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SWEDEN

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY INTO EFL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES WITH DYSLEXIC STUDENTS IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SWEDEN

Degree project in English studies

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Autumn 2019

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the awareness and experiences of L2 teachers of English in Swedish upper secondary schools with regard to dyslexic learners, with a focus on teaching strategies and feedback. The data for the study was collected through audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with three teachers of English. The data was then analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The results show that teachers are aware of dyslexia but lack the knowledge of required teaching methods and strategies to help the students develop their language skills. Teachers use process writing and sequential and cumulative methods when teaching English more than other methods. The findings from the interviews also suggest that teachers need more support to be able to teach phonemic awareness, as one of the most prominent problems for dyslexic students is phoneme-grapheme correspondence.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Swedish learners of English study the language as a mandatory subject from the first year of compulsory school to the second year of upper secondary school. According to the Swedish Curriculum for the upper secondary school, students should learn how to develop and acquire knowledge about the language so that they want, can and dare to use it. They should also learn different language strategies so they can use the target language more effectively, obtain awareness of how that language is used as well as be able to process their own and others' oral and written production (Skolverket, 2011). Students need to understand English in both written and spoken form to pass the different English courses. However, foreign language learning is generally perceived as hard, and for someone with a language disorder like dyslexia, it may be even harder due to different factors that possibly make the learning process slower. Based on this perceived difficulty, although I have been advised by some colleagues to disregard dyslexic students' spelling completely in both Swedish and English, I cannot stop wondering to what extent dyslexia inhibits their language learning.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Sweden comprise a diverse student population, including those who have special educational needs. Dyslexia is one of the most common learning disorders and it needs to be addressed in Swedish EFL classroom. According to The Swedish Dyslexia Association (n.d). There is approximately 1 child per class with dyslexia and there are several who have reading and writing difficulties. However, dyslexia is hard to diagnose with EFL learners because poor performance and lack of knowledge may just as well be due to poor general language proficiency and/or limited schooling (Elbro, Daugaard & Gellert, 2012). On the other hand, some teachers lack general knowledge about dyslexia, assessing dyslexic students, as well as linguistics (Goldfus, 2012; Nadelson et al, 2019; Rontou, 2012), thus making it more difficult to help and teach a dyslexic student to develop reading literacy, perception and articulation (Reraki, 2014).

According to the Swedish Law of Education (200:800), students are to be given the proper guidance and stimulation needed to develop themselves and their learning on the basis of their preconditions (SkolL 15:2 §). Students with special needs, educational dysfunctions and other problems that inhibit their ability to fulfil the knowledge requirements shall be given the help and support needed to counteract the consequences of that dysfunction or problem. If there are special reasons (such as dyslexia), teachers may disregard some knowledge requirements to be

able to give the student a grade (SkolL 15:26 §). This can be interpreted as teachers being allowed to disregard dyslexic students spelling errors when assessing and grading their written productions.

1.1 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While working as an upper secondary school teacher, I have come across dyslexic students and I have found that I lack knowledge about how to teach, asses and grade these students, especially when English is their second and sometimes even third language. Against this background, this study aims to investigate the methods used by a number of active English teachers when they come across EFL learners with dyslexia in Swedish upper secondary school. Among other things, it will explore how the teachers provide feedback to these students and what kind of materials they use to teach them.

The goal with this investigation is to provide information to those who are involved in the Swedish education system to understand how they can work with an EFL learner with dyslexia. The research questions that this study aims to answer are:

1. To what extent are the participating teachers aware of teaching methods for dyslexic learners of English in Sweden?
2. What strategies do the participating teachers use to help dyslexic learners of English in Sweden?

2 BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 READING, WRITING AND DYSLEXIA

Reading and writing difficulties refer to general problems regarding reading and writing whereas dyslexia is an inherited disability that makes reading and writing skills much harder to acquire. People with dyslexia tend to have problems with decoding and making an automatic connection between sounds and letters (The Swedish Dyslexia Association, n.d). Turner and Pughe (2003) divide dyslexia into three different levels: mild, moderate and severe. They say, however, that many dyslexic learners on all of the levels do, to some extent, grasp the basic mechanics of reading even though they tend to read more slowly and have some problems with

detailed reading as well as comprehending what they have read. This suggests that dyslexic students' biggest problem is spelling.

Spelling is an encoding skill whereas reading is a decoding skill. Encoding is the understanding of how sounds work to create words, how to deconstruct a word by sounds, remembering letter and sound correlations as well as how to combine letters on paper in order to create words. Decoding is the ability to recognise letters, associate sounds with letters, understand how sounds work together to create words and to combine them to create speech (Hall, 2001). To spell correctly, a person needs to be able to recall and reproduce words accurately from memory. This requires that the individual has a good visual recall of the words combined with good auditory discrimination as well as the awareness of how different sounds correspond and correlate with each other. These skills are what dyslexic learners often struggle with the most (Turner & Pughe, 2003). To be able to develop language skills, learners need to have a metalinguistic awareness which includes knowledge about phonology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics (Turner & Pughe, 2003). Lack of this type of knowledge may affect EFL learners of English (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

2.2 WHY IS ENGLISH IS SO HARD FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS?

The problems or weaknesses dyslexic students struggle with are a challenge for them in every language they want to acquire. However, people tend to have a general feel for their native language regarding how they are supposed to spell or pronounce certain words compared to a second language with different phonology and syntax (Crombie, 2000). According to The Oxford Royal Academy (2018) and Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal (2016), spelling in English is often seen as illogical by, and the biggest struggle for, EFL learners. The English language consists of a lot of homophones, which are words that are pronounced the same way but have different meanings and spelling. These words are what most language learners struggle with, and in combination with the fact that the rules regarding the correlation between spelling pronunciation do not always add up, it gets even harder for a dyslexic student to fully understand them and acquire good English reading and writing skills (Crombie, 2000; Goldfus, 2012). EFL learners often tend to spell words as they are pronounced, which often results in incorrect spelling (Crombie, 2000; Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016). So English is hard for every EFL learner, but for dyslexic students it is even harder because they often lack awareness of phonemes and graphemes (Philips & Kelly, 2016).

According to Lama (2019), dyslexic students may find it difficult to match letters with sounds, remember how words are spelt, and to memorise sequences due to English orthography. The orthography consists of 26 different letters that can be combined to reflect approximately 44 speech sounds. These speech sounds can be spelt in over 250 different ways, however. This requires that teachers possess enough linguistic knowledge to be able to provide adequate English education, yet Goldfus (2012) suggests that most elementary school teachers do not possess enough linguistic knowledge of that sort. However, according to Nadelson et al. (2019), elementary school teachers are more aware of dyslexia compared to other teachers, thus making the learning context unsustainable/incoherent between levels of education. However, both Nadelson et al. (2019) and Rontou (2012) argue that teachers generally lack knowledge about dyslexia and teaching methods for dyslexic students, even though elementary school teachers seem to be more aware of dyslexia than others. They tend to hold on to myths and misconceptions of the diagnosis, such as dyslexia is letter reversal or that words are jumping around, which can affect their choice of teaching methods (Nadelson et al., 2019).

2.3 TEACHING METHODS FOR DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

The lack of linguistic knowledge among the teachers and the impact of myths and misconceptions regarding dyslexia may possibly affect students' preconditions for acquiring knowledge, especially in the context of language learning. When teachers assess dyslexic students, it is important to look at them from a holistic perspective. This means that the teacher should look at the students' strengths, weaknesses, self-concept, interests and preferred methods of learning (Reid, 1998). By understanding the individual student's learning conditions, teachers may pick a teaching method that helps the individual to learn, hence develop and maintain the student's motivation, self-esteem, knowledge and interest. It is important to understand that all learners are different, even if they belong to a group with common difficulties (Reid,1998). There are multiple ways and teaching methods that can help dyslexic students to acquire and develop knowledge, however these methods are often beneficial for all students as most students need structure and help to acquire knowledge (Mitchell, 2014).

2.3.1 Multisensory strategies

The use of multisensory strategies, according to Reid (1998), is about activating all of the senses simultaneously. This means that the students should listen, speak, watch and write in

order to learn. Reid (1998) advocates that it is a good teaching method to use together with a focus on students' metacognitive skills. Philips and Kelly (2016) suggest that a multisensory approach can help develop students' brains, specifically their tactile channels and their neural pathways, because a multisensory strategy will help the students to understand how to sort and link information as well as transfer short-term memory to the long-term memory.

2.3.2   Over-learning and Automaticity

Over-learning and Automaticity are methods that focuses on repetition and reinforcement. These methods are used to acquire and develop the students' memory (Reid, 1998). Students' lack of automaticity in their native language combined with impaired memory make the students' more prone to errors regarding sentence structure and errors and blanks within those structures This happens due to a dyslexic learner's difficulties with identifying phoneme-grapheme correspondence and identifying different syntactic patterns in languages (Schneider & Crombie, 2012). Schneider and Crombie (2012) argue that lack of automaticity in correlation to phonetics, affects a dyslexic learner's ability to understand and identify "idiomatic expressions, humour, jokes, homonyms, homographs, homophones or metaphors in proper discourse in the foreign language" (p. 7).

2.3.3   Highly structured and phonetically based teaching

Highly structured and phonetically based teaching is used to generate students' cognitive skills with extra focus on their reading ability. This is similar to the multisensory strategy because it focuses on helping the students to make their cognitive skills interact with each other. The focus is on the memory, vision, oral and auditory skills needed for reading and reading comprehension (Reid,1998). According to Philips and Kelly (2016), dyslexic students often have difficulties with phonetical awareness, which hinders their learning. The authors suggest working with phoneme-grapheme correspondence as well as verbal rehearsal strategies and with teaching rhythm. Crombie (2000) writes that this method may include specific training where the students listen to phonemes and try to identify them. Through identifying phonemes, students get a better understanding of phoneme-grapheme correspondence (Philips & Kelly, 2016).

2.3.4   Sequential and cumulative

This strategy focuses on providing structure to the students' learning by helping them to master sub-skills such as scanning and skimming in reading. This method helps the students to learn how to find keywords or important information in texts quickly (Reid, 1998). Gomez (2008) states that most teachers fail to teach these skills to their students, which affects their reading

comprehension and therefore also their knowledge and writing. Reading comprehension can be developed through strategy training, which is when students learn how to read a text in efficient ways to acquire knowledge (Gomez, 2008).

2.3.5 Process writing

Process writing focuses on processing written production. This means that students write the first draft of a text, receive feedback and then revise their text in multiple steps. This is used to help teachers and students to notice deficiencies and achieve a learning curve (Jakobsson & Nilsson, 2011). Process writing can also be used to make teachers and students able to set up specific goals so that the students understand every step of the writing process (Seow, 2002), and to develop the students' encoding skills. Process writing can help the student acquire phonological awareness if the feedback focuses on acquiring that precise skill. Process feedback is also necessary in order show progress and development as it may affect the students' perception of self (Jakobsson & Nilsson, 2011).

2.3.6 Metacognitive strategies

This strategy focuses on helping the students to develop metacognitive skills (Mitchell, 2014), including their ability to visualise, memorise, associate, analyse, find keywords and think about thinking. According to Mitchell (2014), this method is useful for students that need help with understanding how they learn. He also suggests that this method can make reading more meaningful and help the students to transfer learning between situations. Through advancing reading, students will comprehend reading materials much better and become more direct in their learning (Gómez, 2008).

3 METHOD AND MATERIAL

3.1 METHOD

The method used to conduct this study was qualitative content analysis (Haddow, 2017) and the data was collected using semi-structured interviews with 3 teachers at different upper secondary schools in Sweden. The interviews included questions regarding their years of experience, their experience with dyslexic learners of English, their methods and materials for teaching as well as how they provide written feedback to the students. The interview questions can be found in Appendix.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The teachers were selected through convenience sampling and were contacted via e-mail. They are teachers of English as a second language for Swedish students. One of the teachers is also an English teacher for native speakers, so s/he was asked to exclude those cases where s/he has had dyslexic native speakers to make the data focused on EFL learners with dyslexia. The interviewed teachers in this study work at upper secondary schools in Sweden: one worked at a vocational programme, one at a theoretical programme preparing students for university studies, and one at an International Baccalaureate programme. The teachers' years of teaching experience varied from 10 to 40 years and they all had varied experiences of dyslexic students. Teacher 1 (T1) has worked for 40 years, Teacher 2 (T2) for 25 years and Teacher 3 (T3) for 10 years. T1 and T2 included undiagnosed students in their answers, who they were convinced had dyslexia, while T3 included only diagnosed students.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES

The data for this study was collected through audio-recorded interviews with the teachers, conducted at the teachers' schools. The interviews were done in English which is why there are unidiomatic formulations in some of the quotes. The interviews lasted between approximately 35 and 60 minutes. The interview questions as well as some follow-up questions were prepared beforehand. The follow-up questions were used to request elaboration and clarification, to help the teachers expand on their answers and to make them repeat what they said to confirm the information. The interviews were transcribed to facilitate the identification of themes in the data.

3.4 ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE

I transcribed the audio files, categorizing the responses, comparing the responses of each participant to those of the others, and finally compiling similar responses under the same themes. Upon reading and listening to the interviews, I noticed different patterns where the teachers' answers correlated to each other and sometimes where they had different opinions. Their answers were divided into different categories that correspond to the two research questions formulated in the introduction section. These categories were later divided into four themes that summarise the analysis. This in-depth approach to the collected data provided me with rich insights into the participant teachers' awareness and knowledge on dealing with dyslexia in EFL classrooms.

3.5 ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

To ensure that the study followed the principles of good research ethics I consulted Vetenskapsrådet (2017). Participation was fully voluntary, and the teachers were informed that they could end their interview at any time. They were also informed that the interview would be anonymous and that neither the name of their school nor its geographical position would be mentioned in the study.

4 FINDINGS

The themes emerging from the interviews will be presented in four sections: awareness and indicators (4.1), examination (4.2), teaching strategies (4.3), and feedback (4.4).

4.1 AWARENESS AND INDICATORS

The interviews revealed that all three teachers use diagnostic tests with all of their students when they start upper secondary school to get information on what level they are on, and if someone may have dyslexia or other difficulties. T1 and T2 use both written and oral examinations:

> The first thing they do for me when I get a new student, I interview them: that is a verbal exercise, and then they write a letter to me. That is my diagnosis for everybody: what level are they on. (T1)

T1 uses both oral and written means to identify dyslexia. By making the students write a letter, the teacher is looking for signs of systematic spelling mistakes to diagnose dyslexia. T2 uses a similar method of noticing dyslexia:

> In the beginning of first grade [of upper secondary school], we make a diagnostic test; from the score you get a hint. Then you talk to the students after that. (T2)

T2 also uses written and oral means. Even though these tests are done with all of the students and are a good way of monitoring their educational level and difficulties, they also help the teachers spot systematic errors that are not normally committed by students without dyslexia. In response to the question regarding how they spot dyslexia, all of the teachers agreed that it is observable in the students' writing. T1 pointed out that they may do "odd spelling mistakes

that are not common" (T1) and that these spelling mistakes are often repetitive. T2 and T3 also said that the students often commit "spelling mistakes that are not normal" (T2). All of the teachers said that the students' mistakes are often seen in the writing, and more specifically seen when they write English as it sounds, thus indicating that the teachers are aware of what type of spelling mistakes a dyslexic student may make and why. However, T2 and T3 mentioned that dyslexia may be noticed in other aspects of written language as well such as "word order. The verb is in the wrong place for example" (T3) and "on word levels, sentence level but also on text level" (T2). T2 and T3 indicated that dyslexic students' difficulties with spelling may affect other linguistic aspects such as word order and sentence structure (i.e. syntax), and T2 mentioned that even though s/he is allowed to neglect a dyslexic student's spelling errors according to the Swedish Law of Education (SkolL 15:26 §), s/he may not neglect from other linguistic features such as word order and sentence structure while grading students' papers, which may result in a lower grade.

4.2 EXAMINATION

While the assessment of dyslexic students may differ from what is normally done, due to their tendency to write English as it sounds, the teachers' way of examining them does not differ compared to what they do with other students. T1, T2 and T3 all mentioned that they "try to examine them as I examine everyone else" (T2) by letting them "do the same as the others" (T3). T1 explained that s/he " don't treat them differently in the sense that I don't exclude anything" (T1), stating that s/he lets the dyslexic students do the same assignments and tasks as the rest of the class, and that the assessment may differ. T2 and T3 mentioned that the only difference regarding examination is the time. T3 said that "when it is time to write something, they would be given additional time" (T3) and T2 exemplified by saying that "they get more time for writing tests for example, and the same with reading" (T2). This indicates that the teachers are aware of the longer time that reading and writing a given text may take for a dyslexic student. It is not the understanding of an assignment that is difficult, it is the execution. However, because it may be difficult for the students, T2 said that "Avoiding is quite common, that they avoid reading. They avoid writing because it is hard" (T2). The avoiding has sometimes led to students not handing in assignments at all, resulting in a lower or non-passing grade. While the teachers agreed that the examination of dyslectic students should not be different compared to that of other students, T2 mentioned that close reading may be harder

for the former, which often results in them guessing or not answering a question, which in the end will affect their grade as teachers are supposed to assess everything the students do.

4.3 TEACHING STRATEGIES

Even though the teachers have noticed that reading comprehension is a challenge for dyslexic students, they do not use any specific material for teaching. T1 said that she uses "nothing particular" and T2 explains that the reason for not changing the material is because "the materials designed for dyslexic people are a little bit too childish for the students. To avoid using adapted assignments, T3 said: "I'm trying to get them across with the same kind of assignments that everyone else would do" (T3). The materials the teachers use to help dyslexic students "get across" or to develop language skills include digital tools. Digital tools are often used at upper secondary schools and most students have a laptop that they receive from the school. T3 pointed out that:

> They are allowed to use digital tools to improve their writing skills and, hopefully, that
> will help them to get a bigger sense of what they should focus on (T3)

T3 uses digital tools in order to help the students notice what mistakes they repeat and what type of writing pattern they may have. T3 does this through 'Grammarly', which is an app extension for Google Chrome that corrects spelling mistakes and alerts writers to grammatical issues such as word order errors and passive voice misuse. All teachers mentioned that students often write their assignments on a computer and T2 explained that dyslexic students have SpellRight and Stava Rex installed by the special education teacher in order to help them with their spelling. Of course, the students may also have difficulties with reading, which is why T2 and T3 use and app called AppWriter, which is an app that reads texts out loud to its users. T2 and T3 said that this app may be used by all students in the classroom, but it is not possible to use during the national test. T2 explained that the reading comprehension part in the national test is not done with a computer, so dyslexic students take the test in a smaller group with the assistance from a special education teacher. Regarding writing assignments in the classroom, T2 said that s/he lets the students re-write things in order to help them develop their texts:

> When it is time to write something again, they get their text back and then they can see
> what types of mistakes that they made and try to avoid it the next time. (T2)

Both T2 and T3 works in a similar way when it comes to extracting English knowledge – both of them walks and talks with their students during lectures:

> I go around in the classroom and look at their texts, on their screens, give them feedback on how maybe you can move this part. I try to give them response in the process of writing. (T2).

> I walk around, and I talk. Smalltalk. Anything that I can to extract knowledge, in English. (T1)

T3 on the other hand, focuses on providing "writing guidelines" and "a specific framework" to those students who need special education. These methods or ways of working indicates that all three teachers use process writing and sequential and cumulative methods more than other methods.

4.4 FEEDBACK

Students may receive feedback orally in the process of writing; however, teachers also give them feedback on hand-in assignments that receive a grade. The feedback is often in digital form and for T2 and T3 it is in writing. T1, on the other hand, has the possibility to provide oral feedback through recordings:

> On [our school platform] I can send sound files and I do it very often. You can also film yourself, or you can film whatever you want, voice is more important. (T1)

T1 often chooses to record themselves when giving feedback to students with dyslexia because they can have a hard time to read and understand written feedback. S/he mentioned that "voice is more important" and that students do not have to see her give the feedback, only listen to it. This may be a better way for the students to understand the feedback given to them as they do not have to read. This is a feature that should be included on all platforms as it is, according to T1, more time-efficient and an easier way for dyslexic students to understand and process the feedback. T2's and T3's written feedback is done digitally, which helps them avoid misunderstandings due to poor handwriting. However, T2 mentioned that s/he often takes extra time to give dyslexic students oral feedback or explain something further: "with a dyslexic student I very often take that time" (T2). Oral feedback to dyslexic students is experienced by T1 and T2 as more efficient for dyslexic students' language development, otherwise the teachers would not take that extra time to provide it. T3 only provides written feedback "in digital form, in google docs" and rarely explains their feedback orally. The teacher has 'only'

worked for 10 years, which may be why s/he does not think as much about how written feedback relates to the students' understanding and their difficulties, and that oral feedback may be worth the time in order to help them develop.

5 DISCUSSION

The findings show that the teachers are aware of dyslexia and use diagnostic tests at the beginning grade 10 to identify the students' level of English as well as to be able to notice if someone has dyslexia. This indicates that upper secondary school teachers, at least within the limits of this study, have general knowledge about dyslexia in contrast to what Nadelson et al. (2019) and Rontou (2012) claimed. However, the results also support Nadelson et al. (2019) and Rontou's (2012) claim that teachers often lack knowledge about different teaching methods for dyslexia. Furthermore, the findings showed that teachers are fully aware of the fact that dyslexic learners of English often write the words as they sound (Crombie, 2000; Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016; Lama, 2019; Philips & Kelly, 2016), but they never work with methods or strategies to overcome this obstacle. Instead of teaching e.g. phonemic awareness in order to help the students, the teachers apply the Swedish Law of Education and just ignore the dyslectic students' spelling completely, or, in one case, do not assess their writing at all. This may be due to the teachers' lack of adequate linguistic knowledge (Goldfus, 2012); however, further evidence is needed to support this claim. Nevertheless, the teachers may not grade or assess dyslexic students' spelling, yet they differentiate between spelling mistakes and syntactic mistakes while grading – a student with poor grammar may receive a lower grade even though they are dyslexic because it is only spelling that may be excluded from assessment, which suggests that the teachers do have linguistic knowledge but may lack knowledge about how to teach linguistics. Instead of teaching techniques to the students so that they can learn how to spell English even with dyslexia, teachers use digital tools and applications to help students become better writers, but also to make it easier to read a dyslexic student's texts.

While today's modern technology may be a great asset for people with reading and writing difficulties, there is a whole other discussion about how it may affect memory, production of melatonin and dopamine as well as other organs and body parts (Digital responsibility, 2019). Nevertheless, the use of technology for better writing may influence the students' capability to produce a written text without the aid of a spelling programme, thus hindering the development

of that language skill (Hall, 2001). Then again, it may also help the students to notice their mistakes and patterns and therefore make them more aware of them. However, teachers should teach the students phonemic awareness as it is the biggest obstacle to overcome regarding writing a text in English (Philips & Kelly, 2016). Phonemic awareness is not something the programmes help with; therefore, teachers should educate the students on this matter as it will help them make fewer spelling errors when writing both digitally and by hand. In fact, knowledge about phoneme-grapheme correspondence is vital for understanding language structure in general, so this knowledge will also contribute to students' understanding of their native language as well as other languages they may be interested in learning. While it may be problematic to exclude a student with difficulties from the ordinary education, it may sometimes be needed depending on how much of a problem reading and writing are for them. It may be better to focus on teaching encoding and decoding (Hall, 2001). Nevertheless, to be able to study at an upper secondary school in Sweden, the students must have a passing grade in English from secondary school. However, there have been cases where the passing grade is not justified due to different factors. It may be the case that an unqualified teacher works as a substitute teacher and gives the student an undeserved passing grade. Grades have to be confirmed by a certified teacher, but as time is a factor in educational routines, it is possible that the qualified teachers do not double-check a grade, resulting in some students getting to study at an upper secondary school even though they lack prerequisite knowledge.

It is clear that teachers are aware of dyslexia and typical signs of dyslexia but that they lack knowledge about different teaching methods and strategies that can help the students develop their language skills. Teachers have multiple ways of obtaining an impression of the students' English proficiency, and they do so by walking around in the classroom, talking to the students, and giving them different assignments related to the curriculum. Most of the strategies are used with all of the students and the most common ones for developing writing skills are writing guidelines, digital tools and feedback. This suggests that the teachers use process writing (Jakobsson & Nilsson, 2011) and sequential and cumulative teaching strategies more than the others presented in the literature review (see section 2). While these strategies are good ways of teaching reading and writing to students, they do not provide enough support for dyslexic students that write words as they sound. The strategies focus mainly on understanding what has been read and structuring a text to convey a message rather than helping the dyslexic

students with their spelling. By including assignments and exercises that focus on helping students understand phoneme-grapheme correspondence, rhythm and developing of cognitive skills (Crombie, 2000; Philips & Kelly, 2016; Reid, 1998), teachers can use highly structured and phonetically based strategies that may help students to write and read more easily. Although the interviewed teachers evaluate the students from a holistic point of view and point out that communication is the key to finding out strengths and weaknesses, it may not be reasonable to assume that they never work with other strategies to develop their students' language skills. It is also possible that different frame factors, such as time, assets, and economy, may affect teachers' choices and their teaching methods.

6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to reveal teachers' awareness of dyslexia and what methods and materials they use while teaching English to EFL learners with dyslexia at upper secondary school in Sweden. Using qualitative content analysis of interviews, it has been shown that the participating teachers are aware of dyslexia and use process writing and sequential and cumulative methods more than others when teaching English. A limitation of the study is that it was carried out with only three upper secondary school teachers, thus making it difficult to generalize the findings. It is possible, for instance, that the teachers in our sample do not teach phonemic awareness to their students because they may lack the knowledge themselves. It can thus be suggested that future research should include more teachers in order to be able to draw more comprehensive conclusions. Research that employs quantitative and mixed-methodological perspectives may bring further insights as well.

All in all, this study suggests that teachers are aware of dyslexia but lack methods and strategies for teaching dyslexic English language learners. To expand teachers' knowledge about dyslexia, schools may have in-service professional development days where, for example, researchers and lecturers can present different methods for teaching English to dyslexic learners. Teachers may also want to include phoneme-grapheme correspondence in their instructional practices as this knowledge can help all students to develop their writing and understanding of the English language. On another note, teacher education programmes should include suggestions on how to work with language development for dyslexic learners, so that

new teachers have the knowledge when they start working at a school. This would be beneficial for the whole education system as dyslexia is a common disorder in schools.

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APPENDIX

1. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

2. How long have you been a teacher?
3. How many students have you had with dyslexia?
4. What language skills are most affected by dyslexia?
5. How do you notice/suspect that a student is dyslexic?
6. What is a good way of approaching a dyslexic student about their difficulties?
7. How do you examine a dyslexic student?
8. Do you have a preferred way of examining dyslexic students?
9. How do you provide written feedback to a dyslexic student?
10. What do you do to help a dyslexic student to develop their language skills?
11. What kind of teaching material do you use for dyslexic students?
12. Is there anything that you would like to add?