al., 2018). The results show that the majority (55.8%) of teachers at standard primary schools think that learners with SpLD should be included into the standard classroom; only 10% believe that they should attend a special school. For students with SEBD (including ADHD), however, the number of proponents for standard classroom and special school is almost equal (around 29% of participants for each option). The solution that is perceived as best is then a special learning group in a standard school (36.9%).

Regarding the overall views on inclusion, these seem to be more on the negative side. There was the recurring theme of inclusion having no benefits for children with no special needs, and a slight majority of respondents (50.5%) saw inclusion as a temporary trend, which had no future (Michalík et al., 2018, pp. 87–91). However, the thing that needs to be stressed here is that none of the teachers held extremist views on the issue (Michalík et al. 2018, p. 167).

 Interestingly, the results also reveal that teachers at special schools view inclusion even more negatively than teachers at standard schools. And though this may seem surprising, Michalík et al. note that it is in fact not. They point to the fact that such schools used to have a monopoly on the education of SEN students, and given the changes in laws (including the annulment of the educational programme[15] for this type of schools), the teachers started to feel that the opinion of all students being included into the mainstream classroom was now the only valid one. Consequently, they started to worry that the special schools will start to deteriorate, until they cease to exist completely (Michalík et al., 2018, pp. 167–168).

While Michalík et al. focussed on practising teachers, Pitnerová and Pančocha conducted research with a group of teacher trainees (Pitnerová and Pančocha, 2010, cited in Žáková, 2015, p. 44). They were interested in their knowledge of and attitudes towards inclusive

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[15] RVP

practices. They also wanted to find out if (or how) both factors change after taking part in a course on special pedagogy. The results confirm the findings of previous studies carried out abroad. They show that specialised courses have positive impact on the students' knowledge of the field. They also highlight the role of experience as a key factor in forming positive attitudes towards learners who have SpLD. The research done by Žáková as part of her diploma thesis then also reveals the need for further training in special education. Out of the 140 teacher trainees, only 25% considered their knowledge in this area appropriate (Žáková, 2015, p. 65). However, most of the trainees' attitudes towards the implementation of inclusive practices were positive. From the little research there is[16], it would therefore seem that student teachers are more open to inclusion than their more experienced colleagues. However, one has to be careful about making generalisations as the research is scarce, and young teacher trainees are more likely to be susceptible to the "social desirability bias" (see chapter 4).

5. Effective strategies for teaching students with SEN

In the research studies presented in previous sections, teachers' complaints about the lack of knowledge of teaching strategies were a recurring theme. The following chapter therefore presents some of the methods which have proved to be effective. Given the focus of this thesis, it starts with an overview of the specifics of working with SEN students at higher elementary schools. Then, it provides a set of general recommendations, followed by specific teaching strategies and methods. With most of the methods, practical examples from an EFL classroom are also given.

5.1. THE SPECIFICS OF LEARNERS AT HIGHER ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

In the past, the prevalent opinion was that SEN will manifest during the first five years of primary schools, and during that time, they should also be eradicated. However, learners at

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[16] Michalík et al. point out that a study similar to their own had not been carried out since the changes in the law in 2016 (Michalík et al., 2018, p. 167).

higher stages of elementary school experience far greater difficulties than their younger peers (Zelinková, 2006, p. 10). At this stage, the academic skills with which SEN learners struggle cease to be a goal of their own. Rather, they become means of achieving different learning goals. Students are expected to be able to learn autonomously (often by reading texts both at school and at home), and to take notes of what the teacher says. The aforementioned impairments in cognitive functions (memory, speech production and perception etc.) persist, and the gap between SEN students, and their normally developing peers becomes even more apparent. This may result in negativistic attitudes, and even more patent problems in the affective domain (e.g. low motivation)[17] (Zelinková, 2015, pp. 177–179). Sometimes, the child may even turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as drugs or alcohol, be aggressive (both verbally and physically), or run from home or school (Jucovičová et al., 2007, pp. 16–17).

5.2. GENERAL SUGGESTIONS ON DEALING WITH SEN STUDENTS

From what has been said, it follows that the problems stemming from the diagnosis persist, and often become worse. Of course, each student is an individual, and must be treated as such. But some universally applicable guidelines exist nonetheless. The following list is based on the suggestions provided by Jucovičová et al. (2007), occasionally complemented by the ones given by Zelinková (2015).

Firstly, all teachers should reach an agreement among themselves, and with parents, on how they will approach and assess the SEN student. It is necessary to explain it to the parents that it is beneficial for their child if their peers know about the nature of their problems. Further, it is essential to explain the students' problems to the rest of the class in such a way that results in the child being accepted and valued. A good strategy to be employed here is to introduce examples of famous people with the same diagnosis.

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[17] For an overview of the problems in the affective and cognitive domains, see chapter 3 above.

Secondly, the child should not be forced to engage in tasks in which they cannot perform to their abilities, due to the nature of their problem. For instance, a student with writing impairment should not be made to write long dictation exercises, a student with ADHD should not take a long exam without being allowed some breaks in between etc. With all forms of SEN discussed in this thesis, the preferred form of testing is an oral one. Of course, this does not mean that they can never do written assignments. However, what it does mean is that certain accommodations should be made to make such tasks doable. It is advisable to, for instance, use gap-fill or multiple-choice exercises. Even then, teachers should be careful with the layout, using shorter texts, and bigger spacing. For students with a reading impairment, there is also a special font called open dyslexic, which makes the text easier to read (see, e.g. opendyslexic.org).

The points mentioned in the previous paragraph are related to the third suggestion: the teacher's aim should always be to find out the level of the child's knowledge, without it being affected by the diagnosis. The students should be given a chance to perform to their best abilities. From that, it of course follows that the teacher should know about the nature of the child's problems, and should be able to separate difficulties caused by the diagnosis from problems caused by different factors (e.g. the lack of effort). Those problems that stem from the diagnosis should then be tolerated. At the beginning, it may be hard for the teacher to decide on the appropriate assessment strategy, e.g. which mistakes to count, and what to ignore. Luckily, Zelinková organises courses in which teachers can learn some techniques (for more information, see chapter 7). In working with the child, teachers are also advised to follow suggestions given by the advisory centre. In the Czech Republic, these are included in the so called Individualised educational plan (IVP in Czech) (for more information on IVP, see chapter 6).

The fourth recommendation is connected to the students' problems with motivation. The teachers should motivate the learners by giving them a chance to perform tasks they are good at. They should also give appropriate praise, even for things which are not directly related to the students' performance at school. This will help establish rapport with the students and make mutual cooperation easier. It can also play a key role in preventing the negativistic attitudes and aggression.

Due to their impairments, the students' work tempo is usually slow. Thus, it is always better if the teachers can avoid giving time limits. The pressure caused by the limit increases the child's nervousness, and by consequence, their error-rate. The child should always be assessed for what they managed to complete, not for what they did not. And if the limits cannot be avoided, SEN students should always be given more time. Importantly, their performance should not be assessed against that of their peers, neither normally developing ones, nor those with SEN. The reason why two SEN students should not be compared is that they might have problems in completely different areas. For instance, one student who is diagnosed as dyslexic may struggle with reading fluency, another might struggle with comprehension. This was one of the reasons that brought APA to refrain from using the traditionally established terms, and introduce new ones, which enable a more accurate diagnosis (see section 2.4.).

Last but not least, the child needs to learn to use different tools and strategies which will enable them to compensate for their problems. Thus, it is essential to introduce and allow for the use of compensation tools. To give an example, a student with writing impairment should not be forced into taking hand-written notes, but should be allowed to use a computer. Of course, attention must then be paid to what the student is doing, i.e. if they are not checking their Facebook etc. In addition to the knowledge of appropriate compensation tools, the teacher should also be able to give recommendations on some useful learning strategies which will suit

the child's learning style. For instance, visual learners should learn about colour-coding, auditory learners should be advised to record themselves etc.

5.3. SPECIFIC TEACHING METHODS

The previous section gave a general overview of what teachers should bear in mind when teaching SEN students. The one that follows will give more specific recommendations. It will provide examples of specific teaching strategies and methods, along with practical tips on how to they can be used in an EFL classroom.

5.3.1. Multi-sensory learning (MSL)

Of all the recommended approaches, this is the one mentioned most often (e.g. Zelinková, 2006; Lexová and Tůmová, 2016; Delaney, 2016; Kormos, 2012). As evident from the name, the term refers to learning through multiple senses. It combines different styles: visual, tactile-kinaesthetic, and auditory (Birsh and Carreker, 2018, p. 53). The motto of this approach is: "Listen, look, say, write, and show." (Zelinková, 2006, p. 79). In the Czech Republic, MSL has a long tradition. One of its first proponents (if not the first one) was J. A. Komenský. However, as Zelinková implies, although Czechs like to proclaim themselves the nation of Komenský, their approaches to education do not necessarily reflect this:

> We have repeatedly, and proudly proclaimed that we are a nation of Komenský. But is this fact reflected in all classes? Do we always have enough visual aids, overviews or flashcards with difficult words ready? Are the children given enough opportunity to repeat, listen, move around, or live through what they have learned? (Zelinková, 2006, p. 79)

As evident from the citation, MSL is a kind of a gamified approach to learning. The following paragraphs show what it may look like in a language classroom. The sample exercises focus specifically on developing phonological awareness – a function impaired in learners with SpLD (see section 3.1.).

As stated above, MSL should engage different learning paths. When teaching phonological awareness, the one that presents itself first is the auditory one. When the aim is to practise segmenting words into parts, the students should start by saying the whole

word; continue by saying the individual components (phonemes), then repeat the whole word again. When teachers want students to practise finding rhymes, the students should also be encouraged to repeat the words (first out loud, then silently to themselves). This helps them hold the words in their phonological short-term memory (PSTM), and if done repeatedly, increase its capacity. During the auditory phase, the role of the teacher as a model is essential. The learning should be structured as follows: teacher models the word, which is followed by guided and free practice. With this kind of training, emphasis should always be placed on accuracy. To give a practical example of what rhyming practice looks like:

 The teacher says something like: "What rhymes with *hat*? How about *cat*? Do they rhyme? Now you try, what rhymes with *car*?" The students try to come up with answers. This is usually done as whole group practice. Then, the students are given words, and asked to create their own rhymes, either individually, or in pairs (Birsh and Carreker, 2018, p. 303).

Kinaesthetic activities which can be used in developing this type of skill can be as simple clapping to indicate the number of syllables. However, when practising syllables, an even better strategy has been developed. With each syllable, the students can be asked to tap on their wrists, elbows, shoulders etc. (depending on the number of syllables, they can continue with the other shoulder, and get as far down as their ankles). For instance, with the word *dog*, they would tap on their wrists, with the word *student*, they would tap on the wrist and the elbow, with the word actually, it would be wrist, elbow, shoulder etc. This strategy can be beneficial in that it makes them realise the length of the words, and the number of sounds contained in each word. As for strategies for practising segmentation into individual sounds, these include counting on fingers; e.g. with the word *cat*, the student uses their left index finger to tap their right index finger, middle finger and ring finger.

Regarding the visual path, it is advisable to accompany phonological awareness tasks with pictures. This will help the student keep the word in the PSTM, which will enable them to focus on the task, instead of having to dedicate a considerable amount of energy to trying to recall it. Pictures can be useful with both rhyming tasks, and segmentation tasks (Birsh and Carreker, 2018, pp. 301–302).

Now that the principles of MSL have been described, the question that needs to be answered is how effective it is when it comes to practice. Numerous studies have been carried out to demonstrate the effectiveness of MSL in teaching L2 (e.g. Ganschow et al. 1998, for a review of research, see Nijakowska, 2013). With students taught in this way, improvements could be observed in speaking and writing skills, as well as their overall foreign-language aptitude[18]. The progress was then especially apparent in the area of phonology (Nijakowska, 2013, p. 207).

In 2008, Nijakowska carried out an experiment in which she used the MSL approach to develop English spelling and reading skills of dyslexic learners. The performance of the experimental group was compared to that of learners in two control groups (one group consisted of dyslexics, the other of normally developing children). After six months of training, the experimental group outperformed both control groups (Nijakowska, 2008, cited in Nijakowska, 2013, p. 211). Some studies then also point to the fact that the development of skills in L1 and L2 is largely intertwined. Consequently, explicit MSL instruction in the L2 classroom can enhance the students' performance not only in the foreign language, but also in their mother tongue (Ganschow and Sparks, 1995, cited in Nijakowska, 2013, p. 212).

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[18] This was tested using the Modern Language Asssociation test (MLAT)

5.3.2. Communicative language teaching (CLT)

Another method which has proved effective in teaching learners with SEN is Communicative language teaching (CLT). As apparent from the name, the main goal is communication, i.e. for the learners to be able to understand other speakers, as well as get their own message across. With SEN students, the aim obviously cannot be perfect understanding, and speaking without errors. Such perfection is impossible to reach even for learners who do not have any special needs. Rather, the mistakes should be perceived as natural part of the learning process. They are valuable in that they enable for the understanding of the processes by which the student learns the language, which helps in further work with the child. As mentioned, there are two important components: production, and comprehension. The key to success in teaching comprehension is introducing strategies of guessing the meaning of unknown words from context, and anticipating what the other speaker is going to say. The development of productive competence (mainly speaking skills, as speaking tasks are easier for SEN students, and give them a chance to excel)[19] should then focus on the ability to use simple sentences to get the message across. But though teachers should be tolerant of students' mistakes, accuracy-focussed tasks should not be neglected. Rather, teachers should strive for balance between fluency and accuracy (Richards, 2006, p. 15).

Accuracy tasks may include, for instance, practising intonation in wh-questions. This can be done in the form of a short dialogue; two students are saying the dialogue, practising the intonation, and a third student (or the teacher) checks on them and corrects, where necessary. Fluency tasks then include role plays, during which the students are given cards with different roles. The conversations in role plays are improvised, the choice of language limited only by the nature of the situation and the assigned parts. Such activities

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[19] See section 5.4.6.

are excellent for mixed-ability classes – they allow for natural differentiation, and give all learners a chance to shine. Stronger students can be given more difficult roles, while weaker ones have an easier task (Richards, 2006, pp. 13–14).

Though the CLT methodology provides useful guidelines, one should be careful not to follow it too rigorously as it too involves some suggestions which are not suitable in the context of teaching SEN learners. To give an example: one of the core assumptions of CLT is that: "language learning is facilitated by both activities involving inductive or discovery learning of underlying rules of language use and organisation, as well as by those involving language analysis and reflection" (Richards, 2006, p. 22). SEN students have problems with inductive teaching practices as they find it difficult to extract linguistic rules from input (Schneider and Crombie, 2003, cited in Kormos et al., 2009, p. 124). As proven by several studies, they benefit a lot more from explicit instruction (e.g. Nijakowska, 2008, cited in Nijakowska, 2013; Kormos, 2017; Kormos et al., 2009).

5.3.3. Sequential approach to learning

The strategy that must be used with all learners, even more so those who have SEN, if the teaching is to be effective, is sequential learning. This term refers to learning step by step, building on the subjects the students have already mastered when moving forward to new ones. In practice, it means that students should not, for example, be asked to learn the past perfect, if they had not mastered past simple. The students are considered to have mastered the subject when automatization has taken place. They can easily recall the knowledge, and use it without having to think about it for too long. When the students reach this stage, new knowledge can be integrated into the existing structures. Proponents of this approach claim that following it can boost the child's confidence and enable them to experience success. Failure to do so then results in the child having to learn something new without having laid the foundations for it. New information is presented in isolation, with little to no context, which makes memorisation much more difficult, if not downright

impossible (Zelinková, 2006, p. 81). However, though learning step by step and incorporating new pieces of information into pre-existing knowledge structures are advisable strategies for all learners, not exclusively for those with SEN, the automatization part is more problematic. The process of automatization takes a considerable amount of time; and especially with dyslexic learners, it takes even longer than usual[20]. Moreover, the amount of time needed for the automatization to take place will vary for each student. Thus, both because of the individual differences between the learners, and because of the requirements stated in the curriculum, this method, in the form suggested in the literature, is not directly applicable in practice

5.3.4. Look- (Trace) – (Say) – Cover – Write – Check

As mentioned in section 3.2.3., English, unlike Czech, does not have a transparent orthography. This means that there are discrepancies between spoken and written forms of the words. The proponents of the Look – cover – write – check (LCWC) method argue that such difficult spellings cannot be learned using the traditional phonics approach, which works with more regular languages. Instead, they propose using only the visual path, storing details of individual letters as well as their position in the word into memory. The first phase *look* refers to the learner looking at the word, with the aim of reproducing it later. In the second phase *cover* they cover the word, and try to recall it. The third phase *write* then engages the kinaesthetic-tactile path as learners try to write the word down. During the last stage, the word is uncovered, and learners check if their spelling is correct. The value of the method lies in the fact that it helps develop learner autonomy (Reid, Fawcett et al., 2008, pp. 39–41). However, as some authors point out (e.g. Cooke, 1997), this method, when used on its own, is not enough. Thus, following the outcomes of research (for a review, see Cooke, 1997), which proved MSL was the best approach to

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[20] This is sometimes referred to as the Dyslexic Automatization Deficit (DAD) (Nicolson and Fawcett, 2000).

teaching SEN learners, two more stages *trace* and *say* have been added to make the LCWC more multi-sensory. Cooke notes that dyslexic learners should be taught MSL strategies, including the "vocal rehearsal" which has been proven to play an important part in successful memorisation (Cooke, 1997, p. 243).

5.3.5. Dictation

Students with SEN tend to have problems in the areas of attention, and speech perception. Dictation may thus not appear to be the best option. However, Lexová and Tůmová argue that when done right, it is an excellent method for practising listening skills. They suggest choosing a simple text with well-known vocabulary, and propose dialogues as the best type of exercise. The fact that the text is read by two people makes it less monotonous, and by consequence, easier for students to concentrate on. Such exercises are also easy to adapt for learners of different levels. For instance, the class can be divided into three groups. The first group transcribes the whole text, and is only given a paper with names of the speakers on it. The second group is given a transcription with some gaps, which they fill in with key words and phrases. The third group is then given the full text, but in some places, they have to choose one of two forms according to what they hear (Lexová and Tůmová, 2016, pp. 19–20).

5.3.6. Structured approach to learning

Another possible strategy which can be implemented in teaching learners with SEN is the structured approach. In practice, this means that words that look similar are taught together. They can be words, which differ by one grapheme (e.g. *bog, dog, hog, log*), words that rhyme (e.g. *need, speed*), words which share the same root (e.g. *humble, humility*), or words that contain the same diphthong (e.g. *hear, near, gear*). Zelinková argues that words taught in this way are easier to remember than words related by topic. However, she also admits that some learners may in fact prefer the latter (Zelinková, 2006, pp. 81–82).

5.3.7. Drills

Drill is defined as "training of minimal elements of language grouped together on a linguistic basis, such as vocabulary, syntactic forms of the feminine, or the plural, declension etc." (Decoo, 1994, p. 151). In the past, the importance of drills has been underestimated (Decoo, 1994, p. 151). In teaching certain subject matters, however, drill exercises are necessary, and in fact incredibly useful; they facilitate the process of automatization, which is a problematic area for SEN students. Furthermore, learners with SEN tend to enjoy doing exercises they are good at. They feel successful, and are willing to repeat the same exercise over and over. Contrary to popular belief, drill exercises do not have to be boring. They can be made more fun by using, for instance, a ball (Zelinková, 2006, p. 82). In practice, this technique can be used for the conjugation of verbs, e.g. *be*, or practising question forms and answers.

5.3.8. Metacognitive strategies

Every teacher should encourage learner autonomy – the students should not just depend on them, but should take responsibility for their own learning. Thus, they should learn how to reflect on the learning process itself. At the beginnings, the reflections may have the form of simple statements of the type *I did well./ I did less well.* Later, the students should start enquiring into the reasons why they did not perform as well as they could have done. They can also be asked to reflect on the learning that takes place in the classroom. The teacher may ask about why the learners think they chose a certain activity etc. This approach directs the attention more towards the student, and takes the dominant status away from the teacher, making the lessons more learner-centred (Zelinková, 2006, p. 83). It can also aid in developing the students' self-esteem and motivation.

5.3.9. Colour coding

In working with SEN students, teachers are also advised to incorporate colour coding, i.e. use different colours for different material (e.g. Delaney, 2016; Lexová and Tůmová, 2016). This practice can help students become more aware of the patterns. It can

be used for teaching phonemes (e.g. highlighting the *oa* in words, such as *boat, coat, moat*), parts of speech (using a different colour for nouns, verbs, etc.), or grammar (e.g. comparatives and superlatives). However, as Lexová and Tůmová point out, there is one thing teachers need to watch for, and that is consistency. They should be careful to always use the same colour for the same thing. Ideally an agreement should exist among teachers on which colours to use for what, in order to avoid confusing the learners (Lexová and Tůmová, 2016, p. 19).

5.3.10. Mind maps

Another technique which is useful for learners with SpLD are mind maps (e.g. DysTEFL 2; Pokrivčáková, 2015; Reid et al., 2008; Handbook, 2016). Mind maps are a specific note taking technique which enables learners to organise information about a problem, explore the relationships between different elements, and see the big picture. When done well, mind maps facilitate the process of memorisation, and develop students' creativity. Research also points to the fact that working with mind maps can improve students' academic achievement (Mani, 2011, cited in Tee; Mohamed and Azman, 2014). One of the most famous proponents of mind maps Tony Buzan provides some guidelines on how to use the technique for maximal results. The most important ones are: using pictures starting with a central one, working with colours, using codes (e.g. circles, crosses) to connect pieces of information, working with associations, and making the map synoptic and easy to understand (Buzan and Buzan, 2012, pp. 65–71).

As for the benefits of mind maps in teaching SEN students, they are a valuable tool for improving dyslexic students' vocabulary (Reid, Fawcett, Manis and Siegel, 2008, p. 450). They can also help dysgraphic students to organise and structure the information, and express themselves better without having to write long texts. (Pokrivčáková, 2015, p. 19). The handwriting can then be avoided altogether, if the learners use mind-mapping software (e.g. bubbl.us) (DysTEFL 2, 2014, p. 91).

5.4. GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING SPECIFIC LANGUAGE SKILLS

The previous part presented some of the methods that can be used in teaching SEN learners. The following sections will deal with how the specific methods can be applied to teaching pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing). The recommendations given are based on those provided in *A handbook of good educational support for learners with dyslexia.*

5.4.1. Pronunciation and spelling

The key in teaching pronunciation to learners with SEN is explicitness. The learners should be instructed about the articulation of the sound, and allowed to experiment with it. The essential thing is that activities for developing phonological awareness be included (Handbook, 2016, p. 82). This can be done using the multisensory approach, as explained above. Attention should be paid especially to grapheme-phoneme correspondence. The students must learn about the regularities in English spelling, i.e. the spelling rules. When the spelling is irregular, using mnemonics may be a good idea (Handbook, 2016, p. 82). The *look – (trace) – (say) – cover – write – check* strategy might then also prove effective. The last, but no less important rule is that similar graphemes (p and b) or digraphs (oo, oa) should never be taught in the same lesson (Handbook, 2016, p. 82).

5.4.2. Vocabulary

In teaching vocabulary to learners with SEN, there are also certain guidelines that should be followed. First of all, the number of items taught in a lesson should be limited – maximum six to eight words (Handbook, 2016, p. 82). Second, the words should be presented in context, ideally one that is familiar to the learners. Third, using visuals, as well as some physical cues, e.g. gestures, facilitates memorisation. Fourth, if the word has several different meanings, teachers should focus on one meaning only. And last, but definitely not least, frequent revision is crucial.

5.4.3. Grammar

As was the case with teaching pronunciation and vocabulary, grammar teaching too must be done explicitly. However, students should never be overwhelmed with linguistic terminology. Rather, the grammatical forms should be presented in the context of communicative situations in which they are used; the CLT would be the best approach here. Moreover, it is advisable to focus on one aspect of the target grammar at a time, e.g. teach only affirmatives, without explaining negatives and questions. Also, a recommended strategy is to practise orally first, then include activities that involve working with text. And lastly, for the learning to be more effective, more learning paths should be involved – ideally auditory, and visual, as well as kinaesthetic (Handbook, 2016, pp. 84–86).

5.4.4. Reading

When choosing a text for both SpLD and ADHD students, teachers should always consider the length. The texts should be shorter, or at least divided into shorter sections. With extensive texts, the students will have trouble remembering what they read, as well as sustaining attention. Attention can also be easily lost if the texts are not interesting for the students, or if there are too many unknown words. On occasions when unknown words appear, pre-teaching is a good idea. However, one must again be careful not to overwhelm the students. In this case, the same strategy as the one introduced in the section on teaching vocabulary applies; 8 words is the maximum amount (Handbook, 2016, pp. 86–88).

5.4.5. Listening

Students with SpLD generally find listening easier than reading (Handbook, p. 88). However, even in teaching this skill, some adjustments should be made. Plus, though it might be easier for students with SpLD, students with ADHD may actually find it more difficult. Listening requires sustained attention, and there is usually no possibility of going back to the passage where the students got lost, as in the case of reading. And as explained in section 3.1., even SpLD learners have attention problems. One of the techniques that can help them concentrate better is using visuals (e.g. choosing a video, or accompanying

the text with pictures). Another helpful strategy is to teach them how to predict the contents of the text (e.g. based on the title, or a previous passage). One thing to avoid, on the other hand, is asking the learners to answer questions about the text parallel to listening, especially if they are listening for the first time. And, as with reading, all difficult words should be explained in advance (Handbook, 2016, pp. 88–90).

5.4.6. Speaking

Of all the language skills, it is speaking that is the least problematic. In fact, even students with SEN can excel at speaking. However, certain recommendations should again be followed to make the language learning experience more pleasant for them. Firstly, they should start communicating with simple phrases, gradually building up to longer sentences. In other words, the sequential approach should be followed. Second, getting both the form and the meaning correctly tends to be difficult. To facilitate that, teachers should frequently revise both vocabulary and grammar. And finally, the students usually need more thinking time. Consequently, they should be allowed to practise in pairs or small groups, before being asked to talk in front of the whole class (Handbook, 2016, pp. 90–91).

5.4.7. Writing

If speaking is the easiest, writing is the skill that causes the most problems. However, despite different levels of difficulty, the same principles apply to teaching both production skills. To facilitate the acquisition of writing skills in English, the sequential approach should again be followed. At the start, the students should be presented with a model text. After that, they should be asked to fill in only key words or phrases. When they are ready to move on to producing the text themselves, they will find it less challenging, if they are taught some planning skills (brainstorming ideas, outline, draft etc.). It is also important for the writing task to be motivating. If the students are having serious difficulties with handwriting, they should be allowed to use a computer. Lastly, the teacher

should always revise the key vocabulary and grammar before the writing task, but even after that they should be tolerant of some errors (Handbook, 2016, pp. 91–94).

5.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter provided information on general principles of working with SEN students, and some specific methods and strategies that can be used in an EFL classroom. Elementary school teachers can find recommendations on appropriate teaching methods in the Individualised educational plan. Teaching SEN students requires that they are familiar with it. The contents of the IEP are further analysed in the following section.

6. The individualised educational plan (IEP)[21]

The individualised educational plan (IEP) is one of the supportive measures for students with SEN. The learner, their parents/guardians, and all teachers should thus be familiar with it. The document follows the school educational programme[22] and binds the school to the provision of special accommodations for the learner. The school compiles it following the recommendations of the school advisory centre, and a request from the student (if they are at least 18 years old), or a parent/guardian. The IEP then becomes a part of the student's documentation, specifying the special provisions that have to be made for them. It includes educational aims, a list of subjects in which it has to be followed, suggestions on appropriate teaching methods and assessments policies, and a list of suggested materials and compensation tools. The IEP has to be compiled within one month of receiving the report from the advisory centre, and the request from the student or parent/guardian. It can be edited during the course of the school year according to the learner's needs. The person responsible for both the compilation, and the following of the IEP is the headmaster of the school. (msmt.cz).

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[21] IVP in Czech
[22] known as ŠVP in Czech

7.   Courses and materials

Following the recommendations in the IEP, the teachers are expected to be able to include SEN students into the classroom. However, as the research presented in previous sections shows (see chapter 4), they are often at a loss as to how they should do that. Logically, the question that arises is whether they have some opportunities to educate themselves in this area. The following chapter aims to provide an answer to this. With regard to the focus of this thesis, it presents a brief overview of the materials and courses aimed at English teachers at higher elementary school, as well as some of those that have a broader focus, but can be useful to them.

The website of the Ministry of education mentions 5 types of accredited courses on SEN designed specifically for this group of teachers. However, only one of them is still posted on the website of the organisation, and even there, no indication of whether it is still available can be found. Since it is unclear whether it is not available on demand, this seminar is included in the list presented in this section. Alongside this course, the chapter also discusses one other seminar aimed specifically at language teachers, as well as some more general courses, on dealing with SpLD and ADHD students. As for the materials, it introduces three books on teaching languages to SEN students, and some useful websites.

7.1. COURSES FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS
7.1.1. English – strategies for working with dyslexics (Angličtina – strategie pro práci s dyslektiky)

Of the courses focussing on SEN listed on the page of accredited courses for English teachers at higher elementary school (dvpp.msmt.cz), this was the one mentioned most frequently, being available in many regions of the Czech Republic (e.g. Středočeský, Vysočina, Pardubický etc.). It was designed to acquaint teachers with the specific problems dyslexic learners are experiencing in the language classroom. In addition, it included

practical activities, and suggestions on interesting materials and strategies for improving reading skills (mainly comprehension), writing skills and orthography. In the last phase of the course, there was a discussion, where teachers could exchange their experiences and ideas (sylviad.cz). However, looking at the websites of the organisations, it seems this seminar is no longer available.

A new version of the course then appears to have replaced the old one. This new version is however only posted on one of the websites, and even there, no specific date can be found. The new course is divided into two main stages: strategies for working with dyslexic learners, and activities for correct pronunciation. The contents of the first part are the same as the contents of the above-mentioned course. The second part then deals with the methods of teaching pronunciation. Specifically, it focusses on stress, linking, intonation and IPA transcription. This part is, however, not dedicated specifically to teaching dyslexic students (descart.cz).

7.1.2. Teaching foreign languages to learners with SpLD (Vyučování cizím jazykům u žáků se SPU)

This course is led by Olga Zelinková, and is based on her monography on teaching foreign languages to SpLD students (Zelinková, 2006). It starts with a short presentation on famous dyslexics, and some case studies. Then, trainees are acquainted with the concept of SpLD (specifically, dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dysorthographia). Zelinková discusses possible causes, and explains which areas are problematic. She also shows teachers ways they can support learners in those areas, including compensation tools. Lastly, she focusses on the question of assessment (zelinkova.cz). The course is organised by DYS-centrum. (dyscentrum.org).

7.2. LESS SPECIALISED COURSES

7.2.1. Dyslexia – from birth to adulthood (Dyslexie od narození do dospělosti)

During this training, teachers can learn about dyslexia, as well as some other learning difficulties. The content is similar to those of the courses introduced in previous

sections. The only difference is that this one also takes adults into account. Trainees find out about which cognitive functions are impaired, and how this affects the everyday lives of children and adults with dyslexia. Following this theoretical introduction, practical suggestions are given on how to work with both age groups. The content of the course may be also modified based on the interests of the participants (zelinkova.cz). As the seminar on teaching foreign languages, this one is also organised by DYS-centrum (dyscentrum.org).

7.2.3. Dyslexia and dysorthographia in practice (Dyslexie a dysortografie prakticky)

This seminar is for teachers who already possess some elementary knowledge about SpLD as it focusses on specific re-educational techniques. Participants become acquainted with compensation tools (including computer software), and practical strategies they can use when teaching reading (both phonics, and the global approach are discussed), and spelling. They also get practical advice on how they should assess the performance of dyslexic and dysorthographic learners (zelinkova.cz). Teachers who are interested can sign up on the web page of DYS-centrum (dyscentrum.org).

7.2.4. ADHD

With ADHD, no courses aimed at language teachers at higher elementary school have been found. However, Zelinková leads two general courses (for teachers from kindergarten up to secondary school) on this problem. The first one briefly clarifies the differences between ADHD, ADD (attention deficit disorder), and mild brain dysfunction. Then, it focusses on the specifics in behaviour of a child with ADHD, and compares diagnostic tools, and re-educational techniques used in the Czech Republic and abroad. It also introduces the trainees to some of the methods that can be used in teaching students with ADHD.

The contents of the second course are similar, except for the fact that it does not focus on diagnostic tools. Rather, it is concerned with the cooperation between the child,

their parents, their peers, and the school. It also provides practical examples which can help the teachers learn to differentiate between the problems that stem from the diagnosis, and problems caused by different factors (zelinkova.cz).

7.3. BOOKS

As evident from the research presented above (see section 4.1.), some teachers seem to prefer materials for self-study to face-to-face courses. The following section is by no means an exhaustive list of the materials available. However, it presents three books language teachers can use to learn about SEN. One of them focusses specifically on teaching at higher elementary school, the other one is primarily for teachers at secondary schools, but can just as well be used at higher stages of elementary school, the third one then has the broadest scope, focussing on teaching languages to SpLD learners in general.

7.3.1. Teaching learners with SEN at higher elementary school - English (Vzděláváme žáky se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami na 2. stupni ZŠ – Angličtina)

As evident from the title, this book is aimed specifically at English teachers at higher elementary school. It consists of two main parts: theoretical background, and practical teaching tips. The theoretical part defines the concepts of SpLD and ADHD, provides information about common areas of difficulty, outlines general principles of working with these students, and introduces some specific methods (e.g. multisensory learning). Finally, it cites the outcomes from the general educational framework (RVP) and provides recommendations on how to adapt these in the school educational plan (ŠVP), and the IEP. The practical part is then divided into four parts, in accordance with the four skills. It contains worksheets, coupled with methodological suggestions on how to use them (Lexová and Tůmová, 2016).

7.3.2. A handbook of good educational support for adolescents with dyslexia

This book has arisen from cooperation between four European countries. The impulse for writing it was that teachers in all four countries knew what dyslexia was, but were not confident in their abilities to deal with dyslexic learners in the classroom.

(Handbook, 2016, p.9). The book provides general information on dyslexia, the individualised education plan, or the use of ICT in connection with teaching dyslexic learners.

While English teachers at higher elementary school can benefit from reading the whole book, the chapter that is going to be most useful to them is the one as dedicated specifically to teaching foreign languages. It introduces teachers to the principles of multisensory learning (MSL), and provides suggestions on how to approach teaching specific language skills. It includes sections on spelling and pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, as well as what is known as the four skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing). Each section presents general principles, as well as some specific suggestions. The book can be downloaded for free from the web page of DYS-centrum, and is available in both Czech and English.

7.3.3. Foreign languages and SpLD (Cizí jazyky a specifické poruchy učení)

This book is neither aimed at teachers of English, nor at teachers at higher elementary schools. However, it is thorough, and the teachers can benefit from reading it. It focusses specifically on three types of SpLD which affect the process of learning a foreign language the most – dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dysorthorgraphia. In the first two chapters, it defines the concepts, and discusses which cognitive functions are impaired, and how it affects L2 learning. The third chapter will then likely be most useful as it gives an overview of effective teaching methods, and provides practical tips on how SpLD learners can acquire various language skills (e.g. pronunciation, writing etc.). Chapter four might then also be of use, as it recommends some textbooks and teaching aids. In the final part of the book, teachers can find sample worksheets. And though all of these are concerned with teaching German, they can also serve as a source of inspiration to English teachers.

7.4. OTHER MATERIALS

In addition to books, there are other materials that can be used to learn about SpLD and ADHD. The materials are mostly disponible on websites. While some of the websites have a purely informative character, others can also be used for practical material adaptation.

7.4.1. Languages without barriers (Jazyky bez bariér)

A programme called *Languages without barriers* helps dyslexic students learn English and other foreign languages. The method is based on four educational games which promote concentration and increase motivation. The special software enables learners to see and hear the target material at the same time. The learners can chunk the material, revise parts of it as many times as they need, and vary the learning tempo. It also enables them to play with certain parts, manipulate them, write, touch, colour code etc. In other words, it works in accordance with the principles of MSL. The software can be used on any kind of material, including textbooks. The teachers can thus utilise it to adapt their teaching materials. They can also find some pre-fabricated materials on the website. If they wish, they can attend one of the methodological seminars which the author of the programme organises to show teachers how to work with it (jazyky-bez-barier.cz).

7.4.2. Adehade and Hyperka

Both of these are informative websites, where teachers can find information about ADHD. *Adehade* contains articles, and a comprehensive list of literature on the subject as well as some informative videos (adehade.cz). *Hyperka* is then primarily a website of a preschool for hyperactive children, but useful information on the nature of ADHD can also be found there (hyperka.eu).

8.   Material and Method

8.1. DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

The principal aim of this study was to find out the teachers' level of knowledge about SEN[23], and their needs for professional development in this area. In addition, it was concerned with the teachers' opinions on inclusive education. Lastly, we were interested in the relationship between the teachers' years of experience and their knowledge about SEN, and approach to SEN learners. The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1) Are the teachers aware of the problems SEN students experience in the language classroom?
2) How do they deal with these problems in their lessons?
3) Do they have knowledge of effective teaching strategies?
4) What would the teachers need, if anything, to feel more confident in dealing with SEN learners in the classroom?
5) What is their opinion on inclusion, and how is that related to their level of experience?[24]
6) Do years of teaching experience influence the teachers' level of knowledge about SEN, and/or their approach to SEN learners? If so, how?

After considering different possible methods, a mixed methods approach was selected in order to obtain comprehensive information. The qualitative data were collected by conducting face-to face interviews, the quantitative data were obtained through an anonymous online questionnaire[25].

The first step in designing the research was to create a structure for the initial interviews. To ascertain it was adequate, literature on the methodology of interviewing

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[23] SEN is used here to refer specifically to SpLD and ADHD; see section 2.3. above

[24] i.e. teaching experience in general, and experience with SEN learners. Research shows that younger teachers (the studies were conducted with teacher trainees) usually have more positive attitudes. Teachers who have more experience with SEN learners also tend to have more positive views on the issue (see chapter 4).

[25] I am aware of the limitations of both interview and questionnaire as research methods. They are discussed in more detail in the Limitations chapter.

(Gillham, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992) was consulted. The approach that seemed to best fit the overall aim of the study was the semi-structured approach (Gillham, 2000). In this type of interview, all participants are asked the same open-ended questions which are usually followed by *probes,* i.e. questions that encourage the interviewee to develop their ideas. Sometimes, *prompts* – often multiple options, or words that help guide the answer – can also be used.

For the purpose of this research, 15 main questions were created. The questions were designed to elicit the teachers' knowledge about SEN, their opinions on inclusion, and their needs for professional development in the area of teaching SEN students. Some were also aimed at obtaining information about the teachers' actual teaching practices. Simple *probes*, such as "Why?" or "Could you tell me a bit more." were used throughout as necessary. As for *prompts,* these were only developed for some of the questions. The reason was that in some cases, they might have led the teachers to answer in a way that would not reflect their true opinions or level of knowledge. For instance, with the question on the teaching strategies they employ (question 5 of the first part), possible *prompts* would include *adapting materials, giving more time, working with multiple learning styles, recycling* etc. However, due to the *social desirability bias*[26], to which, as Oppenheim notes, face-to-face interviews are especially prone[27] (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 139), some teachers might feel the need to say they employ some of the strategies, and make up some answers, so as not to show themselves in a bad light. A similar pattern would likely occur with some of the questions about the needs for professional development (e.g. question 3 of the second part). If *prompts*, such as *courses, online materials, printed materials* etc. were introduced, the "social desirability bias" might lead

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[26] See chapter 4
[27] In comparison with other research methods, such as anonymous self-completion or postal questionnaires

the teachers to express their need or willingness to take courses or engage in self-study of printed materials as to them, this would appear as the correct, or expected answer. Thus, in such cases, we decided to refrain from using the *prompts* to increase the probability of obtaining a truthful response. The final version of the interview was structured as follows:

1st part – knowledge about SEN and experience

1. Please, tell me, how long you have been teaching.
2. How often do you have students with SpLD (the learning difficulties that start with -dys) or ADHD in your classes?
3. What do you think are the most common problems SpLD and ADHD students face at school?
4. How, in your view, do these problems manifest specifically in the context of the language classroom?
5. What do you do in your lessons to help the students overcome these problems?
6. How do you assess the work/performance of these students?
   PROMPTS: errors, examination style (written vs. oral), unfinished work
7. Did you learn these teaching methods and/or assessment strategies by yourself?
   PROMPTS: courses, books, articles, experience

2nd part – problems and solutions

1. In what areas of language would you consider yourself an effective teacher of SEN learners?
   PROMPTS: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, the four skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking)
2. In which of these areas, if any, would you like to become better?
   PROMPTS: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, the four skills (reading, listening, writing, speaking)
3. What do you feel would help you improve in these areas?
4. Is there any way you can achieve that?
5. In general, do you think teachers in the Czech Republic have enough opportunities to learn about SEN?
   PROBES: If so, which ones? If not, what would help improve the situation?

3rd part – opinion on inclusion

1. Lastly, tell me, what would you say are the advantages of students with SEN and students with no SEN learning together (in the same classroom)?
2. And what would you say are the disadvantages?
3. How does that work in your lessons (students with SEN and students with no SEN learning together)?
   PROMPTS: relationships between students, students' performance, motivation

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The language chosen for interviewing was Czech. The main reason for this was that if the interviews are conducted in their native language, the teachers' answers will not be influenced by their (in)ability to express themselves in English. Consequently, issues caused by lack of knowledge of English terminology are also unlikely to occur. Moreover, the teachers are likely to feel more relaxed when talking in their mother tongue, and may thus find it easier to open up.

As mentioned above, these interviews were complemented by an anonymous online survey[28]. As was the case with designing the interview, relevant literature was consulted to ensure the structure of the instrument was adequate (Oppenheim, 1992; Lavrakas, 2008). Regarding the structure, it essentially mirrors that of the interview – there are three main parts focusing on *knowledge about SEN*, *attitudes towards and experience with SEN students*, and *opinions on inclusive education* respectively. Throughout, SpLD and ADHD students are mostly treated separately so as to avoid the so-called *double-barrelled questions[29]*, i.e. questions that "mix" two separate issues together (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 126). The instrument contains forty main items and several sub-items. In addition, four questions asking for personal information are included. Following

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[28] The questions were also written in Czech as it increased the probability of obtaining responses.
[29] With several items, e. g. 37, SpLD and ADHD are grouped together

Oppenheim's suggestion (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 108–109), these questions were moved to the very end.

The instrument contains Likert-type items, multiple-choice ("checklist")[30] questions, and open-ended questions. The Likert-type items primarily measure the teachers' attitudes. However, some of them also indirectly focus on the teachers' knowledge (e.g. statements 10–13). With such "knowledge questions", we decided to include the *I don't know* option[31] as in those cases, it is in fact possible that the teachers do not know the answer, and forcing them to choose one might lead to distortion of the data. With those Likert-type items that measure attitudes or teaching practices, however, we opted for a four-point scale, which entails the *forced-choice method* (Lavrakas, 2008, p. 94); in this type of scale, the *don't know* and/or *neutral* options are missing. Both the *forced-choice* method and the four-point scale (instead of e.g. a six-point scale) have several disadvantages (see the Limitations section). For the purpose of this research, however, they are appropriate. The four-point scale was chosen mainly for its simplicity and straightforward nature. The *forced-choice method* was then employed for two reasons: Firstly, forcing the participants to choose whether they agree or disagree may increase the probability of them considering their answers more carefully; second, with the attitudinal questions (e.g. opinion on inclusion) or questions about their classroom practices, some of the teachers would likely opt for the neutral option to avoid reporting the actual state of events.[32] This is related to the *social desirability bias* (see above). To eliminate the likelihood of occurrence of this phenomenon, the open questions are included. Thus, when the respondents agree with a statement saying, for instance, that

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[30] Lavrakas, 2008, p. 654
[31] For the purpose of the analysis, these responses were coded as zero (see below)
[32] Opting for the neutral option is sometimes also referred to as the *central tendency bias* (Lavrakas, 2008, p. 429)

they adapt materials for SpLD students, they are prompted to briefly state how. Likewise, when they express the need for additional courses or materials, they are presented with a "checklist" question about the preferred form as well as an open question prompting them to state specifically on which skill the materials/courses should focus.

The *social desirability bias* is, however, not the only phenomenon that can skew the data. There is another type of response bias known as the *acquiescence* bias or the tendency to agree. To eliminate the occurrence of this phenomenon, some items are constructed as having opposite polarity, i.e. one statement is phrased positively, the other negatively (e.g. statements 10 and 12)[33]. As Anna Villar points out, "Respondents that answer in an acquiescent way would tend to agree with statements in both directions." (Villar in Lavrakas, 2008, p. 752). The aforementioned strategy thus enables for their identification, and possible elimination.

8.2. DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative and quantitative data were first analysed separately. With the interviews, the first step was to examine the transcriptions. The aim was to identify emergent themes for each teacher. Based on the themes, twelve broad thematic categories were developed. These categories were then further specified and refined.

Next, the themes for the two younger teachers were checked for similarities and differences. The same procedure was then applied with the two more experienced teachers. This step enabled us to determine if/ or how age and teaching experience influence the results. Finally, the two groups were examined jointly in order to identify overall themes. All analyses of the qualitative data were performed in NVivo.

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[33] In coding such items, the numbers on the scale are reversed, i.e. if *Agree* is normally treated as 4 and *Disagree* as 1, in such reversed items, *Agree* becomes 1 and *Disagree* 4

As for the questionnaire, multiple methods of analysis were chosen. As mentioned above, the instrument contains several Likert-type items. Nowadays, it has become a common practice to analyse such items using standard parametric measures of descriptive statistics, most commonly means and standard deviations (e.g. Dornyei, 2007; Dornyei and Csizér, 1998; Nijakowska, 2014). However, researchers do not seem to agree on whether this is an appropriate method. Some point to the fact that scalar data are by nature ordinal; they cannot be treated as interval as the distance between the categories cannot be considered equal, i.e. the distance between *strongly agree* and *agree* is not necessarily the same as the distance between *agree* and *neutral* (e.g. Jamieson, 2004; Kuzon et al. 1996). Such researchers are then strongly opposed to interpreting scales using averages and standard deviations. Other authors, on the other hand, advocate the aforementioned methods, claiming them far superior to other existing statistical tests (e.g. Norman, 2010; Sullivan and Artino, 2013). The majority of experts are, however, of the opinion that if the research operates with a true Likert scale, i.e. a group of different items that measure the same latent variable[34], the parametric measures mentioned can readily be used (e.g. Carifio and Perla, 2008; Brown, 2011). This was also the case with the authors mentioned above (Dornyei, 2007; Dornyei and Csizér, 1998; Nijakowska, 2014). The instrument used in this study, however, does not involve a Likert scale as such. Rather, it involves Likert-type items followed by the "checklist" and open-ended questions.

Furthermore, to approximate the interval scale, the number of points on the scale should be higher (Leung and Wu, 2017, p. 5)[35]. The instrument created for this study,

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[34] Such scales can then be tested for reliability using e.g. Cronbach's alpha. In this way, researchers can be sure that the test items that are in the same group indeed measure the same variable

[35] Their conclusions are logical since with increasing number of points, the distance between the individual points should grow smaller

however, often employs the four-point format. From that it follows that the parametric measures employed by many researchers could not be used, and different statistical instruments had to be selected. The quantitative analyses were conducted using SPSS, Stata and R. Instead of the mean, the median was opted for as a measure of central tendency; the standard deviation was then substituted by the inter-quartile range (IQR).[36] The coding of the scales was as follows: except for the exceptions discussed above *Agree* always had the highest value, i.e. 4; *Disagree* was then treated as 1. With the frequency or level of difficulty questions (items 1 and 2; items 5–9), the highest frequency/level of difficulty was coded as 5, the lowest was marked as 1. Where the *Don't know* option was offered, it was treated as a zero.

With the "checklist" questions, in which the items are nominal, all items were treated as separate variables. They were dummy coded using the system of zeros and ones; one indicating that the participants chose the option, zero that they did not. The dummy-coded variables were combined into multiple-response sets, and plotted or analysed with the help of the cross-tabulation method to help determine whether the responses differed for experienced/ less experienced teacher, teachers who had taken part in courses, and teachers with/without experience with SEN learners. As to the open-ended questions, these were coded by hand. The responses were placed into thematic categories, and the most common responses are reported.

To answer research questions five and six, several statistical tests were performed. After considering different possible options, the Kruskal Wallis test, the Mann Whitney U test and ordinal regression, were selected as the most appropriate. Firstly, the Kruskal Wallis test was performed to see whether there were statistically

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[36] All descriptive statistics can be found in Enclosure 3.

significant differences in the attitudes, approaches and self-efficacy[37] of teachers who had more experience with SEN learners, compared to teachers who had no experience in this area. The same test was used to see if there was a difference between teachers who had more experience overall, and teachers who were not as experienced. In both cases, teachers were split into three groups – most experienced, moderately experienced, and least experienced[38]. The null hypothesis was that there was no difference between the groups. The alternative hypothesis was that especially the first and the last group will differ (see the research cited in chapter 4). To see whether the alternative hypothesis holds, Mann Whitney post-hoc tests were performed in cases where the Kruskal Wallis test indicated a significant difference between the groups. This enabled us to obtain more detailed information, and for which pairs of groups, the differences are statistically significant. The Mann Whitney U test was also performed to see whether the attitudes, approaches, and self-efficacy of teachers who had participated in courses differed from those of the teachers who had not. In all cases, the p-value threshold for significance was set at 0.05. The assumption of similar distribution for both non-parametric tests was checked using the *homogeneity of variance test* in SPSS.

Finally, in the cases where the results of the Mann Whitney and Kruskal Wallis tests came out as significant, as well as in other cases where variance was expected (with the items investigating the teachers' opinions on inclusive education), the ordinal regression test was performed, to determine the nature of the relation between the

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[37] The knowledge and attitudinal items that were inspected are items 3–13, 39 and 40; those that measure approach to SEN learners and self- reported competence are 20–27; 33 and 34; 38 and 38.1.

[38] In case of the experience with SEN learners, the responses for the first two items were averaged. Teachers with a mean of 5–4.5 were classified as *most experienced*, teachers whose mean score was 4–3.5 were placed into the *moderately experienced* category, the rest was treated as *inexperienced*.
With the teaching experience, *inexperienced* teachers are those who have taught for less than 3 years, *moderately experienced* teachers have taught *3–10 years*, the rest are treated as *experienced*

factors.[39] The dependent variables in this case were the attitudes, and the self-reported competence (all expressed in the form of points on a scale, and thus ordinal); the independent variables were the overall teaching experience, experience with SEN students[40] (measured by the average score for the first two items of the questionnaire), and the teachers' participation on courses (item 35 on the questionnaire). All independent variables were dummy coded, and one of the three categories in the case of the ordinal variables was omitted.[41] The null hypothesis was that none of the mentioned factors played a part. The alternative hypotheses were that teachers who had more experience with SEN students (frequent contact and/or courses) would have more positive attitudes toward inclusive practices, and their reported competence will also be higher. The p-value threshold for rejecting the null-hypothesis was again set at 0.05. The independent variables were selected so that the criterion of little to no multicollinearity was satisfied[42]. Even so, all analyses were checked using the Stata software, which automatically watches for this issue, and in cases where it would affect the analysis, removes redundant variables[43]. The assumption about proportional odds was tested using a *test of parallel lines* (the *omodel logit* command in Stata). In those cases, where the assumption did not hold, but the p-value appeared to be significant, statistical tests which relax this assumption for one or more variables were performed. These tests included multinomial logistic regression, which, however has the disadvantage of losing the ordinal nature of

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[39] Several studies that used or described a similar research design were consulted to ensure this test was indeed appropriate (e.g. Norris et al., 2005; Elamir and Sadeq, 2010; Jenset, 2011).

[41] The variable does not need to be included as it is present implicitly by virtue of not belonging in any of the other categories. In cases where the software does not omit the variable automatically – as e.g. Stata does – it can cause multicollinearity issues and skew the results.

[42] It was not likely that the chosen variables would have been strongly inter-related. Age, on the other hand, was excluded, as in most cases, it strongly influences the years of teaching experience.

[43] Unless programmed to keep them, that is.

the data; and the generalised ordered logit model (the *gologit2* command in Stata). However, even though the scores in the goodness of fit tests indicated the suitability of the models, the standard errors were usually extremely high[44], and even in cases where they were not, the results turned out as insignificant. Thus, we refrained from using the models, and only report the results of the Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney tests. Having analysed the questionnaire, the next step was to perform the so-called triangulation, i.e. the results from the qualitative and the quantitative research were compared and contrasted. Lastly, the overall findings were compared with those of previous studies.

9.   The Analysis

9.1. THE INTERVIEWS

9.1.1. Participants

The participants were two experienced and two beginner higher elementary school teachers. Both experienced teachers – Věra B. and Hana P. – have taught for approximately 30 years; the less-experienced teachers – Martina B. and Barbora N. – have taught for one year, and three years respectively. All three had experience with SEN learners. Věra B., Martina B. and Barbora N. mentioned having students with some form of SEN in almost every group they taught. Hana P., however, said that she had taught but a few.

Of the four teachers, only the two more experienced ones mentioned having taken specialised training in the area of teaching SEN students. While Hana P. initially stated that she had not attended any courses, she later corrected herself, saying: "Oh, I've just remembered, I did take some courses years ago.". She, however, did not elaborate, and

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[44] For sample analyses, see Enclosure 2.

when prompted, she said she could not remember. Věra B. was more specific, reporting having attended courses for lower elementary school teachers organised by Mrs. Kelly, and courses organised by Mrs. Rýdlová – the author of Languages without barriers[45]. The two less experienced teachers did not attend any special seminars, but Martina B. mentioned reading materials on the internet, mostly on the webpage of the Czech Ministry of Education. Reading materials was also mentioned by Věra B., and somewhat Hana P. – although she again did not elaborate[46]. As for Barbora N. she said she was busy at the moment as she was still a teacher trainee. She would, however, like to learn more on this topic after she has graduated. She seemed to be interested particularly in the topic of formative assessment.

9.1.2. The Themes

As mentioned, based on the emergent themes, twelve broad thematic categories were developed; these categories were then divided into more specific subcategories. In the end, we ended up with 191 coding nodes. The final coding structure is displayed in the hierarchy chart below.

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[45] For more information on Languages without barriers, see chapter 7.
[46] Since she could not remember any of the courses or materials she had taken, and since she repeatedly mentioned having no interest in this topic, she was, in the end, treated as having no education in this area.

Figure 1.

Hierarchy Chart of Coding Nodes (by number of references in each node)
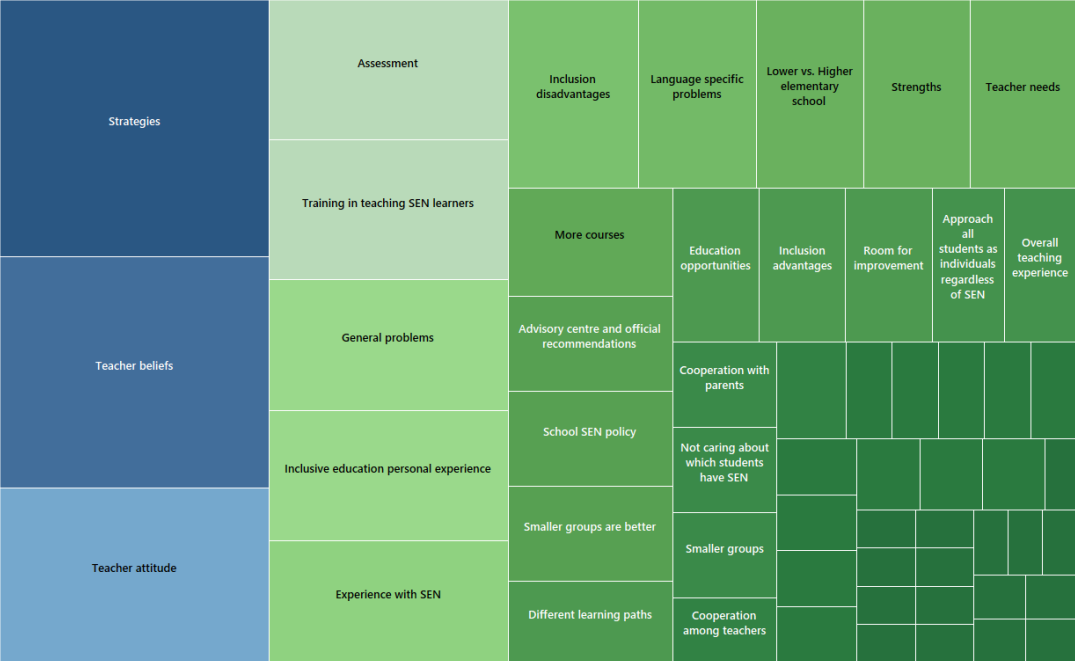
The themes that came up are discussed in detail in the next chapter. The experienced and less-experienced teachers are compared and contrasted. The focus of each section corresponds to one of the broad categories. Two categories were omitted as they only included information on the teachers' degrees of experience (both with SEN learners and overall) and previous education in the area of teaching SEN students. The relevant information contained in these nodes is presented in the section on participants.

9.1.3. Advisory Centre and Official Recommendations

Advisory centres and the recommendations provided by them were mentioned by all four teachers. Three of them, specifically Barbora N., Martina B., and Hana P., were dissatisfied with the degree of cooperation between the centre and the school. Barbora N. saw the main problem in the vagueness of the recommendations provided to the teachers. She stated:

> Most of the official documents include phrases, such as *give the students more time, print materials, and what else … oh, yes, keep checking that they understand,* but I do that with all students. […] I keep hearing you have to design tests in this way or that way… Well, not only tests, also the notes. But I'm not quite sure how the teacher can manage all that in the everyday bustle

at school… If we can actually manage to prepare special content for so many students.[47]

The vagueness of the recommendations was, in a way, also brought up by Hana P. She claimed that she had only read a few reports, but as all the suggestions were the same, it all somewhat *blended together.* She also displayed a degree of scepticism about the overall importance of the advisory centres. In her opinion, they often over-diagnosed students, and in the end were not that helpful. Martina B. then also thought that the school advisory centre should be of more help, but her response was more specific. She mentioned that the school psychologist mostly consulted with the parents, and visited the school only on occasion. She imagined that ideally, every school should have a trained specialist who would observe the teachers' lessons and give them feedback. Lastly, Věra B. did not share any views on the issue, only mentioning that she knew which students had SEN by way of receiving reports from the centre. She however added: "I rarely come across a child that is actually in the care of the advisory centre or whose problems are very serious".

9.1.4. The Schools' SEN Policy and Approach to SEN Students

Regarding the schools' SEN student policies, all four teachers mentioned working with the school counsellor[48] in some way. Barbora N. was, however, the only one satisfied with the mutual cooperation. She said she had no training in teaching SEN students, and the school counsellor, along with the school psychologists helped her in this respect. Věra B., again, did not pass any evaluative judgments, simply saying that she knew which students had SEN from the reports given to her by the school counsellor. Hana P., who was actually Věra's colleague from the same school, however, seemed somewhat dissatisfied. She claimed the school counsellor did not inform her, unless she asked directly.

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[47] The segments of the interviews are translated into English. The original Czech transcripts are provided in Enclosure 1.

[48] Výchovný poradce in Czech

Lastly, Martina B. complained about lack of qualification among school counsellors, adding that she would have liked to see a higher level of cooperation. She was, however, appreciative of her more experienced colleagues who gave her advice. Martina B. was then not the only one who brought this up. The theme of cooperation among colleagues was also present in the interview with Barbora N. who, like Martina B., was grateful for the help of older, more experienced co-workers. Hana P then basically agreed with her younger colleagues, thinking very highly particularly of the students' class teachers. She, however, added that the cooperation usually worked well only at lower elementary school. Hana P. was also one of the two teachers who mentioned working with an assistant. However, she did not discuss the subject any further. Martina B. also touched upon this topic, being somewhat more elaborate. She believed that when the child's difficulties are so serious that they require the presence of a teaching assistant, the child would, perhaps, do better in a special school.

9.1.5. Lower Elementary School vs. Higher Elementary School

All teachers mentioned having experience from both higher and lower elementary school, and three of them shared their thoughts on the difference between the two levels. There was, however, no consensus among them. Věra B. stated multiple times that the higher grades of elementary school were considerably easier for the students owing to the students' participation in re-compensational groups during the lower grades. Hana P. seemed to disagree with her colleague, thinking that it was actually the earlier stages that were easier. In her view, the students benefitted from a more focussed attention of their class teacher. The other teachers could then also take advantage of the fact that the students have yet to come into puberty, and hence are more inclined to take part in the activities the teacher prepares. She claimed that in her experience, the students learned more easily due to the fact that they were not as concerned about getting approval from their peers. Barbora N. then agreed with Věra B. in that higher elementary school tended to be easier. She, however, stated different reasons: "Well, the first thing that comes to mind is that in the lower grades, I don't quite know the children yet ; by the

higher stages we will usually have formed some kind of relationship, which makes it easier to work with them. […] And they tend to be more self-reliant; when they don't know what to do, they usually ask for help."

9.1.6. SEN Student Problems

During the interviews, the teachers were asked about their views on what can prove most problematic for SEN students at school; both in general, and in the context of English classes. Figure 2. summarises what they thought to be the biggest issues in general.

Figure 2.

General Problems of SEN Students – Teachers' Views (by number of coding references)
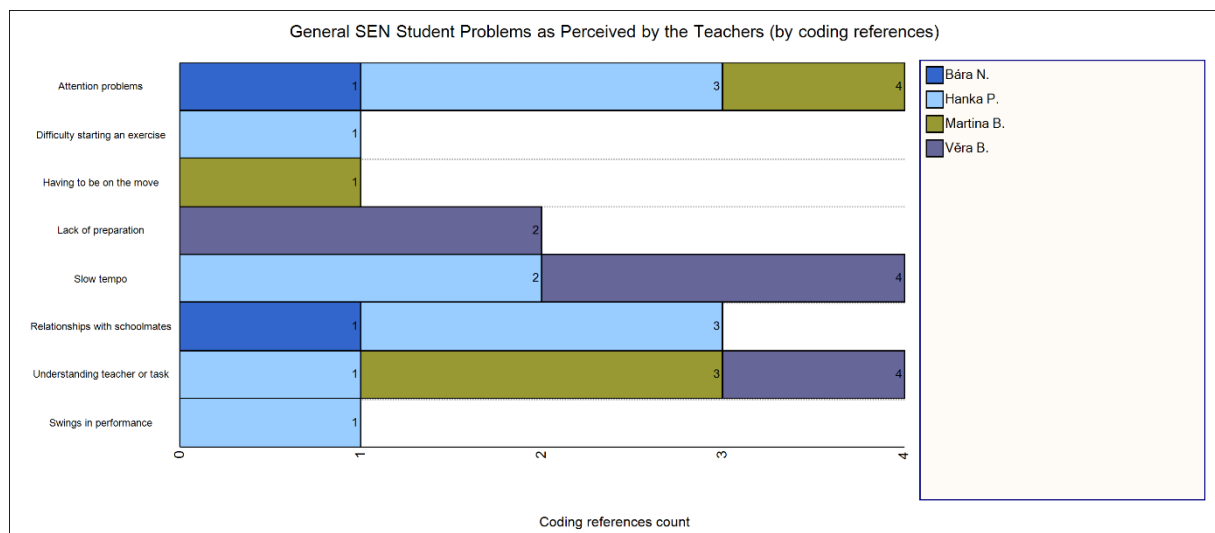
As evident from the chart, the teachers saw *attention problems,* and *difficulty understanding the teacher or the task* as most problematic; both issues were explicitly mentioned by three teachers. The only one that did not talk about attention was Věra B. However, this was likely given by the fact that throughout most of the interview, she focussed solely on the context of English lessons; even when asked about general problems, she mainly spoke of language lessons-specific issues, such as understanding grammar. Barbora N., in turn, focussed mostly on affective factors. For her, the biggest issue seemed to be that of the tension between the SEN students and their peers caused by the fact that the SEN students were given adapted tests and materials. She said that this might lead the other students into thinking that the SEN students

had some kind of benefits; that things were generally made easier for them. This situation then affected the teachers in a considerable way as they were presented with the uneasy task of maintaining harmony in the group. Aside from the aforementioned issues, there did not seem to be an agreement among the teachers, nor was there any observable pattern shared by the two younger and the two more experienced teachers; each teacher seemed to view different factors as causing the most difficulties.

Regarding the problems that affect the students' performance in English classes, the teachers mentioned understanding and applying grammatical rules, understanding textbook instructions, getting stuck on a specific word unable to continue the task, reading and reading comprehension, and writing and spelling. As in the case of the general difficulties, no shared patterns were detected. The only thing perceived by all four teachers as highly problematic was writing and spelling.

Figure 3.

Difficulties SEN Students Experience in Language Classes (by number of coding references)
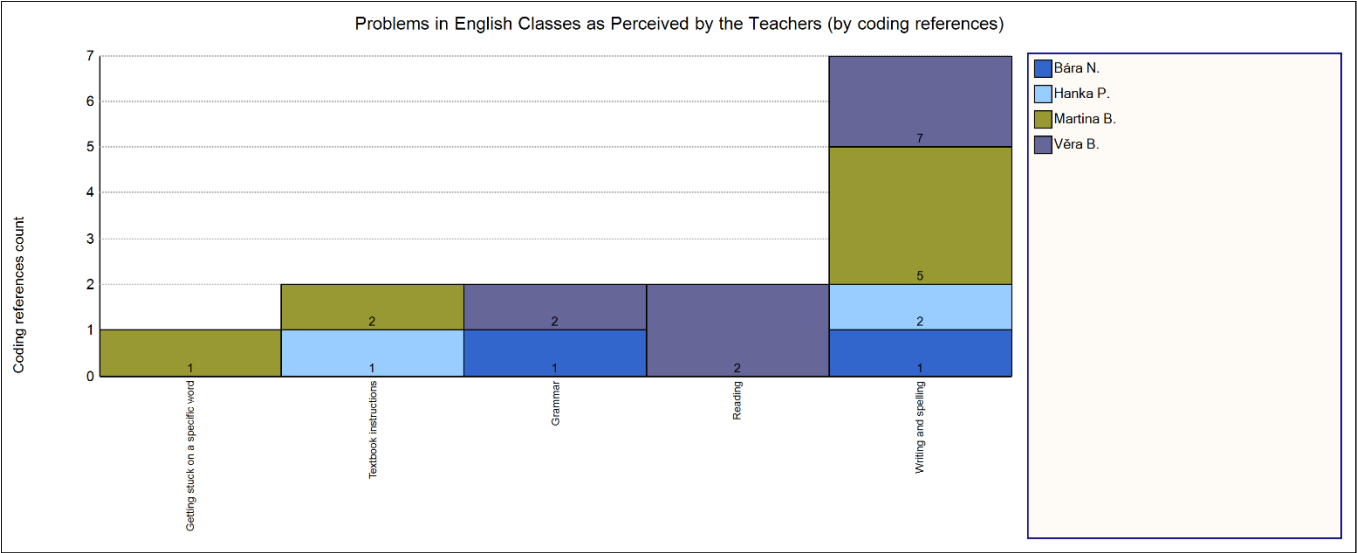
9.1.7. Beliefs about SEN and Teaching SEN Students

Among the teachers' beliefs about teaching SEN students, however, certain prominent themes were identified. Firstly, all teachers were of the opinion that the students learned better

in smaller groups where the teacher could give them more attention. Thus, all of them viewed the often-high numbers of students per group to be a burning issue. Second, all teachers seemed to favour different forms of assessment. The younger teachers both believed that formative assessment was more beneficial. Barbora N. stated: "These children are often diligent, and we can motivate them by giving them feedback". She did not, however, directly criticise the more traditionally used forms. Martina B. agreed with her as to the benefits of this strategy, but was more critical of the established system: "The system here is oriented towards achievement; the formative part is often forgotten. I prefer formative assessment to the established classifications". The preference for formative assessment then indeed appears to be the preferable method as it is in line with the suggested approach of teaching the students meta-cognitive strategies. In this way, they will be able to evaluate their own progress, and establish achievable learning goals (see chapter 5). And while Martina B. mentioned regularly incorporating this form of evaluation into her lessons, especially by writing positive comments and suggestions for improvement, Barbora N. felt she needed more training before she was able to successfully implement this technique: "I've tried it, but I think I would need more training, both theoretical, and practical. I've tried a few times, but don't think I was that successful"[49]. As per the two more experienced teachers, Hana P. did not mention formative assessment, but did speak of using assessment for motivation. She was strongly opposed to giving bad grades, drawing heavily on her own negative experience from when she herself had been a student. As for Věra B., she, like her colleagues, mentioned the motivational function. She said that when the students did all the tasks, and showed the effort, she was more than willing to give a better grade. However, in contrast with her similarly experienced colleague, she did not seem to have a problem with bad grades in general. Regarding other assessment strategies mentioned by the teachers, Martina B. reported not using a red pen for correcting mistakes, believing it was bad

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[49] This section is mostly concerned with the teachers' beliefs. The assessment strategies they employ in practice will be discussed in more detail in the section on Assessment.

for dyslexic students. She explained that this strategy was suggested to her by a more experienced colleague.

Barbora N. and Martina B. also agreed that the problems of SpLD and ADHD students differed. Barbora N. thought that classroom decorations and informative posters often hanging on the classroom walls were a major distractor for ADHD students. However, for SpLD students, these could actually prove beneficial. She also believed that ADHD students benefitted from change, and frequent switching between activities whereas SpLD students learned better when they have a sense of routine. Martina B. also saw distractors as a major problem for ADHD students, though she did not specifically mention classroom arrangement. She agreed with Barbora in that SpLD and ADHD students differed; SpLD students being the ones for whom learning was more difficult. However, she responded to the question in a very concrete way, referring specifically to one of her students who suffered from dysphasia:

> With the students that have some form of -dys- disorders, it tends to be worse. In the case of the dysphatic student, I was trying to empathise with him, to *step into his shoes*, and to understand his thought processes. He would get stuck on a specific word, and I had to turn his attention to something else, and come back to the word later.

As to the two more experienced teachers, they did not mention the similarities and/or differences directly. However, by implication, Hana P. did not hold the view that the two groups of students differed significantly: "I've read about ten reports from the advisory centre and it all somehow blends together. The problems are the same, the recommendations also…". As for Věra B., she only mentioned that the numbers of students who had ADHD have been increasing lately, but did not compare the two groups in any way.[50]

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[50] As she was the first teacher that was interviewed, we did not ask her so that her opinion could be compared or contrasted with those of the other teachers.

Another noticeable pattern was that the two less-experienced teachers tended to discuss more general problems, such as the differences between the difficulties ADHD and SpLD students experienced, problems with the school system or affective factors, e.g. the feeling of otherness associated with the fact that SEN students usually had to sit at the front. The older teachers, on the other hand, focussed more on the cognitive issues, and difficulties that could affect the process of language learning, e.g. problems with receptive skills.

As to what the teachers viewed as most important in teaching SEN students, there only seemed to be a consensus regarding the importance of communicative competence. All teachers reported that they were mostly trying to focus on developing speaking skills. Martina B. thought it especially important for the students to not be afraid of making mistakes. Hana P. then mentioned focussing on the skill of saying things in different ways, so that the students did not feel lost when they could not recall a specific word. Barbora N. did not directly bring up focussing on speaking skills, but she did speak about putting an emphasis on practising pronunciation, which is part of communicative competence. The importance of correct pronunciation was also brought up by Hana P. She said she was trying to teach it herself, but she realised that her pronunciation was not perfect. She did, however, believe that nowadays, it has become easier for the students to acquire it, given the fact that they had access to a number of films and TV shows. The two teachers who were (self-reportedly) least educated in teaching SEN students thus agreed on the importance of pronunciation teaching. This fact is, however, rather unlikely to point to a presence of a more general pattern. Lastly, Věra B. was surprisingly the only teacher that mentioned the benefits of learning chunks of language applicable in "real life". She said, for instance, that in reaction to the corona virus pandemic, she started teaching rules, and phrases such as *Have you washed your hands?* even to small children. However, despite not having been mentioned explicitly, a similar strategy was, in a way, also hinted at by the other experienced teacher – Hana P. – who said that she made students rehearse (and

sometimes perform) dialogues. As Věra B. also talked about the benefits of repetition, this could point to a preference for different forms of drilling activities in the teachers who had more experience. This would not be entirely unlikely as at a certain point (before the shift towards communicative language teaching, after which drills were being shunned as boring[51]), drills were one of the recommended methods[52]. The teachers may thus have been trained to use them in their lessons. If this were the case, it could actually be good for SEN students who benefit from repetition, and enjoy practising activities they are good at (see chapter 5).

Aside from the strong belief in the importance of developing communicative competence, the views of the teachers mostly diverged. Hana P. mentioned grammar, and the interaction between the teacher and the students; specifically, she was referring to the value of personal contact as opposed to the impersonal nature of the internet. Moreover, she talked about teaching through mnemonics and connections between concepts. This theme then also came up in the interview with Martina B. who talked about using songs, poems, and sometimes even slogans from TV commercials to help the students better remember the target vocabulary or grammar. The two other teachers, Věra B. and Barbora N., did not talk about using such strategies, but both mentioned using visual support. And while Barbora N. only though that, e.g. summary charts, might prove beneficial for SpLD students, Věra B. saw visual support as essential:

> They have to have some form of visual support. […] They can connect the word with the picture… Or when they are taking a vocabulary test, they have to see the word. It can be written on the blackboard, or projected on the IWB, or I hand out copies to give them more time to think.

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[51] See chapter 5

[52] E.g. during the popularity of the *Audio-lingual method* (Liu and Shi, 2007).

As to the general attitude of the teachers towards SEN students, all but one – namely Martina B. – agreed that they simply tried to treat them as any other student, respecting their individual needs. All three reported adapting the classification, opting for alternative forms of assessment, and sometimes printing adapted versions of the materials (especially Barbora N.), but they said they did not feel the need for a special approach. This might seem as a contradiction at first, but the teachers – given that what they reported was true – simply treated all students equally in that they honoured their individual needs, which is in fact in accordance with the fundamental principles of inclusive education. Barbora's statement, perhaps, summarises their attitudes best:

> I try to motivate all students in the same way. Sometimes I choose a different form of test, or adapt the assessment, but other than that I simply try to create an atmosphere where all students feel good, so I don't think it's necessary to approach these [SEN] students with more care.

However, while Barbora N. and Věra B. held mostly positive views, Hana P. mentioned that oftentimes she was not sure whether the students actually had some form of SEN or whether they were just lazy. This is likely related to her general mistrust of the advisory centre. By implication, she treated the students as the other students who were slower, but had no SEN. She did, however, proclaim a strong belief in being kind and fair to all children, SEN or not, and added that said she, first and foremost, tried not to stress the students. She stated she was more than happy if the children took something home from her lessons, not caring as much about whether they learned the amount stated in the curriculum demands. As for Martina B., she only spoke of adapting, not stating directly, whether she made similar accommodations for all students, or only for those that had SEN. She did, however, proclaim that she felt it was important to respect the students' coming from different backgrounds. She stated that:

> Everyone comes from a different background and has a different level of support from the parents, so I can't be *a brute* to someone who just can't get

there. […] For instance, now in the time of the quarantine, a lot of people have no computer literacy. Most people do, but I can't grade the child, or judge them when I don't know if they have the access, or what kind of options they have.

Moreover, she also mentioned being patient, even seeing it as one of her greatest strengths as a teacher.

9.1.9. Assessment and Testing

It seemed all four teachers used an adapted form of assessment for SpLD and ADHD students. As mentioned above, all of them endorsed the concept of assessment for motivation, taking into account the amount of effort students put into preparation for the classes. All of them also reported opting for different forms of testing. In addition, they all agreed on giving students more time to complete the assignments. Věra B. then also reported allowing for the students to finish tasks at home. She gave an overall grade for the finished task, not awarding special points for work completed at school, and work completed at home, and computing, e.g. a weighted mean. "I am very benevolent.", she said.

Both Martina B. and Věra B. also mentioned replacing the written form with the oral form. Martina B. said she knew from experience that the students usually understood the rules, only struggling when asked to apply them. Věra B. had different reasons, simply stating that speaking was, in most cases, not a problem for these students. Thus, she usually gave them a chance to prepare talks on different topics. Nevertheless, while she mentioned focussing on developing communicative competence a great deal, she said she only replaced the written form with oral with students in the lower grades.

Lastly, the two less-experienced teachers both mentioned not counting errors stemming from the nature of the learning difficulty; or in the case of Martina B., awarding at least half-points for them. Such errors – as reported by the teachers – included writing words as they are spoken, missing letters, spelling errors in words that contain doubled consonants, or incorrectly

written diphthongs. The different assessment and testing strategies as reported by the teachers are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1.

Assessment Strategies Reported by the Teachers – A Comparison

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES (comparison by case)	Barbora N.	Martina B.	Hana P.	Věra B.
	less experienced	less experienced	experienced	experienced
	SEN in every group	SEN in every group	infrequent contact with SEN	SEN in every group
	no SEN education	reads materials regularly	no SEN education	courses and materials
Assessment for motivation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Different form of testing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individualised approach, respecting students' background	No	Yes	No	No
More benevolent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No bad grades	No	No	Yes	No
Not using red to correct errors	No	Yes	No	No
Not counting errors caused by the learning difficulty	Yes	Yes	No	No
Opportunity to complete tasks at home	No	No	No	Yes
Writing positive comments	No	Yes	No	No

9.1.10. Teaching Strategies

When asked about the teaching strategies they employed when teaching SEN students, all teachers agreed in that they tried to help the students develop their speaking skills. All four also reported trying to make the students engage different learning paths. Věra B. and Barbora N. – though Barbora N. more indirectly – mentioned visual support. Hana P. and Martina B. talked about games and kinaesthetic activities. Both teachers, however, seemed to have mixed feelings about them. Hana P. was complaining about the fact that higher elementary school students wanted to play games only to avoid *the hard work*:

> Well, I try to include games or kinaesthetic activities every now and then, but not too often. I prefer the *frontal way of teaching…* And at higher elementary school, the students want to play the games, but just because they want to avoid the hard work… Sometimes I include them at the end of the lesson.

Martina B. then had a different problem – she was worried about the fact that the games suggested in textbooks often required students to make fools of themselves in some way, and

in her opinion, this could be a problem with higher elementary school students as they were especially sensitive in this respect. She felt that including such activities would result in the students feeling embarrassed and inappropriate.

As mentioned in the section on teacher beliefs, the two less-experienced teachers both thought that SpLD and ADHD students struggled in different areas. It is therefore unsurprising that both reported using different teaching strategies for each learning difficulty. Barbora N. talked about frequent switching between activities in order to keep ADHD students engaged. With SpLD students, on the other hand, she mentioned trying to maintain a sense of routine. Martina B. said she allowed ADHD students a ball they could press to help them relax the tension and concentrate on the lesson. Regarding her approach to SpLD students, she only mentioned the dysphatic child in whose case she usually tried to direct his attention to something else, and then help him come back to the original task, or find the word he struggled with.

Both of the less-experienced teachers, along with Hana P. also displayed strong focus on motivation. Barbora N. saw it as her biggest strength[53], saying she was able to motivate the students with her "beginner's enthusiasm". Hana P. and Martina B. then both reported trying to praise the students whenever possible. Martina B. stated: "I'm trying to praise them, to boost their self-esteem because in so many cases, they only experienced failure.". Hana P. then directly pointed out the effects of positive motivation on her students: "For instance, with one student from grade six; I always praise him, and he suddenly *blossoms*.". As for Věra B., she did not mention motivation directly, but it was implicitly present throughout the interview; for instance, in the form of her giving better grades for effort, or in her giving the students an opportunity to complete the tasks at home, and only grading their work after they have finished.

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[53] More on that in the section on strengths

The two more experienced teachers both agreed that for them, it was essential to *be present,* i.e. to react to what is happening in the classroom. This also projected into their approach to SEN students. They both said they watched the students, and whenever they saw someone struggle, they came to their aid. The fact that this was mentioned only by the more experienced teachers might lead one into thinking that this was a skill acquired with experience. However, we must be careful not to make generalisations since while experience certainly plays a role, and the teachers likely become better with time, this is something any teacher has to do rather than a skill exclusive to those who are more seasoned.

In addition, the two more experienced teachers agreed that whenever possible, they tried to approach the students one-on-one. Hana P. mentioned adapting assessment in this way, examining the student individually when others are, for instance, working on an exercise, instead of calling them to the front in the usual manner. Věra B. did not speak of adapting testing in this way. Rather, she was using this strategy to facilitate the actual learning process:

> I help them. When I have smaller groups – 15 children maximum – I am able to help every child individually. I write everything on the board, and when they copy it, I check every child's work for errors. I also build the speaking tasks on that – they first write down what they want to talk about, I correct it, and then they learn it.

Věra B. then also agreed with Martina B. as to the benefits of repeated practice. She said that when a child has revised something 200 times, it would almost certainly be imprinted on their memory. Martina B. reported putting an emphasis on correction. She said that when a child made a mistake, she corrected them, and insisted they re-write the sentence, or the word correctly. She also said that whenever she got a new group, she started almost from the beginning, and explained the subject matter step by step *as if she were teaching a small child to walk;* it could thus be said that she has adopted the *sequential approach* (see chapter 5). Her

reasoning was that she usually did not know what the children had already learned, and in this way, it was easy for her to find out where they got stuck.

Lastly, as hinted at in the section on teacher beliefs, Martina B., along with Hana P., also tried to teach the children some learning strategies they could use. Both mentioned introducing mnemonics to help the students remember vocabulary and grammar. Martina B. then also reported working with songs and poems.

9.1.11. Teachers' Strengths and Weaker Spots

During the interviews, the teachers were asked what they perceived to be their greatest strengths, and what, on the other hand, they saw as their weaker spots. In their answers, almost no distinct patterns could be identified. The only thing that stood out was that while motivation seemed to be of importance for all teachers, only the two less experienced ones mentioned it as one of their greatest strengths. Aside from that, two teachers, namely Martina B. and Hana P., thought patience to be their strong suit. The only other quality brought up by more than one teacher, was the ability to help the students develop good communicative competence. The other answers were completely divergent. Věra B. said that despite putting an emphasis on speaking skills, which she initially mentioned as her strongest point, she was not quite sure what she was best at. She reported she was trying to focus on all the skills equally. When asked to point out where she would like to improve, she said that she could focus more on writing, and practise translations more. The other experienced teacher, Hana P., thought she was best at explaining grammar. She mentioned being able to communicate the rules in such a way that all students, including those with some form of SEN, understood them. She reported resorting to mnemonics frequently. When prompted to say at what she would like to become better, she replied that there was always room for improvement, and she could probably improve in every single area. She later added that she would like to become more demanding, and incorporate more English into her lessons. However, she confessed that she was not actively working on it.

As mentioned, Barbora N. saw the ability to motivate students as her greatest strength, referring to her *beginner's enthusiasm* as being *contagious.* Her weakest spot, in turn, were her organisation skills. She also claimed that she would like to improve in the area of teaching SEN students, especially in terms of adapting assessment. Lastly, Martina B. pointed out her ability to motivate students, and her patience as her strongest points. She added that she would be interested to find out more about interesting games and role plays and that she would like to learn how to motivate students to actually take part in them.

9.1.12. Teacher Needs

The question about the teachers' weaker spots was followed by that on what they felt they would need to become better. All teachers, except Hana P., mentioned more space in the curriculum allotted to English lessons. They believed this would also help them improve in the area of teaching SEN learners as they would be able to give them more attention. When asked whether they felt the number of courses for higher elementary school teachers dedicated to working with SEN learners was sufficient, two teachers answered that it most definitely was not. Interestingly, this view was shared only by the two teachers who had some form of education in this area, be it self-education through reading materials – Martina B. – or reading materials and having taken specialised courses – Věra B. The two other teachers said they were unable to tell as they did not feel sufficiently informed in this respect. Hana P., though initially saying that she kept receiving offers, and thought there was enough, later corrected herself, stating that she was completely uninterested in the subject, and hence, could not provide an informed response. Barbora N. would, on the other hand like to take some courses as soon as she graduated from the faculty. She also stated she wished to read more materials, especially on the topic of formative assessment. She would then like to start applying the concept in her own lessons. Her interest in attending specialised seminars was also shared by Martina B. As

for Věra B., she did not express a desire to take any other courses herself[54], but she did feel they would definitely help beginner teachers.

When prompted to specify what the focus of the specialised seminars should be, the teachers gave different responses. Věra B. mentioned writing and reading comprehension, seeing the latter as the most difficult skill overall. Barbora N. showed an interest in courses focussed on assessment and seminars that would help make differentiated learning more manageable for the teachers, i.e. courses that would advise them on how to prepare adapted tests or materials in a reasonable amount of time. Hana P. said she did not know, repeating she had no interest, and Martina B. did not mention anything explicitly. She did, however, report that she would like to become better at preparing engaging games that would help the students develop their speaking skills. Therefore, she might be interested in seminars oriented in a similar direction.

9.1.13. Opinion on and Experience with Inclusive Education

Figure 4. shows that both groups of teachers – experienced and less experienced alike – seemed to feel more negative about inclusion[55]; there were approximately twice as many negative comments than there were positive. In contrast with existing research (see sections 4.1. and 4.2.), the less-experienced teachers did not seem more inclined to endorse the concept.

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[54] She did not, however, directly say that she would not take them if they were available.
[55] We refrained from using the word *inclusion* because of its potentially negative connotations. A few times, however, it was brought up by the teachers themselves.

Figure 4.

Positive vs. Negative Comments on Inclusive Education Made by the Teachers
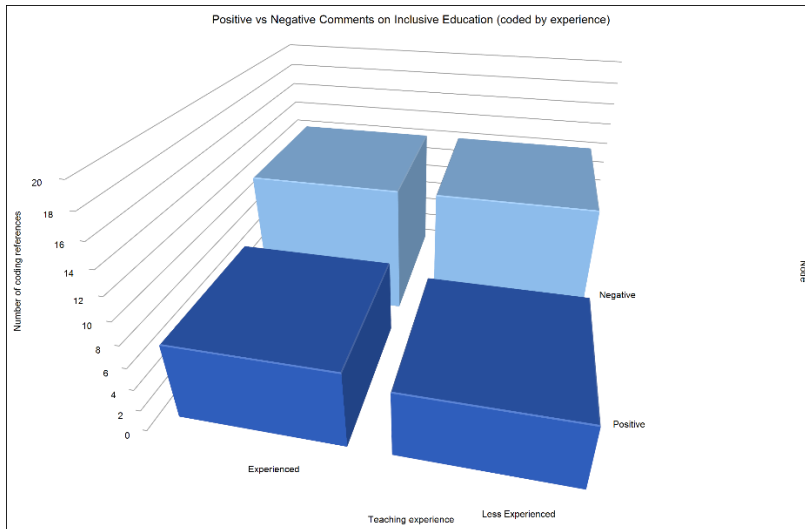
 Rather, there was one teacher in each group who felt more positively about it, and one teacher who was more sceptical; as becomes apparent from Figure 5.

Figure 5.

Positive vs. Negative comments on Inclusion – Comparison of the Four Teachers
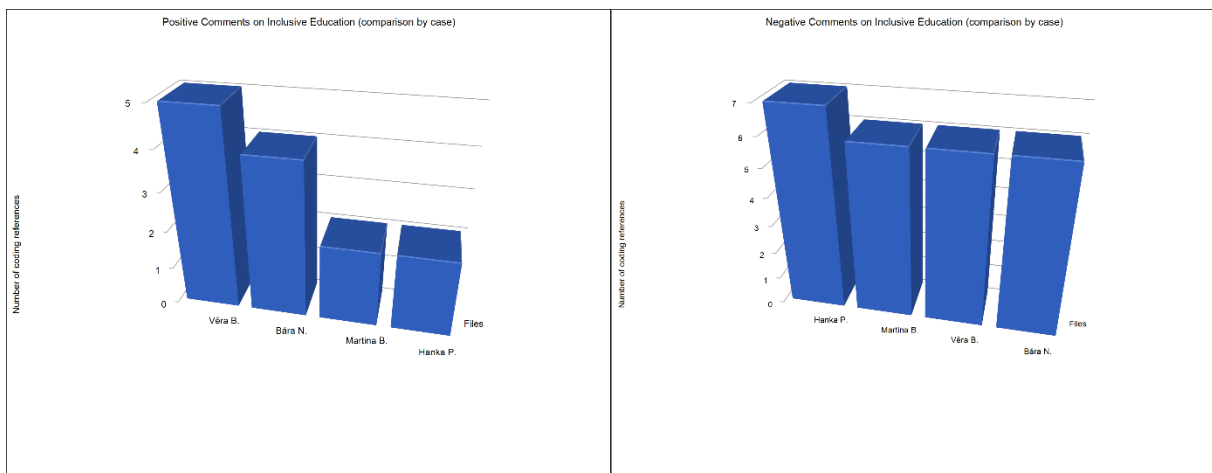
Of the two experienced teachers, the one who was more positive was Věra B. She believed that even if the nature of the student's learning difficulty was serious, there were usually no problems if they worked hard. In contrast with the other three teachers, she did not think that the students' learning difficulties often affected the relationships with their peers, saying that if

the children made sufficient effort, so that the tempo of the lesson did not drag because of them, everything worked well. She did, however, express the view that inclusion was usually beneficial for SEN students, but not as beneficial for the normally-developing ones:

> There are advantages; the SEN child watches the others, and they learn by it. Especially the things about which they do not ask the teacher… They are basically *served* these things by the other children, so it is beneficial for them. The question is, how the group, as a whole, functions, because the more talented children are, in a way, held back.

In addition, she also seemed to be of the opinion that the concept of inclusive education worked best in smaller groups. In this respect, all the other teachers agreed with her. This likely stemmed from the teachers' experience that SEN students tended to require more attention, which in the context of larger groups, the teachers were unable to give. The other experienced teacher, Hana P. also agreed with Věra B. in that in the inclusive classroom, the students could learn from each other. She, in contrast with her colleague, then saw this to be an advantage also for the normally-developing students, saying that:

> If I were to look for advantages… One comes to mind. If the children don't quite understand something, and I have to explain it again, it often helps the others who, otherwise, wouldn't ask. Then I suddenly hear *Aha! That's the way it works!.* So, that's an advantage for everybody.

Aside from the one mentioned, however, she did not see any benefits. She was, in fact, the most sceptical of the teachers, proclaiming being opposed not only to inclusion, but also to mixed-ability classes in general. It might be tempting to ascribe this to her reported lack of experience with SEN students. However, given her statement: "I teach 150 children. I know the situation in every classroom, but I don't know who has some kind of a learning disability. […] I teach so many children that I don't know in whose case it's a learning disability, and who's just lazy.", her reported lack of contact with SEN learners should be taken with a grain of salt. Of the less experienced teachers, Barbora N. seemed to hold the more positive view. She viewed SEN

students as diligent, and thought that inclusion could teach children to respect each other. Martina B. agreed in this respect, also mentioning it as a possible advantage. However, she expressed her concern that people were not naturally programmed to accept differences, adding: "I don't know if the upcoming generations will be capable of that". Among other disadvantages, she mentioned especially the students' feelings of inferiority and consequent struggles with low self-esteem. This was also the reason why she advocated changing the seating arrangement. She preferred the V-shaped or U-shaped form, as opposed to the traditional form with desks arranged in rows: "I think that when they're among the others, it's more… There's a sense of togetherness. They're not outsiders, like *I'm the black sheep, I have to sit at the front.".* The advantages and disadvantages of inclusion as mentioned by the teachers are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2.
Teachers' Views on Inclusive Education – A comparison

TEACHERS' VIEWS ON INCLUSION (comparison by case)	Barbora N.	Martina B.	Hana P.	Věra B.
	less experienced	less experienced	experienced	experienced
	SEN in every group	SEN in every group	Infrequent contact with SEN	SEN in every group
	no SEN education	reads materials regularly	no SEN education	courses and materials
Inclusion advantages				
Frequent revision of subject matter	No	No	Yes	No
Learning from each other, cooperation	No	No	Yes	Yes
Tolerance and respect	Yes	Yes	No	No
Inclusion disadvantages				
Students demand more attention, the teacher is unable to give it	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Good only for SEN students	No	No	No	Yes
Self-esteem problems, students become defensive	No	Yes	No	No
SEN students have problems understanding subject matter	No	No	No	Yes
Slow tempo	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Tension among schoolmates	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other				
Inclusion works better in smaller groups	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Success of inclusion depends on the group	Yes	Yes	No	No

9.2. THE QUESTIONNAIRE

9.2.1. Participants

Thirty-seven people originally took part in the questionnaire. One of them, however explicitly stated that she did not teach at higher elementary school. As this paper focuses solely on this group, this participant was excluded from the analysis. This left us with thirty-six participants. Three of them were male, thirty-three female; the majority (54.5%) from 25 to 35 years old. Their levels of experience varied, the *experienced* teachers (teaching for more than 10 years) being the most numerous group (n = 17), followed by the *moderately experienced* (teaching from three to ten years) (n = 12), and the *inexperienced* (teaching for less than three years) (n = 7) groups. The time they spent teaching at higher elementary school then differed somewhat from that for their overall teaching experience, suggesting some of them also taught at other levels, or perhaps, at language schools.

As for the teachers' experience with SEN students, most of them (n = 23) fell into the *moderately experienced* category. Of the remaining thirteen, eight could be considered *most experienced;* the rest were then classified as *least experienced*. On average, the teachers came more frequently into contact with SpLD learners (86.1% responded that they had SpLD students in every group, or almost every group they taught), than they did with ADHD learners (61.1% reported that ADHD students were part of only some groups, or almost none of the groups they taught).

9.2.2. The Knowledge Questions

Items three to nineteen of the questionnaire were designed with the aim of finding out about the teachers' knowledge – and to a certain extent, opinions – about SEN and SEN learners. The first ten items were written as Likert-type statements. The teachers were prompted to express their views on whether the difficulties experienced by SpLD and ADHD students differed, how difficult they thought learning was for the students and whether the two learning difficulties could be fully compensated. Most teachers seemed more inclined to believe that the

problems experienced by SpLD and ADHD students did not differ significantly. However, when asked to select which areas they perceived as most problematic, both in general, and in the context of English lessons, the responses differed in some respects. Figure 6. summarises the responses across the different levels of teaching experience and different levels of experience with SEN students.

Figure 6.

General Difficulties Experienced by SpLD and ADHD Students as Viewed by the Teachers
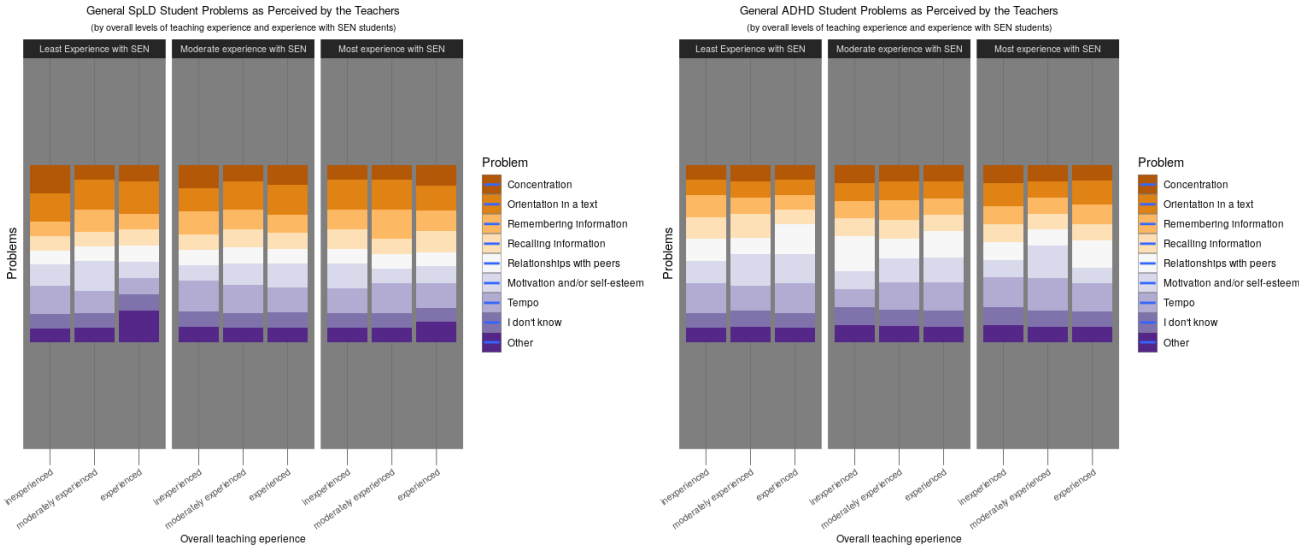
In case of the general difficulties, teachers across all groups agreed that both SpLD and ADHD learners tended to have trouble with orientation in texts, focussing on tasks and keeping up with the set tempo. However, in their opinion, orientation in a text was more of a problem for SpLD students than for those who had ADHD. The latter group, in turn, experienced greater difficulties in terms of relationships with their peers. A tabulation comparison revealed that only 6% of all respondents viewed this as a problematic issue for SpLD students; for ADHD, it was nearly 50%. In the case of SpLD students, 8% of participants (n=3) selected the *Other* option. Two shared the view that it was not viable to make generalisations as, for instance, a

dyscalculic student would experience difficulties distinct from those of a student who had dyslexia. The remaining participant then considered writing to be the area that causes the most trouble.

Regarding the problems specific to the context of learning languages, the skills perceived as being among the most difficult for both ADHD and SpLD learners, included reading and comprehension, writing compositions, and applying grammatical rules. Reading and comprehension was then regarded as more problematic for SpLD students (50% of respondents) than for students with ADHD (36%). The latter were, in turn, thought to have more trouble with applying grammatical rules (30. 6%, as opposed to 19. 4%). Listening was also seen as more difficult for ADHD students than SpLD students, which is rather logical, given the fact that listening requires focus, and the name of the learning difficulty alone indicates that people who have it will get easily distracted. SpLD students, on the other hand, were perceived as having a harder time remembering written forms of words. As in the case of the question on general problems, some of the participants (22% for ADHD and 14% for SpLD) chose the *Other* response. Their answers, however, referred to general problems, rather than language-specific ones; some of them mentioned motivation, and one teacher complained about the students' lack of effort.

When asked to compare the two groups of students, the majority of respondents (58.3%) thought that learning was comparably easy/difficult for them. The number of participants that considered ADHD students as being better off, or somewhat worse off than those who had SpLD was then almost equal (n = 5 and n = 6 respectively). Moreover, none of the teachers thought that students from either group had an easier time at school than their normally-developing peers. With SpLD students, nearly 60% chose the *More difficult option*, the rest opting for the *A lot more difficult* one. In the case of ADHD students, 5. 6% of the teachers (n = 2) thought that learning was *Comparably easy/ difficult* for them.

Regarding the perceived difficulty of higher elementary school as compared to lower elementary school, the results were more varied. The distribution of responses can be seen in Figure 7.

Figure 7.

Perceived Difficulty of Higher Elementary School Compared to Lower Elementary School (distribution of responses across the different categories)
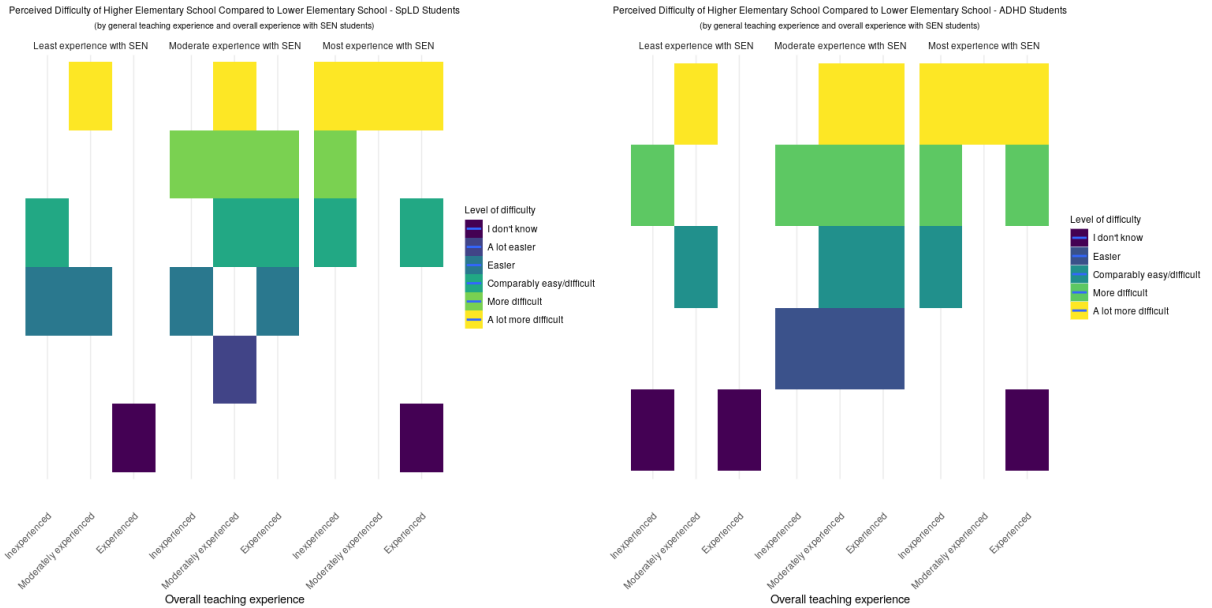
From the figure, it becomes evident that the majority of teachers agreed with Zelinková (2006) and Jucovičová et al. (2007) in believing that of the two stages, higher elementary school was actually more difficult. In the case of ADHD, 52.8% of the teachers selected either the *More difficult* or *A lot more difficult* option; with SpLD students it was 47.2%. Interestingly, the teachers thought that students with SpLD actually had an easier time than those who have ADHD. With the former, 19.5% gave the *Easier* or *A lot easier* response; with the latter, none of the participants thought that the higher grades of elementary school were *A lot easier,* and only 13.9% selected the *Easier* response. A plausible explanation of why this was the case could be that the initial struggles of SpLD students with basic literacy can be minimised by teaching

them compensation strategies; which is actually the focus of the so-called re-educational groups. ADHD students, on the other hand, have problems concentrating on tasks – something that is increasingly important in the higher grades as the students are expected to be able to work more autonomously, and maintain focus for longer periods of time. One thing worth noting with this item is that none of the teachers who were classified as having the most experience with SEN learners held the view that higher elementary school was easier. Some, however, thought that the difficulty of the two levels was comparable. Lastly, concerning the opinions on whether SpLD or ADHD can be fully compensated, the vast majority of teachers (80.6% for ADHD, and 88.9% for SpLD) thought this not to be the case.

As mentioned in the method part, the Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney tests were performed to see whether the results for the teachers across participation in specialised courses, different levels of overall teaching experience and experience with SEN students differed. In all cases, the results revealed that there were no significant differences between the groups, i.e. p-value higher than 0.05[56].

9.2.3. Approach towards SEN Learners and Experience and Self-reported Competence in the Area of SEN Education

Items 20 – 38 of the survey were primarily concerned with the teachers' approach towards SEN learners. In addition, there were questions asking about their previous education and training in this area, as well as about what they would need, if anything, to become more effective teachers of SEN students. Most teachers reported trying to adapt their teaching style when they had a student with SEN in the class. However, when asked about the two learning difficulties separately, their responses differed. While they mostly seemed to adapt teaching materials for SpLD students (median = Somewhat agree, mode = Agree), they did not appear to approach ADHD students in the same way (median = Somewhat disagree, mode = Somewhat

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[56] The results can be found in Enclosure 2.

disagree). The same pattern was observed in the other two items concerned with adapting teaching style (adapting assessment and adapting testing)[57].

Of the 36 participants, 29 shared their ways of differentiating for SpLD students. The most frequent answers included giving shorter assignments, offering visual support, adapting the form of the materials, i.e. using a different font or changing the layout etc. In the cases of assessment and testing, most teachers agreed in that they did not count errors stemming from the nature of the learning difficulty; some then also mentioned having a different classification system, tolerating a higher number of errors. In addition, two teachers stated a preference for formative assessment. The majority of participants agreed that they sometimes replaced the written form of exams with an oral one.

The number of teachers who stated their ways of adapting for ADHD students was considerably smaller; the maximum number of responses obtained being 14 (in the question concerning testing). The answers provided by the teachers did not differ significantly, which again suggests that the teachers did not seem to believe the problems experienced by SpLD and ADHD students were entirely distinct. Some respondents only added including kinaesthetic activities, and trying to bring variety into the lessons.

When enquired about what they thought to be the best strategies, the answers for both learning difficulties were also similar. The majority of teachers (over 60% in both cases) considered multi-sensory learning to be beneficial. Others suggested methods that included communicative activities (42% in the case of SpLD students, 33% with ADHD), and student projects (13.9% for SpLD, 30.6% for ADHD). The fact that the number was considerably higher for ADHD students may be due to the teachers' view that ADHD students tend to experience problems in relationships with their peers. The projects enable for individual work

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[57] The modes and medians in all cases were almost equal.

and, unless designed as group projects, do not require cooperation. In addition, they enable students to work at their own pace, thus not requiring them to maintain focus for long periods of time. Lastly, the teachers seemed to have mixed feelings about the usefulness of drills; eleven teachers viewed them as suitable for at least one of the groups, the same number classifying them as one of the least suitable activities. Regarding the strategies the teachers considered least appropriate, there seemed to be a high degree of consensus concerning dictation; especially in the case of SpLD learners, where 66.7% thought it to be unsuitable. In a way, this was not surprising, as the teachers likely imagined the traditional form of dictation, where the teacher stands at the front, and dictates a whole text. However, as discussed in chapter 5, when certain adjustments are made (e.g. letting the students only fill in certain words), even dictation can be beneficial. The response of one of the participants suggests, that at least some teachers are well aware they can adapt in this way. However, despite explicitly mentioning an open-cloze form, the teacher still saw it as inappropriate: "Dictation, that's out of the question. Even in Czech, they need an open-cloze form." Finally, some of the teachers shared the view that none of the activities was intrinsically better or worse than the others, saying that the suitability of an activity depends the context in which it is used. This was essentially correct; the activities were chosen in accordance with the recommendations found in relevant literature (for a review, see chapter 5). However, there was a presupposition that the participants would exhibit a certain bias (both positive and negative) towards some of them.

Regarding the teachers' competence in teaching SEN students, most of them felt that it was *Good* or *Ok* (n = 34 for SpLD students; n=30 for ADHD students). The teachers who were most experienced overall then appeared to be the most confident in this respect. The skills/ competencies most teachers viewed as their strongest were vocabulary, speaking, and quite surprisingly, pronunciation. The weakest points then appeared to be listening, and writing. In terms of self-reported teaching competence, participation in courses also seemed to have a

positive effect as none of the teachers who reported taking part in some kind of training evaluated their own skills as poor. The findings on the teachers' perceived competence across different levels of overall teaching experience and reported participation in courses are summarised in Figure 8.

Figure 8.

Teacher-Reported Competence in Teaching SpLD and ADHD Students (by course participation and overall teaching experience)
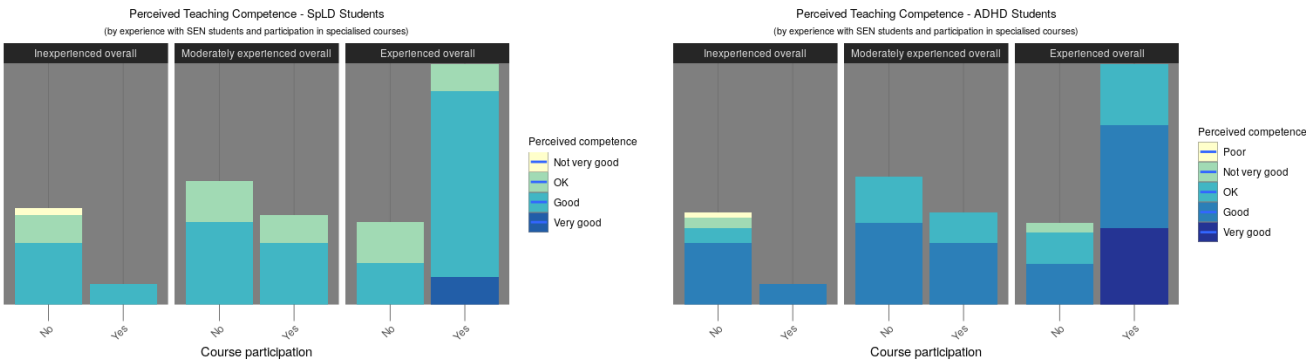
As for experience with SEN students, it appeared to be a significant predictor of the teachers' confidence in teaching ADHD students, but not in teaching SpLD students. In the first case, the Kruskal Wallis test showed that the mean ranks among the three groups – most experienced, moderately experienced, and least experienced – were significantly different ($H = 6.281$, $df = 2$, $P = 0.043$). In order to see which pair of groups differed the most, a Mann Whitney post-hoc test was conducted. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences between the scores of the teachers pertaining to the *least experienced* and *moderately experienced* categories ($U = - 9.491$, $Z = - 1.995$, $p = 0.046$). In addition, teachers who had the least experience differed significantly from those in the most experienced group ($U = - 13.662$, $Z = - 2.485$, $p = 0.039$).

Besides the perceived competence in teaching ADHD students, experience with SEN learners also affected the teachers' desire to become better SEN teachers. Results of the Kruskal Wallis test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the three groups (H = 6.029, df = 2, p = 0.49)[58]. The Mann Whitney test then indicated that the mean ranks for only two groups, namely the *moderately experienced* versus the *most experienced*, were significantly far apart (U = - 8.747, Z = - 2.218, p = 0.27). In both analyses, the mean ranks were highest for the *most experienced* group, suggesting that they were not only the most likely to feel confident in terms of teaching ADHD learners, but also the most likely to want to improve.

Experience with SEN students was not the only significant predictor of the teachers' approach and competence; overall teaching experience also played an important part. However, in one of the cases where the results for experience with SEN learners were significant, specifically with the teachers' wanting to become better SEN teachers, the effects of overall experience could not be determined. In the case of this dependent variable, it was not possible to use the Kruskal Wallis or the Mann Whitney test since the data did not hold against the assumption of homogeneity of variance; i.e. it was found that the "shapes" of the distributions for the three groups – *experienced*, *moderately experienced*, and *inexperienced teachers* – were not equal (p < 0.05).

General experience was, however, found to affect the teachers' interest in further education focussing on teaching both ADHD and SpLD learners. For the SpLD learners, the Kruskal Wallis test scores were as follows (H = 10.349, df = 2, p = 0.006). The results of the Mann Whitney post-hoc revealed a significant difference between *experienced* as opposed to *moderately experienced* teachers (U = 7.819, Z = 2.082, p = 0.037), and the *experienced* vs the

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[58] We are using the asymptotic p-value, not the adjusted one.

inexperienced group (U = 13.521, Z = 1.204, p = 0.003); the mean ranks for the last two groups – *moderately experienced* vs *inexperienced* teachers – did not differ significantly.

Regarding the interest in further education in the area of teaching learners with ADHD, the Kruskal Wallis test again pointed to a considerable variance between the groups (H = 7.023, df = 2, p = 0.03). The consequent Mann Whitney test revealed results similar to those found in case of the training focussed on teaching SpLD students – *experienced* vs *inexperienced* (U = 10.088, Z = 2.251, p = 0.024); *experienced* vs *moderately experienced* (U = 7.880, Z = 2.094, p = 0.036). As for participation in courses, it was not found to have a significant effect on any of the dependent variables.

In addition to the non-parametric tests discussed in previous paragraphs, the ordinal regression test was applied to learn more about the effect of the predictors on the outcome variables[59]. Initially, all three independent variables – participation in courses, experience with SEN learners, and overall teaching experience – were included in the model. As mentioned in the *Method* chapter, the ordinal independent variables were dummy coded, using zeros and ones. The assumptions of the model were checked using Stata. In none of the cases analysed, multicollinearity appeared to be an issue. However, in the case of the self-reported competence, the assumption of proportional odds was violated (p = 0.000), and with *the desire to become a better SEN teacher* variable, we received a warning that the model was unsuitable for the data. Thus, in neither case the test could be performed[60]. In the remaining two cases, all requirements

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[59] The model was initially used for the four cases where the difference between the different levels of the independent variable came out as significant in the non-parametric tests.

[60] As the p-values for some of the variables appeared to be significant, we did try to apply other recommended models that relax the assumption of proportional odds, namely the multinomial regression, and the generalised ordered logit model (*gologit2* in Stata). However, in most cases, the standard errors were extremely high and even when they were acceptable, the p-values did not indicate significance.

were met, and it was possible to carry out the regression. We used R for both analyses to enable for easier plotting[61].

The model as a whole was statistically insignificant for the ADHD item (p = 0.14), but significant for the SpLD one (p = 0.02). In both cases, however, there were predictors with a p-value below 0.05.[62]. In case of the interest in further training on how to teach SpLD learners, the p-value was significant for the teachers with most experience overall (p = 0.007). The results showed that (given the other variables in the model are held constant) the odds of the teachers classified as *experienced* being interested in further training in the area of teaching SpLD students was 0.046 (95% CI, 0.004 to 0.383) times that of the teachers falling into the *moderately experienced* or *inexperienced* categories[63]. As for the item concerned with interest in additional training in teaching ADHD learners, the p-value was again significant for the teachers with the highest level of experience (p = 0.029). The results revealed that the odds of them showing an interest in further education was 0.096 (95% CI, 0.010 to 0.740) times the odds of the teachers classified as *moderately experienced* or *inexperienced*. In both cases, the confidence intervals were relatively narrow, and indicated that the findings should reflect the average population well. The fact that the more experienced teachers are the least likely to be interested in any form of further education in this area can indicate that they had already gained sufficient experience and consequently, do not feel the need for more training, or it can be due

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[61] The dependent variables had to be ordered before the analysis. In the case of the dummy variables, the reference category was 0. With the outcome, the reference category was the one with the highest value, i.e. 4 (in this case *Agree*). Both ordinal independent variables originally had 3 categories, but only two were needed for the analysis (the other would be redundant as it is already included by virtue of absence of the other two properties). We decided to omit the inexperienced teachers, along with teachers who had the least experience in teaching SEN students. The log odds coming out of the original model were converted into odds to enable for a clearer interpretation, and the calculation of predicted probabilities.

[62] Later, we also tried to remove *experience with SEN learners* and *participation in courses*, as these did not have a significant effect. As a result, both models came out as significant (p = 0.02 for the ADHD; p = 0.003 for the SpLD. However, except for the overall significance, the change in the model did not affect the results. Hence, we can interpret the original model.

[63] Those coded as zero on this dummy variable.

to their higher degree of scepticism about the concept of inclusive education in general (see sections 4.1. and 4.2.). Lastly, it could also mean that they are generally sceptical about the quality of the available courses. In addition to the basic analyses, we converted the odds ratios obtained for both items to predicted probabilities. The differences among the teachers across the three levels of teaching experience are displayed in Figure 9.

Figure 9.

Interest in Further Education in the Areas of Teaching SpLD and ADHD Learners (distribution of predicted probabilities across dif. levels of teaching experience)
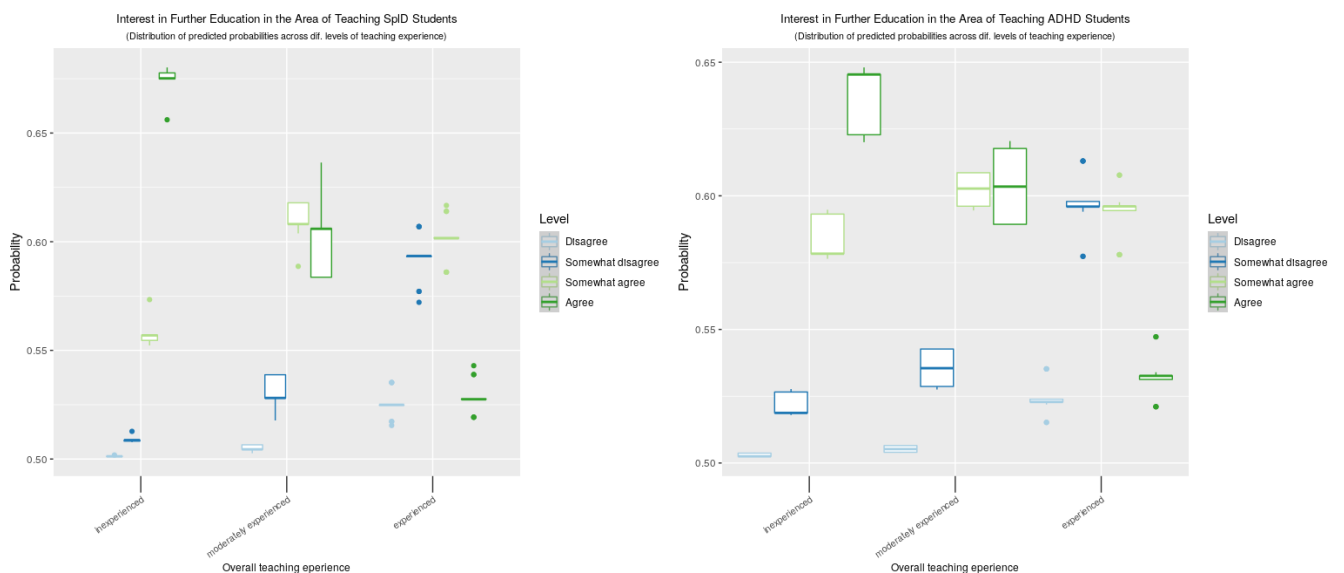
9.2.4. Opinions on and Experience with Inclusive Education

Items 39 to 40.2 of the questionnaire were designed to find out about the teachers' views on and experience with inclusive education. The teachers were asked to state their opinions along with the reasons why they held it. Overall, most participants (n = 25; 69.5%) seemed to be in favour of inclusion of SpLD students (*Agree* or *Somewhat agree* on the questionnaire). With ADHD students, the number of respondents who felt positively, or at least somewhat positively about them being educated in standard schools was even higher, though not considerably (n = 27; 75%). This goes against the findings of Michalík et al., who reported that

the number of teachers opposed to inclusion of ADHD students was higher (Michalík et al., 2018).[64]

When prompted to state the benefits of inclusive education in general, the teachers' answers included students learning to respect each other, a tolerance for differences, developing a sense of empathy, and cooperation and learning from each other. Some teachers (n = 3), however, were so opposed to the concept of inclusion that they could not see any benefits whatsoever. When enquired about the negative aspects, the teachers mentioned slow tempo, high numbers of students in the groups, huge amounts of extra work for the teachers, and students with ADHD misbehaving and distracting others.

In one of the last items of the survey, the teachers were also prompted to evaluate their personal experience with inclusive practices on a scale from 0, indicating no experience, to 4, meaning positive experience. Their responses are summarised in Figure 11. The chart shows that the majority viewed their experience to be *Mostly positive.* The teachers that gave the most positive answers overall then belonged to the *moderately experienced* group (both overall, and in terms of experience with SEN learners). Among the teachers in this group, there was also one who reported having no experience in this area whatsoever. The participants that, on the other hand, viewed their experience in a rather negative light, were those with the highest level of experience overall. However, we must be careful not to make generalisations here, as the sample was relatively small and the distribution across the different groups was not equal.

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[64] For more detailed information, see section 4.2.

Figure 10.

Inclusive Education – Personal Experience (by overall teaching experience and experience with SEN students)
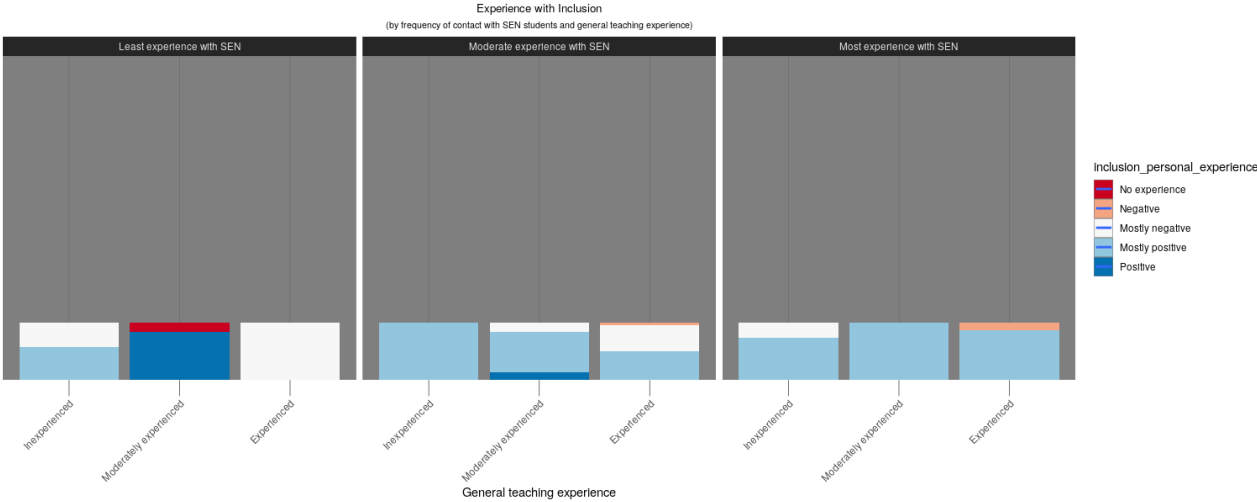

Regarding the results of the statistical tests conducted, for none of the outcome variables, the Mann Whitney or the Kruskal Wallis test turned out as significant (all p-values were higher than 0.05). However, as in the case of opinions on issues, such as inclusion, some variance is to be expected, the ordinal regression model was applied nonetheless. The model showed that there were significant differences among the groups concerning the attitudes on inclusion/exclusion of ADHD students[65]. In case of the item asking whether the teachers were in favour of inclusion, the group classified as *moderately experienced* overall differed significantly from the two other two groups (p = 0.023). The findings showed that the odds for the teachers with moderate level of experience being in favour of inclusion was 10.719 (95% CI, 1.503 to 95.928) times the odds of the teachers pertaining to the *experienced* or *inexperienced* category. In the case of the oppositely worded question, the group that differed significantly from the others were again the *moderately experienced* teachers (p = 0.035). The

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[65] In none of the cases, multicollinearity among the independent variables was detected; the assumption of proportional odds also held.

odds of their pertaining to the higher category – in this case being *against* inclusion as this was one of the items where the coding was reversed – were 8.756 (95% CI, 1.234 to 73.796) times higher than the odds for the other two groups. However, the results of both analyses must be interpreted with caution as the 95% confidence intervals are extremely wide[66]. Nevertheless, they do indicate that we can claim with 95% confidence that the odds of the *moderately experienced* teachers falling into the higher category are greater (the lower limit is greater than 1). Interestingly, this group seems to vary considerably in terms of their opinions on inclusive educational practices. However, variation could occur in any of the groups as even if certain patterns can be identified, the teachers are individuals with different backgrounds, levels of experience[67], and points of view. As in the case of the questions concerning the teachers' interest in further training in teaching SEN students, the odds were converted into predicted probabilities. Their distribution across the three categories can be seen in Figure 12.

Figure 11.

Teachers' Views on Inclusion of ADHD Students (distribution of predicted probabilities across dif. levels of teaching experience)

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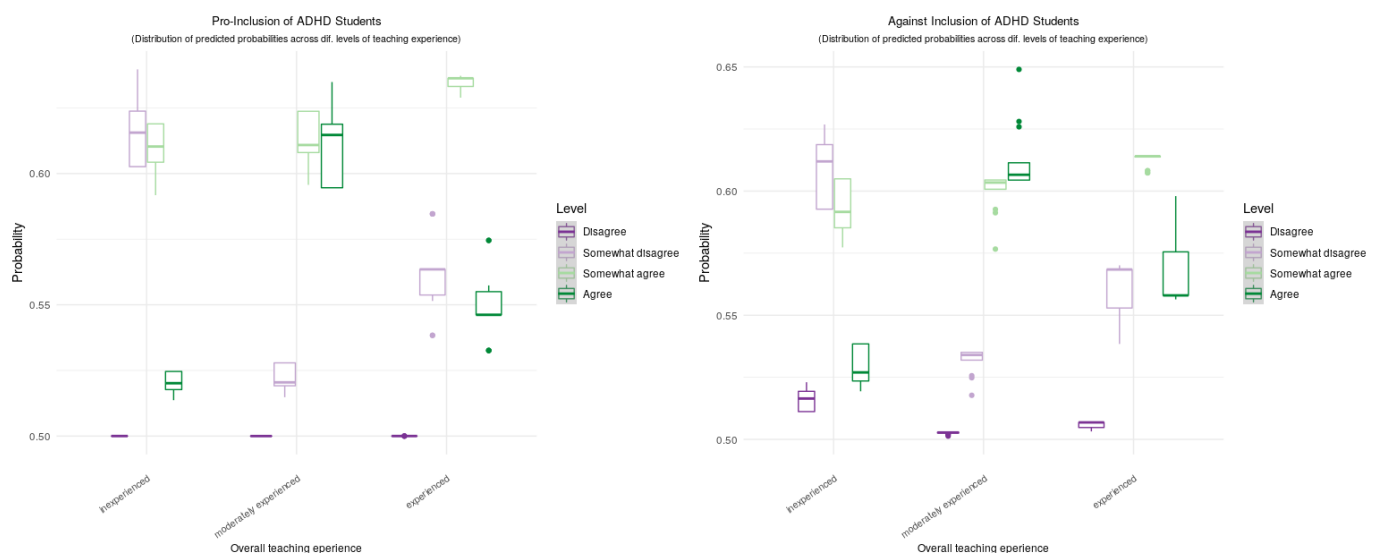
[66] We did try to adjust the model and remove the variables that did not have a significant effect. However, the confidence intervals in both cases remained wide (95% CI, 1.44 to 69.56) in case of the *pro-inclusion* item, (95% CI, 1.09 to 48.07) for the *against inclusion* item.

[67] The group includes teachers with three to ten years of experience.

9.2. DISCUSSION

9.3.1. Interviews vs Survey – A Comparison

In the interviews, the teachers did not quite agree on whether the manifestations for the two learning difficulties were similar or different. One of the two experienced teachers seemed more inclined to believe the former whereas the two less-experienced interviewees were leaning towards the latter. Most of the survey respondents, on the other hand, held the view that the students' problems were of a similar nature. In contrast with the interviews, the majority of the teachers who did think SpLD and ADHD students differed considerably then actually came from the *experienced* group. However, looking at the questionnaire from a holistic perspective, we find evidence that some teachers' actual opinions diverged from what they reported in this particular item. For instance, when asked about their teaching practices, most respondents agreed that they adapted their teaching style when they had SpLD students in the group. With ADHD students, the numbers were considerably lower. Interestingly though, the majority also thought that in comparison with students who had SpLD, ADHD students actually had a harder time at higher elementary school. From the aforementioned observations, it follows that in many cases, the teachers' responses were inconsistent. As per the difficulty of higher vs lower elementary school in general, most survey respondents believed that the lower grades were easier for both groups of students. In this respect, their perceptions differed somewhat from those of the interviewees as out of the three who shared their opinions on this matter, two actually thought the higher level to be easier.

Regarding what the teachers viewed as causing the most difficulties for SEN students overall, the interviewees and the teachers who took part in the questionnaire mostly agreed. There seemed to be a high degree of consensus particularly on the students having trouble with orientation in a text, maintaining focus and keeping up with the set tempo. The interviewees then saw the latter as a potential factor causing tension between the SEN students and their peers. While the survey respondents also mentioned that the normally developing children were

often "held back", only one of them directly commented on this being the cause of disharmony in the group. With respect to the difficulties in terms of relationships with peers, the interviewees also believed it to be an issue for all SEN students – or at least, they did not explicitly state they thought this to be a problem exclusively for students who had ADHD as many teachers in the questionnaire had done. Approximately 50% of the survey respondents thought that students who had ADHD could experience problems in terms of relationships with their schoolmates; in the case of SpLD students, it was only 6%. Lastly, two teachers in the interviews also mentioned other affective factors, namely problems with self-esteem and lack of motivation. These were also marked as potential issues by a number of survey respondents (in items 14, 15 and 39.5).

As to the teaching strategies the teachers viewed as most beneficial for SEN students, both the questionnaire participants, and the interviewees mentioned multi-sensory learning practices. In the survey, where this strategy was given as one of the possible options, it was selected by more than 60% of the respondents[68]. In the interviews, none of the teachers directly used the term, but all of them mentioned trying to make the students engage different learning paths. Věra B. and Barbora N. talked about providing visual support, while Hana P. and Martina B. spoke of including games and kinaesthetic activities. All four interviewees then also professed their belief in the importance of positive motivation, the two younger teachers even thinking of motivation as of their greatest strengths. In the survey, motivation was not offered as an option under the teaching strategies items – though the teachers could still include it under the *Other* option. The respondents could, however, also choose it as one of their strong suits. Interestingly, it was the teachers pertaining to the *experienced* group that selected this option most often; those classified as *inexperienced* actually being the least represented. Lastly, in the interviews, the two more experienced teachers also showed a certain preference for drilling

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[68] 61% saw it as beneficial for SpLD students; 64% thought it might help students who had ADHD

activities. In the survey, drills were among the items the teachers were ambivalent about. And although *experienced* teachers were represented among those who had chosen it as one of the most suitable activities for both SpLD and ADHD students, there were not enough for it to point to the presence of a more general pattern. As per assessment strategies, almost all respondents agreed with the interviewees in that they were more tolerant of errors. Some of them, similarly to the two less experienced interviewees, then also reported not counting mistakes stemming from the learning difficulty, and some, like Martina B., mentioned giving the students a chance to correct the mistakes by orally explaining the rules. Finally, two teachers seemed to share a preference for formative assessment with the two younger interviewees. The thing worth noting here, however, is that not all teachers will perceive formative assessment to be a good strategy; there was one respondent, who mentioned having taking a course on how to implement this technique, was in fact strongly opposed to it.

Regarding the teachers reported competence in dealing with SEN learners, the survey analysis revealed that both participation in specialised courses and experience with SEN had an effect; experience with SEN learners having turned out to be a statistically significant predictor. However, a direct comparison of the survey and the interviews is not possible here, as with the latter, none of the teachers – with the exception of Barbora N., who said she knew there was considerable room for improvement – stated explicitly whether they felt confident in their skills as SEN teachers. By implication, however, Věra B. and Martina B. – the two teachers who said they encountered learners with some form of SEN in every group they taught, and who reported having some form of education in the area of teaching such students – thought of themselves as having sufficient skills. From what could be observed in the survey and the interviews, we may therefore conclude that both participation in courses and experience with SEN learners affect the teachers' competence – at least self-reported competence – in working with SEN learners.

Especially the latter appears to play an important part, given the fact that it turned out to be a statistically significant predictor.

The teachers' perceived competence is then related to their wanting to become better SEN teachers. The statistical analyses revealed that both general teaching experience and experience with SEN learners had a significant effect on the teachers' desire to improve in this respect; the teachers classified as being most experienced overall appearing to be the least interested in further education focussed on SEN. Respondents with the highest degree of experience with SEN students, on the other hand, could be expected to show the most interest in becoming better SEN teachers. As to the conclusions from the interview study, these seem to be partially consistent with this finding. The fact that the two younger interviewees both expressed an interest in taking specialised seminars was perfectly in line. However, though both experienced teachers reported not being interested in further training in the form of courses, Věra B. did mention occasionally reading materials on the topic. Thus, the younger teachers did appear to be more interested in further education, but with the two that were more experienced, the situation was not as straightforward. Experience with SEN students then did not seem to play a significant part in the interviewees' cases. One thing worth noting here, however, is that only the interviewees who reported having had some form of education in this area (n = 2) felt well informed enough to answer the question on whether they felt the number of available courses in the Czech Republic to be sufficient.

Finally, regarding the interviewees' opinions on inclusive education, they were more on the negative side. The teachers taking part in the questionnaire, on the other hand, seemed to view it in a more positive light. And while in the interviews, no emergent patterns were identified, the questionnaire yielded more interesting results. From the responses, it seemed that those who viewed their own experience with inclusion negatively were most represented by the members of the *experienced* group. This group then also displayed a higher degree of scepticism

about SpLD and ADHD students being included into standard classrooms. The most negativistic in this respect were, however, the teachers classified as *moderately experienced*. Interestingly, this group showed the highest degree of variance as its members were also the most likely to feel positively about inclusive education.[69] As to what the teachers perceived to be the benefits of SEN students being educated alongside their normally developing peers, the interviewees and the survey respondents both mentioned the children learning to respect differences, a higher degree of cooperation and tolerance among them, and the fact that they can learn from each other. The disadvantages pointed out by teachers in both groups then included high numbers of students in the groups and the consequent inability of the teachers to give the students the attention they would need, slow tempo, and huge amounts of extra work for the teachers.

9.3.1. Summary of the Findings and Comparison with Existing Research

The findings from the questionnaire analysis suggest that firstly, it is more probable for teachers to agree with Kormos (2017) in that the difficulties experienced by ADHD and SpLD learners do not differ considerably; nevertheless, evidence for the contrary also exists. Second, it appears that the majority of teachers will realise that SEN cannot disappear completely. Third, in relation to the perceived difficulty of learning, most will likely agree with the conclusion reached by Zelinková (2006) and Jucovičová et al. (2007), believing that compared to lower elementary school, higher elementary school tends to be more difficult for SEN students.

Moreover, our results also indicate that teachers are mostly aware of the general difficulties SEN students experience; both the interviewees and the survey respondents mentioned the cognitive (e.g. concentration, orientation in a text), as well as affective factors (e.g. motivation, relationships with schoolmates). In case of the problems specific to the context of learning languages, it then appears that the teachers realise that SEN students will, in most

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[69] Significantly more likely in the case of inclusion of ADHD students (for more information, see section 9.2.4.).

cases, struggle with writing and remembering written form of words, reading and comprehension, applying grammatical rules, and to some extent, listening. However, what they do not seem to be completely aware of, is the role of working memory and phonological short-term memory, and the difficulties stemming from the deficits SEN students have in these areas. In both the survey and the interviews, only a few teachers saw vocabulary (both learning and recalling), and pronunciation as areas causing trouble. However, as Kormos and Safár (2008) point out, difficulty in storing words and retrieving the ones already learned from memory are among the most problematic issues for SEN students. In fact, some of the problems perceived by the teachers to be the most pronounced (e.g. problems with writing or reading and comprehension), have their roots in the students' difficulties with learning and recalling vocabulary. As per pronunciation, one of the cognitive functions most affected in SpLD learners is phonological awareness. Hence, this group is also likely to struggle in this respect (e.g. Zelinková, 2006). It is therefore rather surprising that a relatively high number of teachers (n = 28) reported being confident in their ability to teach correct pronunciation well to such learners.

As to which strategies teachers tend to view as most suitable, they generally seem to realise the benefits of the multi-sensory practices so-often recommended in the literature (Zelinková, 2006, Lexová and Tůmová, 2016, Delaney, 2016, Kormos, 2012) and it is also likely for most of them to be aware of the advantages of communicative activities or mind maps. However, only a relatively small number would consider drills to be a good strategy; and the vast majority will probably disagree with Lexová and Tůmová (2016) as to the appropriacy of using dictation.

In terms of teachers' perceived competence in working with SEN learners, our findings contradict those of Nijakowska's study (2014). According to her, the vast majority of teachers, irrespective of their teaching experience, would be interested in further training in the area of

teaching SEN students. Our results, however, reveal that teachers with the highest levels of general teaching experience do seem to show an interest. In addition, Nijakowska's research showed the teachers' self-reported competence in working with SEN learners to be poor, which was not the case in this study. The conclusions from our research are also only partially in line with those from the studies conducted by Pitnerová and Pančocha (cited in Žáková, 2015), Kormos and Nijakowska (2017), and those cited in Avramidis et al. (2000) as in our case, participation in courses appeared to be a factor contributing to a higher sense of self-efficacy, but in none of the cases analysed, it had a statistically significant effect. What, on the other hand, did turn out to be a significant predictor – at least in the case of working with ADHD students – was the teachers' degree of experience with SEN students.

Lastly, the findings concerning the opinions on inclusive education indicate that in reality, most teachers are likely to have mixed feelings in this respect. Although the answers given by the survey respondents were mostly positive, the interviewees, who had a chance to go deeper, seemed to hold more negative views. While in the case of the interviews, no particular patterns were detected – years of teaching experience, experience with SEN learners, and previous SEN education did not play a role – the questionnaire analysis yielded more interesting results. In the case of the latter, teaching experience turned out to be a significant predictor. The teachers classified as *moderately experienced* then turned out to be the most likely to feel positively, but also negatively about ADHD students being educated alongside their normally-developing peers. At first glance, our findings thus do not seem to agree with the research presented in section 4.2. as it suggests that teachers with more experience will be more negativistic towards inclusive educational practices. However, a direct comparison is not possible here as the research studies discussed in the section only compared teacher trainees with more experienced teachers; there was no "middle category" as was the case with our research.

10. Limitations

The study does, of course, have certain limitations. Firstly, all findings presented here are based solely on the teachers' self-reports. Thus, despite the fact that we tried to avoid potential biases (i.e. the *social desirability bias* and *the acquiescence bias*), they do not necessarily have to reflect the actual state of events. Second, with any interview study, the analysis is dependent on the subjective interpretation and judgements of the researcher. We used various techniques to obtain a higher degree of clarity – namely prompts and asking for clarification, be it directly or by means of reformulating the interviewee's statements and waiting for additional input – but errors due to misinterpretation could still have occurred. And last but not least, the sample size for the survey was relatively small. Hence, there is no guarantee that the conclusions reached will actually reflect the target population.

11. Conclusion

The study attempted to provide an insight into higher elementary school teachers' knowledge and opinions about SEN – specifically SpLD and ADHD – their approach towards SEN students, and their views on and experience with inclusive educational practices. We wanted to see if/how these were affected by the number of years of teaching experience, experience with SEN learners, and the teachers' level of education in the area of working with SEN students. The findings show that most teachers are aware that even at higher elementary school level, learning tends to be more difficult for SEN students than it is for their normally-developing peers. Moreover, it also appears teachers mostly possess at least some degree of knowledge about both general, and language learning-related difficulties SEN learners can experience at school. What, on the other hand, they seem not to be completely aware of, is the impact the students' deficits in general working memory and phonological short-term memory capacity has on their performance on certain skills (particularly vocabulary and pronunciation).

In addition, it seems likely for many teachers to approach SpLD and ADHD students in a different way; i.e. adapting their teaching style with the former, but not with the latter group. This is interesting given that, as far as our findings are concerned, most teachers are more inclined to believe that the problems stemming from the two learning difficulties do not differ significantly. A possible reason why this could be the case therefore is that the students do experience problems in similar areas, but the problems, in fact, manifest in different ways. The teachers then, perhaps, do not have sufficient training or experience in working with ADHD learners to know how to differentiate for them. Our conclusions seem to support this hypothesis, given that both the teachers who attended courses, and the teachers who had the experience perceived their competence in teaching ADHD students to be higher. From that it, therefore, follows that while experience was the more influential of the two factors, specialised seminars could also be of use to the teachers. As regards further training in this area, the findings from our study also show that a number of teachers – especially those who have less experience in general – would be interested. In addition, our results reveal that the teachers who are the most experienced in terms of teaching SEN learners, are also likely to show an interest in this respect. However, at present, the number of courses aimed at higher elementary school teachers, let alone those who teach languages, is insufficient; seminars focussing on teaching ADHD students then being particularly scarce. Thus, there seems to be a need for more specialised courses, especially those aimed at teaching learners with ADHD. As to what the focus of the seminars should be, both the interviewees and the survey respondents complained about the amount of extra work they had to do, when they had a student with SEN in the group. By implication, teachers would probably welcome practical strategies that would help make differentiation more manageable.

As regards the teachers' opinions on inclusive education, it appears that most teachers' feelings about inclusion are, in reality, more likely to be mixed, given the fact that the majority

of the survey respondents saw it in a more positive light, but the interviewees, who had a chance to go deeper felt more negatively towards it. Particularly in the case of ADHD learners, the opinions on their being included into/excluded from standard schools then seem to be affected by the teachers' overall teaching experience. The teachers that turned out the most likely to be positive, but at the same time the most likely to hold negative views, were then the ones with three to ten years of teaching experience (the *moderately experienced* group).

However, although the present study revealed possible trends and patterns, it only involved a small sample of the target population. Thus, more research is needed in order to validate the findings. As to the possible direction of future studies, given the scarcity of specialised courses, and given the fact that a number of teachers show an interest in further education, they could focus more thoroughly on teachers' needs. Such research would contribute to the development of quality courses which would help teachers improve in the required areas. Furthermore, consequent studies could also look into the differences in the teachers' attitude towards SpLD and ADHD learners. Specifically, they could attempt to find out more about the underlying causes of the disparity between the teachers' approaches towards the two groups of students, e.g. why they tend to differentiate for SpLD students, but not for learners with ADHD. The last posed question is then connected to the need for additional research into the teachers' actual classroom practices as the present study only provided the teachers' perspective, and therefore does not necessarily have to reflect the actual state of events.

SHRNUTÍ

Diplomová práce se zabývá výukou angličtiny studentů se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami (SVP), konkrétně specifickými poruchami učení (SPU) a ADHD, na druhém stupni základních škol. Jejím cílem je zjistit úroveň znalostí českých učitelů v této oblasti, jejich názory na inkluzivní vzdělávání a přístupy a strategie, které ve výuce studentů se SVP uplatňují. Práce si dále kladla za cíl zjistit, jaký vliv mají na výše zmíněné proměnné celková délka pedagogické praxe, celkové zkušenosti se studenty s SPU a ADHD a vzdělání učitelů v oblasti speciální pedagogiky – především absolvování specializovaných kurzů. Práce se skládá ze šesti hlavních částí – *teoretické, metodické, výzkumné, diskuzní, části popisující omezení* a *části závěrečné* – rozložených do celkem 11 kapitol. Kapitoly jsou dále členěny do sekcí a podsekcí.

První částí práce je část teoretická. Tato část popisuje teoretická východiska dané problematiky, jak je uvádí odborná literatura. Na jejím začátku jsou definovány speciální vzdělávací potřeby a je vymezena oblast zkoumání – výuka studentů s SPU a ADHD. Tyto dvě skupiny studentů byly zvoleny proto, že oblasti, které jim působí obtíže se příliš neliší. Pro jejich výuku tedy lze využít obdobné metody. V následujících dvou sekcích (2.4. a 2.5.) jsou obě dvě poruchy definovány zvlášť. Je také objasněno proč se, i přes celou řadu společných příznaků, jedná o poruchy odlišné – studenti, kteří mají ADHD nemají na rozdíl od žáků se SPU potíže se samotným osvojením dovedností, ale spíše s jejich prováděním.

Následující kapitola se pak zaměřuje na právě obtíže, se kterými se studenti se SPU a ADHD setkávají, a to jak v obecné rovině (např. motivace, nízké sebevědomí, poruchy laterality), tak konkrétně v oblasti učení se jazykům. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována pracovní paměti, jejíž kapacita je u studentů se SPU i ADHD omezená. Nejprve jsou dle Baddeleyho modelu popsány její jednotlivé složky a kognitivní funkce, jež ovlivňují. Následně se zaměřujeme na to, jak deficit v oblasti pracovní paměti ovlivňuje proces osvojování jazyků.

Studenti mívají problémy s výslovností a zapamatováním i vybavováním slovíček. Z posledně zmíněného pak plynou potíže v oblasti některých jazykových dovedností; zejména psaní a čtení. V následujících třech oddílech jsou popsány oblasti, jež rovněž bývají problematické, ale jež přímo nesouvisí s pracovní pamětí. Jednotlivé podsekce se věnují problémům s prostorovou orientací, úzkostem a nízkému sebevědomí, a motivaci.

Čtvrtá kapitola se pak zabývá konkrétně znalostmi, jež učitelé v oblasti SVP mají, jejich postoji, potřebami a názory na inkluzivní vzdělávání. Sekce 4.1. je věnována situaci ve světě; sekce 4.2 se pak věnuje přímo České republice. Studie zmíněné v první sekci ukazují, že učitelé celkově vnímají své schopnosti v oblasti výuky žáků se SVP jako nedostatečné. Dále poukazují na fakt, že většina z nich by měla zájem se v této oblasti dále vzdělávat. Někteří by preferovali specializované kurzy, jiní pak spíše materiály k samostudiu. V sekci jsou zmíněny i studie poukazující na pozitivní vliv specializovaných seminářů na to, jak učitelé vlastní schopnosti v oblasti výuky žáků se SVP vnímají. Co se týká názorů na inkluzivní vzdělávání obecně, většina učitelů má názor spíše pozitivní. Výzkumy pak poukazují na fakt, že zejména studenti učitelství a učitelé, kteří mají se studenty se SVP více zkušeností jsou inkluzi nakloněni. Pokud jde o Českou republiku, výzkum v této oblasti je zde nedostatečný; existuje pouze několik studií. Jejich výsledky se však víceméně shodují s těmi zahraničními.

V páté kapitole jsou představeny doporučené výukové metody. Strategií, která je v literatuře obecně nejvíce doporučována, je vícesmyslové učení (multi-sensory learning). Jak už název napovídá, při výuce probíhající v souladu s touto metodou se zapojuje více smyslů. Doporučuje se vizuální podpora, pohybové aktivity, vytleskávání slabik, rytmu, atd. V kapitole jsou zmíněny studie, které efektivitu vícesmyslového učení ve výuce žáků se SVP dokládají. Kromě vícesmyslového učení mezi další doporučované výukové strategie patří komunikativní aktivity, tvorba myšlenkových map či barevné značkování (colour coding). Nicméně ani tradičnější výukové metody (např. drilování, diktát) nemusí být pro tyto studenty nevhodné.

Naopak, zábavnější formy drilu jsou vhodné, jednak proto, že přispívají k automatizaci učiva, která studentům se SVP obecně působí obtíže, a jednak proto, že studenti mají možnost procvičovat látku, kterou už ovládají. Dril tak může přispět ke zvýšení jejich sebedůvěry. Navzdory obecnému přesvědčení pak nemusí být zcela nevhodné ani diktáty, pokud se studentům uzpůsobí (např. tak, že nemusí psát celý text, ale pouze doplňují slova či části vět). Zatímco sekce 5.3. se věnuje obecně doporučovaným metodám, sekce 5.4. prezentuje doporučení k výuce jednotlivých složek anglického jazyka, konkrétně výslovnosti a psaní slov, slovní zásoby, gramatiky, čtení, poslechu, mluvení a psaní.

V následné šesté kapitole je popsán tzv. individuální vzdělávací plán. Pozornost je věnována obsahu plánu i tomu, co z jeho doporučení vyplývá pro učitele. Sedmá kapitola pak představuje dostupné kurzy, a materiály (ve formě knih a webových stránek) pro druhostupňové učitele.

Kapitola osmá pak popisuje zvolenou metodu a předkládá výzkumné otázky a hypotézy. Pro výzkum bylo využito metod kvalitativních i kvantitativních. Sběr kvalitativních dat probíhal formou polostrukturovaných rozhovorů se čtyřmi druhostupňovými učitelkami angličtiny; dvě byly zkušenější, dvě pak méně zkušené. Kvantitativní výzkum byl realizován formou dotazníkového šetření. Po sběru dat následovala jejich analýza. Rozhovory byly „okódovány" v programu Nvivo. Na základě témat zmíněných v rozhovorech bylo vytvořeno 12 tematických kategorií. Tyto kategorie byly poté dále zpřesňovány. Následně jsme mezi sebou porovnali zkušenější a méně zkušené učitelky; na závěr jsme obě dvojic porovnávali mezi sebou. Pokud jde o dotazníkové šetření, odpovědi byly analyzovány za použití kvalitativních i kvantitativních metod. Kvalitativní analýza spočívala v kódování odpovědí na otevřené otázky. Kvantitativní analýza byla provedena formou několika statistických testů; konkrétně test Kruskal Wallis, test Mann Whitney a v případech, kdy ve zvolených neparametrických testech vyšly signifikantní výsledky či v případech, kdy se dal očekávat určitý stupeň variability (názory na inkluzivní vzdělávání), rovněž ordinální regrese. V případech, kdy nebyly

předpoklady ordinální regrese dodrženy, byly vyzkoušeny i jiné modely (např. multionomiální regrese či *gologit2*). Statistické analýzy byly provedeny v programech SPSS, Stata a R.

Devátá kapitola shrnuje poznatky z případových studií. Je rozčleněna v souladu s širšími tematickými kategoriemi. V každé kategorii porovnáváme názory a přístupy jak jednotlivých učitelek, tak obou zmíněných dvojic navzájem. Jak už bylo řečeno, dvě učitelky měly za sebou dlouhou pedagogickou praxi; dvě z nich pak učily poměrně krátce (jeden a tři roky). Tři z nich se se studenty se SVP údajně setkávaly téměř v každé skupině, kde učí. Jedna pak prý příliš mnoho takových studentů neučila; nicméně nutno podotknout, že sama přiznala, že se o to, kteří žáci mají specifické potřeby příliš nezajímá. Jedna ze zkušenějších učitelek navštívila specializované semináře, a snaží se v této oblasti vzdělávat studiem materiálů. Samostudium formou čtení materiálů pak zmínila i jedna z učitelek mladších. Ostatní dvě se z různých důvodů v této oblasti nijak nevzdělávají. Obě mladší učitelky však projevily zájem o účast na specializovaných seminářích.

Všechny dotazované měly alespoň základní povědomí, s jakými problémy se studenti s SPU a ADHD mohou potýkat. Dvě mladší učitelky pak vyjádřily názor, že obtíže se pro obě skupiny studentů liší. Všechny dotazované zařazovaly aspoň některé z obecně doporučovaných strategií, včetně více-smyslového učení. Zmíněna byla důležitost vizuální podpory a rovněž výuka formou her a pohybových aktivit. Obě dvě učitelky, jež zmínily hry, ale měly určité pochybnosti, zda je jejich zařazování vhodné. Zkušenější z nich se zdála být přesvědčená, že žáci často mají o hry zájem, nicméně především proto, aby se vyhnuli „skutečné práci". Mladší z nich pak vyjádřila obavu, že hry, které jsou doporučovány v učebnicích, často zahrnují zesměšňování, a druhostupňoví žáci, kteří prožívají období puberty, bývají v tomto ohledu obzvláště citliví. Všechny učitelky dále kladly důraz na vymezení dostatečného množství času pro komunikační aktivity. Obě dvě zkušenější učitelky pak rovněž zmiňovaly zařazování drilů. Všechny dotazované také pro studenty se SVP upravovaly systém hodnocení. Všechny údajně

bývají ve známkování benevolentnější; dvě mladší z nich pak rovněž zmínily, že preferují formativní hodnocení a že studentům nezapočítávají specifické chyby, tzn. chyby, jež plynou z podstaty jejich poruchy. Všechny dotazované si také uvědomovaly motivační funkci hodnocení; a pokud jde o motivaci obecně, obě dvě mladší učitelky dokonce vnímaly schopnost studenty motivovat jako jednu ze svých silných stránek.

Co se týče názoru na inkluzi, potenciální výhody dotazované viděly ve spolupráci žáků a budování vzájemného respektu; nevýhody naopak v příliš vysokém počtu žáků ve skupinách, v pomalém tempu práce a v potenciálním napětí mezi žáky způsobené tím, že žáci s SVP mají uzpůsobené testy či tím, že mohou ostatní žáky zdržovat. Celkově se dá říci, že se všechny dotázané učitelky stavěly k inkluzivnímu vzdělání spíše negativně.

Desátá kapitola shrnuje výsledky dotazníkového šetření. Stejně jako v případě rozhovorů, i zde vyšlo najevo, že učitelé mají aspoň základní povědomí o tom, s jakými obtížemi se žáci se SVP mohou potýkat. Nicméně se zdá, že si plně neuvědomují problémy, které v důsledku snížené kapacity pracovní paměti mohou žáci mít v oblastech výslovnosti a osvojování, a především vybavování slovíček. Stejně jako učitelky, které nám poskytly rozhovory, si i učitelé, kteří se zapojili do dotazníkového šetření, uvědomovali, které výukové strategie mohou použít, aby studentům se SPU výuku usnadnili. Dalo by se však říct, že některé výukové metody, které lze ve výuce těchto žáků rovněž využít, jsou vnímány spíše negativně. Nejvíce negativně se učitelé stavěli k zařazování diktátů. Co se drilů týče, názory na jejich ne/vhodnost se poněkud lišily. Na rozdíl od rozhovorů se však nezdálo, že by je jako vhodné vnímali pouze učitelé zkušenější.

Přesto, že se většina respondentů domnívala, že se obtíže u obou skupin studentů příliš neliší, byly zjištěny výrazné rozdíly v přístupu ke studentům se SPU oproti studentům, kteří mají ADHD. Většina učitelů se údajně snaží diferenciovat výuku pro první, nikoli však pro druhou skupinu. Příčinou by mohlo být, že přesto, že žáci skutečně mají obtíže v podobných

oblastech, projevy se pro obě poruchy liší. Vzhledem k obecnému nedostatku kurzů pro druhostupňové učitele – zvláště pro učitele jazyků – a s ohledem na fakt, že učitelé celkově vnímali své schopnosti v oblasti výuky studentů s ADHD hůře než v případě studentů se SPU – učitelé, kteří absolvovali kurzy lépe než ti, kteří žádný trénink neměli – je možné, že učitelé u studentů s ADHD nediferencují, protože si nevědí rady.

Zájem o semináře specializované na výuku těchto studentů by mezi učiteli byl. Podobně jako v případě rozhovorů projevili nejmenší zájem učitelé, kteří mají za sebou delší pedagogickou praxi; u méně zkušených učitelů byl zájem výrazně větší. Dále se zlepšovat pak chtějí i ti, kteří už mají s výukou studentů se SVP značné zkušenosti. Co se zaměření kurzů týče, učitelé by pravděpodobně uvítali praktické tipy ohledně přípravy diferenciované výuky; mnoho z nich si stěžovalo na příliš velký objem práce, který z uzpůsobování testů a materiálů plyne.

Na rozdíl od rozhovorů se názory učitelů na inkluzivní vzdělávání zdály být spíše pozitivní. Zmiňované výhody a nevýhody se příliš nelišily od těch zmiňovaných během rozhovorů, pouze s výjimkou oblasti vztahů se spolužáky, kterou na rozdíl od rozhovorů – kde učitelky svůj názor blíže nespecifikovaly – respondenti vnímali jako potenciálně problematickou pouze pro studenty s ADHD. Právě v případě těchto studentů se pak názory na inkluzi výrazně lišily. Z výsledků studie plyne, že se dá očekávat, že nejvíce učitelů, kteří jsou pro, ale i proti inkluzi těchto studentů bude patřit do skupiny učitelů středně zkušených (tři až deset let praxe). U této skupiny byla tedy zjištěna značná variabilita

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