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Pedagogická fakulta

Diplomová práce

2017   Bc. Kateřina Klingerová

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Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

Angličtina a SPU

Diplomová práce

Autor: Kateřina Klingerová

Studijní program: N7503 Učitelství pro základní školy

Studijní obor: Učitelství pro 2. stupeň ZŠ – anglický jazyk a literatura

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Zadání diplomové práce

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Název diplomové práce: **Angličtina a SPU**

Název diplomové práce AJ: ELT and SpLD

Cíl, metody, literatura, předpoklady:

Práce se bude zabývat specifickými poruchami učení (především dyslexií) a tím, jak se tyto SPU projevují v souvislosti s angličtinou. Práce bude mít dvě části, teoretickou a praktickou. Teoretická část se zaměří na definici a charakteristiku SPU/dyslexie, dále projevy a možnou diagnostiku dyslexie (učitelem angličtiny) a následný proces pomoci (případně také reedukace) žáků se SPU/dyslexií. Praktická část bude obsahovat drobný výzkum. Práce je psána anglicky.

Matějček, Z.: Dyslexie, SPN 1998 Pokorná, V.: Teorie a náprava vývojových poruch učení, Portál 2010 Zelinková, O.: Poruchy učení: specifické vývojové poruchy čtení, psaní a dalších školních dovedností, Portál 2003 Zelinková, O.: Cizí jazyky a specifické poruchy učení, Tobiáš 2005 Michalová, Z.: Specifické poruchy učení na druhém stupni ZŠ a na středních školách, Tobiáš 2004 Jošt, J.: Dyslexie, Grada 2011 Reid, G.: Dyslexia, Bloomsbury Publishing 2011 Krupska, M.; Klein, C.: Demystifying Dyslexia, London Language & Literacy Unit, 1995 Pumfrey, P.; Reason, R.: Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia), Routledge 1992 Westwood, P.: What Teachers Need to Know About Reading and Writing Difficulties, ACER Press 2008

Anotace:

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá specifickými poruchami učení a výukou anglického jazyka na druhém stupni základních škol. Teoretická část začíná představením specifických poruch učení, jejich definicí, klasifikací, charakteristikou, příčinami vzniku a diagnostikou. Další část práce představuje právní rámec vzdělávání žáků se specifickými poruchami učení. Teoretická část se také zaměřuje na metodologii výuky anglického jazyka a charakterizuje pojetí jazyka v Rámcovém vzdělávacím programu pro základní vzdělávání. Dále jsou zde popsány přístupy, principy, postupy a metody vhodné pro vzdělávání žáků se specifickými poruchami učení. Tato část také zahrnuje ukázky aktivit, které lze ve výuce angličtiny použít. Praktická část vychází z rozhovorových průzkumů prováděných mezi učiteli na druhém stupni základních škol doplněných o pozorování v hodinách anglického jazyka. Tato část diplomové práce se zabývá přístupy k žákům se specifickými poruchami učení v hodinách angličtiny na druhém stupni základních škol.

Garantující pracoviště: Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury a oddělení francouzského jazyka,
Pedagogická fakulta

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Pavla Machová, M.A., Ph.D.

Oponent: Mgr. Olga Vraštilová, M.A., Ph.D.

Datum zadání závěrečné práce: 27.11.2014

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala (pod vedením vedoucího diplomové práce) samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne ……………….. ....

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že diplomová práce je uložena v souladu s rektorským výnosem č. 1/2013 (Řád pro nakládání se školními a některými jinými autorskými díly na UHK).

Datum:…………………………   Podpis studenta:…………………………….

Poděkování

Na tomto místě bych chtěla poděkovat vedoucí mé diplomové práce Mgr. Pavle Machové, M.A., Ph.D. za odborné vedení práce, poskytování rad a připomínek.

Anotace

KLINGEROVÁ, Kateřina. *Angličtina a SPU*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2017. 103 s. Diplomová práce.

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá specifickými poruchami učení a výukou anglického jazyka na druhém stupni základních škol. Teoretická část začíná představením specifických poruch učení, jejich definicí, klasifikací, charakteristikou, příčinami vzniku a diagnostikou. Další část práce představuje právní rámec vzdělávání žáků se specifickými poruchami učení. Teoretická část se také zaměřuje na metodologii výuky anglického jazyka a charakterizuje pojetí jazyka v Rámcovém vzdělávacím programu pro základní vzdělávání. Dále jsou zde popsány přístupy, principy, postupy a metody vhodné pro vzdělávání žáků se specifickými poruchami učení. Tato část také zahrnuje ukázky aktivit, které lze ve výuce angličtiny použít. Praktická část vychází z rozhovorových průzkumů prováděných mezi učiteli na druhém stupni základních škol doplněných o pozorování v hodinách anglického jazyka. Tato část diplomové práce se zabývá přístupy k žákům se specifickými poruchami učení v hodinách angličtiny na druhém stupni základních škol.

Klíčová slova: specifické poruchy učení, SPU, dyslexie, anglický jazyk, metodika

Annotation

KLINGEROVÁ, Kateřina. *ELT and SpLD*. Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, 2017. 103 pp. Diploma Degree Thesis.

This diploma thesis deals with specific learning difficulties and English language teaching at lower secondary schools. The theoretical part begins with an introduction of specific learning difficulties, their definition, classification, characteristics, causes and diagnostics. Next part of the diploma thesis introduces the legal framework of learners with specific learning difficulties. The theoretical part also focuses on methodology of English language teaching and characterizes conception of foreign languages in Framework educational programme for basic education. Furthermore, approaches, principles and methods suitable for education of pupils with specific learning difficulties are described in this section. This part also includes examples of some activities that can be employed in English language classes. The practical part is based on interview surveys conducted among teachers of English at lower secondary schools accompanied by observations of English lessons. This part of the diploma thesis deals with attitudes to pupils with specific learning difficulties in English classes at lower secondary schools.

Keywords: specific learning difficulties, SpLDs, dyslexia, English language, methodology

Content

Introduction

This diploma thesis deals with specific learning difficulties and teaching English at lower secondary schools. The necessity of being familiar with the basic issues of specific learning difficulties can be indicated by the current situation at elementary schools as specific learning difficulties are present in almost all the classes. On that account, even the English teachers must be competent in this issue since learning foreign languages is believed to be one of the most demanding for pupils with specific learning difficulties. Additionally, the subject of the thesis is topical because integration and inclusion are much emphasized in the present-day teaching. A plenty of publications are focused on this issue and many pedagogues are concerned with the topic.

The significance of specific learning difficulties at present time was decisive for the choice of the topic. Moreover, the choice was influenced by two subjects I attended during my university studies. Subjects called Special education and English for dyslexics encouraged me to further study of this topic.

The main aim of the diploma thesis is to introduce specific learning difficulties in general as well as in the context of English language teaching. The objective of the practical part is to describe the attitudes of English teachers to pupils with specific learning difficulties and to provide an overall picture of their situation.

The diploma thesis is divided into theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part starts with specific learning difficulties and it tries to provide a general and complex overview of the phenomenon. On that account, the theoretical part focuses on terminology, definition, classification, characteristics, causes and diagnostics of SpLDs. The second chapter is dealing with legal documents related to education of pupils with SpLDs. The next chapter is focused on characterizing English and foreign language learning in general. The last chapter is dedicated to particular teaching principles, techniques, and approaches. A few examples of activities that can be employed in English classes are included too.

The practical part is based on the research. The fifth chapter provides description and analysis of the research conducted among lower secondary English teachers.

All the sources that were used in this diploma thesis are listed at the end of the thesis in Bibliography section. The term specific learning difficulties is frequently abbreviated to SpLDs. To prevent repeating only this abbreviation, phrases like dyslexic pupils or learners with difficulties are sometimes used.

I Theoretical part

The theoretical part begins with an introduction of specific learning difficulties, their terminology and definition. It also deals with classification and characteristics of specific learning difficulties. Finally, the theoretical part focuses on causes and diagnostics of these difficulties.

1 Specific learning difficulties

To start with I would like to emphasize the importance of dealing with the phenomenon of specific learning difficulties as it is focused on reading, writing and counting skills that are a prerequisite for education and orientation in the world.

This chapter is going to give a brief summary of specific learning difficulties including difficulties with defining the phenomenon. As many specialists have been concerned with specific learning difficulties, several definitions with various points of view have been published. It follows that there is a terminological disunity.

Specific learning difficulties are a really broad term as it covers many features of different levels of learning difficulties with various types of symptoms. On the top of that, it is necessary to point out how individually the learning difficulties manifest and there is usually quite a great difference even between two people who have been diagnosed.

1.1 Terminology

On the issue of terminology, it is not fully unified not only in Czech but also in English scientific literature. There are several authors using a variety of terms. Terms such as *Specific learning difficulties*, *Specific learning disabilities* or just *Learning disabilities* are the most widely used ones in the scientific literature written in English. Moreover, the terms *Special educational needs*, *Special developmental dyslexia*, *Dyslexia* or *Specific reading retardation* comes in use. (Pokorná, 2010a, p. 59-60)

Such terminological disunity is quite humorously illustrated by Cornwall, Hedderly and Pumfrey (1984, in Pumfrey, Reason, 1992, p. 15 [online]) talking about the situation of learning difficulties in the United States. It is noted that:

"If a child diagnosed as dyslexic in Philadelphia moved to Bucks Country, ten miles north, he would be called a child with language disorder. In Montgomery Country, Maryland, a few miles south, he would be called a child with special or specific language problems. In Michigan, he would be called a child with a perceptual disturbance. In California, he would be either a child with educational handicaps or a neurologically handicapped child. In Florida and New York State, he would be called a brain injured child. In Colorado, the child would be classified as having minimal brain dysfunction." (Cornwall, Hedderly and Pumfrey in Pumfrey, Reason, 1992, p. 15 [online])

A terminological disunity might be justified by the fact that specific learning difficulties are typical of a huge variety and diversity of symptoms and forms. The issue of the disunity is one of the frequently discussed topics of most authors dealing with specific learning difficulties. For instance: Schneider and Crombie (2003), Reid (2016), Westwood (2004) and many other writers. Furthermore, currently, specific learning difficulties are not only a matter of pedagogy or psychology but also linguistics, developmental psychology or neurology. (Pokorná, 2010a. p. 61) This implies that each of the specialists tackles the issue from a different perspective, from their own point of view.

Regarding terminology, Pokorná (2010a, p. 59) points out that there are terms of dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthographia or dyscalculia that are subordinate to specific learning difficulties. In view of the fact that dyslexia is the best known and most researched, it is often used as a cover term for other difficulties including mostly reading and writing. Consequently, a greater attention must be paid when using or manipulating with the term dyslexia as it might signify both a roof term for all specific learning difficulties and the particular one learning difficulty.

In this diploma thesis, I am going to use term specific learning difficulties when talking about them in general. The terms dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysorthographia or others are going to be used as sub terms when pointing to each of them separately. The same terminology is also used by Pokorná (2001, p. 61) as she wants to respect a terminology that is widely prevalent and firmly established among our research, pedagogical, advisory and parental or public community. The term specific learning difficulties is preferred by Czech authors, for example by Pokorná (2010a), Matějček (1995), Zelinková (2003, 2005), Michalová (2004) as well as by the authors of the

English speaking world, for instance by Pumfrey and Reason (1992), or Westwood (2004).

To simplify the term and save space, specific learning difficulties are going to be abbreviated to *SpLDs*.

1.2 Definition

Naturally, terminological inconvenience is reflected in characteristics and definition of the problem. Definitions of specific learning difficulties, especially definitions of dyslexia, have undergone a significant change since attempts of the first definitions up to the present. Such change is reflecting the development of different disciplines and authors' attitudes to the phenomenon. There is a huge number of different definitions of specific learning difficulties usually stressing something different as they are formulated by various authors and specialists with their own and different opinions and points of view. (Zelinková, 2003. p. 16)

When dealing with a process of defining SpLDs, there is also a noticeable development of research in this subject area. The very first definitions appeared at the end of the 19th century. Their main purpose was to describe a newly discovered experience and raise the issue. Initially, the first definitions used to cover only difficulties with reading, later it included also writing and then counting. (Pokorná, 2010a. p. 68)

The very first works about SpLDs were written by medical doctors (physicians) who particularly placed emphasis on neurological or neurological psychological attitude of SpLDs. In this regard, a brain damage was a reason of inefficiency (insufficient achievement) in some school activities. (Pokorná, 2010a, p. 68) The medical approach to specific learning difficulties includes also a psychological and specially-pedagogical point of view and it stresses even personality traits – for example, performance motivation, impulsiveness, emotional lability, nervousness, low self-esteem, concentration disorder etc. (Pokorná, 2010a, p. 69)

Concerning the issue of defining specific learning difficulties, it is essential to mention Zdeněk Matějček as he was a world-renowned child psychologist, who was dealing, among other issues, with specific learning difficulties.

As there is an enormous amount of definitions, it is no wonder that there has been an attempt to find the most appropriate one that would express the most the sense of the difficulties. It is worth noting an experiment of D. D. Hammill. Hammill chose 28 books dealing with special educational needs that were used as instructional texts for teachers' training and were published between 1982 and 1989. There were 11 definitions included in these books. When comparing them, Hammill identified 9 conceptual elements:

1) "Underachievement determination;
2) Central nervous system dysfunction aetiology;
3) Process involvement;
4) Present through lifespan;
5) Specification of spoken language problems as potential learning disabilities;
6) Specification of academic problems as potential learning disabilities;
7) Specification of conceptual problems as potential learning disabilities;
8) Specification of conditional problems as potential learning disabilities;
9) Allowance for the multi handicapping nature of learning disabilities." (Hammill, in Pumfrey, Reason, 1992, p. 15 [online])

In the end, he comes to a conclusion that the nature of specific learning difficulties is well expressed by the definition of National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities and he proposes the definition as being "...probably the best current descriptive statement concerning the nature of learning disabilities." (Pumfrey, Reason, 1992, p. 18 [online]) For this reason, I have chosen to use it in my thesis. The definition states:

"Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunctions, and may occur across the life span. The problem in self-regulatory behaviours, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbances) or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or

inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions of influences." (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities 1988 in Pumfrey, Reason, 1992, p. 17 [online])

As the definition says, specific learning difficulties include a lot of symptoms and a series of skills can be affected. It is not only related to reading and writing but also activities like speaking, listening, reasoning and counting can be influenced. The definition also stresses an individual nature of learning difficulties which means that these difficulties manifest differently from one case to another. Another fact is that they are caused by dysfunction of central nervous system. It is also important to point out that behavioural and social problems may be embodied in learning difficulties but they themselves do not comprise them. All in all, the definition tells us that SpLDs go through the whole scale of the curriculum.

As far as I am concerned, for the purpose of this diploma thesis, it is enough to mention the definition of National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities as it is really detailed and elaborated one.

Specific learning difficulties can be found at different levels (from mild, through moderate to severe disorders). As it was mentioned above, there are different types of SpLDs (such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, etc.) However, they rarely occur in so-called pure types with difficulty only in one area. More frequently, they appear in a combination of more of them. Moreover, they are often combined with specific behavioural disorders (ADHD Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and ADD Attention deficit disorder). These facts make the education and teaching-learning process very complicated.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that specific learning difficulties may negatively affect not only the education and teaching-learning process but also children's personal development. Furthermore, they can influence children's social adaptation and their lifelong personal or career orientation.

As it was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, SpLDs can't be defined unequivocally. A lot of researchers are dealing with this phenomenon and they look on in from their own professional point of view. Such plurality of reasons is not always as wrong as it might seem to be. Rather, SpLDs can be judged from different viewpoints and it results in mutual enrichment of individual approaches and it also

makes the problem more complex. What's more, a plurality of attitudes and its complexity is a key to finding new impulses for remediation of SpLDs. (Pokorná, 2010a, p. 73)

1.3 Classification and characteristics of SpLD

Specific learning difficulties are called *developmental*. It means that they are conditioned by the development and they arise at a certain level of pupils' development. They usually appear at younger school age when children start attending school and certain demands are placed on them. They are of a continual character which signifies that they are changing during the development. SpLDs are not primarily connected with a sensory disability or retarded intellectual development. Developmental is the opposite of *acquired*. Acquired learning disabilities are principally caused by brain damage. (Michalová, 2004, p. 14)

As it was mentioned before, specific learning difficulties are a root term for a variety of individual disorders and this chapter is going to look further into those particular types of specific learning difficulties, especially dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dysorthographia. In practice, however, all the disabilities are closely related to each other and it is not always necessary to deal with them separately. Beyond that, dyslexia is basically used as a term that includes also the next two disabilities mentioned because dyslexia was discovered and explored first. Dysgraphia and dysorthographia were developed consequently.

Basically, SpLDs affects pupils' ability to learn in the same way and level as their classmates who do not experience any learning difficulty. As SpLDs are focused on such basic skills as reading and writing, it goes throughout the whole curriculum and it has a negative impact on most of the school subjects, English included. At-risk pupils then have evident difficulties keeping up with the class or they have difficulties with home study.

It is really important to have at least some basic information about SpLDs as dyslexic pupils may be wrongly labelled as slow, lazy, inattentive or even stupid. It is no surprise that also behaviour and emotions are affected by SpLDs and so social relations and development. Dyslexic pupils then often suffer from inferiority complex and feel misunderstood. (Zelinková, 2003, p. 41)

1.3.1 The Importance of reading, writing and counting

In general, reading, writing, and counting are skills that are often not appreciated enough. However, all of the skills are fundamental not only to education but also to everyday understanding and orientation in the world. There are many people who are still not fully aware of how much they actually use these basic skills. At present, mobile phones, calculators, emails and lots of other devices are expected to be used instead of traditional handwriting or counting. Information might be obtained from TV or videos. Nevertheless, this is not exactly true.

Having difficulties in these skills leads to quite a demanding life as a man usually must depend on others, disguises or conceals his disability. Such troubles may finally result in inner conflicts and frustration.

Concerning reading, it is common knowledge that reading is essential for personal development. It is a source of information and also a way of relaxation. Mertin (in Daňová, 2008, p. 9) states that reading enriches man's cognitive, emotional and social aspect. Reading also provokes an emotional process, imagination or memories. Moreover, reading provides an opportunity to identify with any hero, any environment or any time. Finally, reading helps us to expand vocabulary, both active and passive, it makes our self-expression better and it has a positive effect on the development of thinking. Seeing how words are used in different contexts also provides a better understanding of the word usage.

There are also several basic functions of a book or any kind of text in man's life as Smetáček (in Daňová, 2008, p. 9) mentions. The first function is connected with entertainment as reading is a relaxing activity which enables people to break away from everyday reality and stereotypes. By means of reading people have an opportunity to leave their troubles behind, reduce tensions temporarily and escape to their own world of illusions, wishes, and needs, even for a short while. To continue, it is fundamental to mention an informative function of reading. Not only it provides any kind of information, but it might also confirm or refute readers' opinions and attitudes. Smetáček (in Daňová, 2008, p. 9) also speaks about the aesthetic function of reading as books or any piece of writing help us to perceive various ways of artistic expression.

All in all, reading is a vital component of everyday life. To be able to read, it is essential to read right and with comprehension (to comprehend a text). Reading comprehension is a basic precondition of new knowledge acquisition. It makes reading entertaining, enables us to work with a text and provides individual's development.

Besides reading, it is also important to be able to express ourselves well by means of writing. When writing, we are sending a message about who we are and usually, we wish to make a good impression on a reader. For example, when applying for a job, taking written exams, sending letters or emails to someone we actually haven't met yet, writing essays, seminar papers and so on, a certain level of writing and expressing ideas is desired. Writing is not only about words. It comprises also grammar, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation etc.

Regarding counting, it might seem to be the most expendable skill. Exactly the opposite is true. As Pokorná (2010a, p. 159) states, maths does not mean only arithmetic. Understanding mathematical relationships helps us to organize our lives and time better. An acquaintance of such mathematical relationships is essential also to orientation in space, depth and speed perception, planning any kind of work or activity. (Pokorná, 2010a, p. 159)

1.3.2 Dyslexia

Generally, dyslexia is a reading disorder characterized by troubles with reading. A dyslexic child is not able to learn to read by means of common methods despite the fact that he does not suffer from an intellectual deficit. It is probably the most common and the best-known learning difficulty. It affects people throughout their lives as the ability to read belongs to everyday and inevitable routines.

When dealing with definition, it is not possible to choose the best one as the approaches to dyslexia have changed many times and there are lots of different viewpoint of it. As emphasized by Schneider (Schneider, Crombie, 2003, p. Ix), the difficulties caused by dyslexia vary a lot but still there is a set of common characteristics. The Czech definition of dyslexia was published by Matějček and Langmeier (in Matějček, 1995, p. 19) in 1960. Their definition says that:

"Developmental dyslexia is a specific defect of reading, caused by lack of some primary abilities that create a complex skill for learning through a certain educational

method. It usually appears at the very beginning of learning and causes that reading skill is permanently in remarkable contradiction to examined level of child's intelligence."[1]

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) (Dyslexiaida.org 2017 [online]) provides another definition:

"Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge."

(Adopted by the IDA Board of Directors, 12 November 2002)

(https://dyslexiaida.org/definition-of-dyslexia/)

As the definition shows, dyslexia refers to a cluster of symptoms. Pupils with dyslexia often experience not only difficulties with reading but also difficulties with other language skills such as spelling, writing and pronouncing words. The core difficulty is with word recognition and reading fluency. Dyslexic people can have problems even with spoken language. Usually, they may find it difficult to express themselves clearly (to use right and suitable words) or to fully comprehend what others mean when they speak. Dyslexia manifests differently for each person and it depends on the variety of conditions and the effectiveness of any approach and remediation. (The International Dyslexia Association, Dyslexiaida.org 2017 [online])

Dyslexia has an influence on general issues of reading performance such as reading speed, accuracy, reading technique and comprehension. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 13) All these factors are closely related to each other. When a pupil faces a trouble with a letter and word decoding, he reads very slowly, his reading is confusing and he cannot comprehend clearly and so get the information. On the other hand,

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[1] „Vývojová dyslexie je specifický defekt čtení, podmíněný nedostatkem některých primárních schopností, jež skládají komplexní schopnost pro učení za dané výukové metody. Objevuje se u dětí obvykle od samých počátků výuky a působí, že úroveň čtení je trvale v nápadném rozporu se zjištěnou úrovní intelektových schopností dítěte."

excessive reading speed and rashness leads to incomprehension too. Consequently, he needs to read a text several times to get the meaning. Reading accuracy is focused on doing mistakes while reading. It means deducing or guessing words; omitting, adding or transposing letters or syllables; confusion with letters that look or sound similar. Reading technique refers to the way a pupil reads any kind of text. Incorrect decoding of letters induces recurring reading and it makes reading effortful and hesitant. This may have an impact on comprehension. Comprehension does not only refer to a text reproduction but also to an ability to work with a piece of text.

1.3.3 Dysgraphia

Dysgraphia is another one of specific learning difficulties. It is characterized by a difficulty with handwriting and graphic aspect of any written work generally. It is "a disorder of written expression." (Lindstorm in Westwood, 2008, p. 67 [online]) It affects both speed of handwriting and readability.

Dysgraphia affects written work and so: it looks poor, untidy, hard to read, or even illegible, even though there are enough time and attention devoted to the given issue. The font size is rambling/irregular, is too small or too big instead. It looks unorganized, with many crosses and sometimes the underlines are also ignored. Letters and words may be not finished or omitted and the distance between them is not regular. Common mistakes include irregular sizes, shapes and slant of letters too.

A dysgraphic pupil has troubles with remembering and copying the letter shapes as well as with punctuation. He usually disrespects the lines and margins. His writing is often very slowly; it is done with much effort, it takes a lot of time and it requires an excessive amount of energy. It is usually accompanied by self-talking. Another typical mistake is an atypical pen grip or convulsive finger grip. That is why dysgraphia may cause physical pain, makes handwriting very uncomfortable and stressful and so limits pupils' written expression.

All in all, the process of handwriting is so demanding that a pupil has a serious difficulty to focus on grammar and content. Finally, it can cause low classroom or home productivity and difficulty in focusing attention.

As The International Dyslexia Association (Dyslexiaida.org 2017, p. 1 [online]) states, "dysgraphia can interfere with a pupil's ability to express ideas. Expressive writing requires pupil to synchronize many mental functions at once: organization,

memory, attention, motor skill, and various aspects of language ability." A similar fact is reflected by Westwood (2008, p. 56 [online]). According to him, written language is one of the most difficult skills to be acquired as it requires a complete coordination of various cognitive, linguistic and psycho-motor processes.

Dysgraphia is caused by underdeveloped motor skills, poor eye-hand coordination, and poor muscle tone. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 15) However, it is necessary to distinguish dysgraphia from a poor handwriting caused by extreme pressure put on pupils by teachers. In the case of such pressure, pupils are trying to keep up with teacher's pace and their handwriting is badly affected. Generally, a decline of pupils' handwriting is mostly connected with a switch to lower secondary school as the requirements are much higher. As Zelinková says, pupils at lower secondary school are supposed to write faster and much more than at primary school. Not being able to cope with teacher's demands the pupils get under pressure and it makes their handwriting poorer. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 15-16)

1.3.4 Dysorthographia

Dysortographia is a learning disability specific to writing. It is usually described as a difficulty to "...recognize, understand and reproduce written symbols." (Dyslexia, dysorthographia, 2013 [online]) It is often paired up with dyslexia and therefore, its symptoms are close to those of dyslexia, but oriented on problems with writing.

Dysortographia interferes with a pupil's ability to spell and write correctly. Concerning spelling, dysorthographia affects all spheres of spelling:"...grammar, conjugations, and sentence and word construction." (Dyslexia, dysorthographia, 2013 [online]) It makes writing slow, complicated and accompanied by frequent errors which include reversal of letters, syllables or additions and omissions. Usage of strange or nonsensical letter combinations is no exception. Spelling errors made by dysorthographic pupils are often characterized as bizarre as there is usually little or no connection between letters they write in a word and the sounds they make. Therefore, it is sometimes said that the spelling mistakes made by dysorthographic pupils are qualitatively unlike the mistakes made by pupils who are weak at spelling. Moreover, dysorthographia also includes troubles with copying words correctly

when writing. Such frequent and extraordinary interruptions are so severe that they make identification of words challenging for anyone, even for a teacher.

Regarding slowness of writing, dysorthographic pupils often face up to several difficulties. Their written work takes much more time than that of ordinary ones. This is probably a result of "...an inability to develop automaticity in spelling." (Westwood, 2008, p. 67 [online]) It does not matter how many times they saw or used the particular written form, spelling is not entirely fixed in their mind. Such inability makes writing and spelling slow and pupils then cannot manage to keep up with their mates, complete assignments on time and their overall performance is decreasing.

Besides spelling disability, dysorthographia affects working with grammatical rules, particularly an application of grammatical rules. Afflicted pupils are usually able to cope with grammatical rules as such. However, they may struggle with the application of rules. They often apply them incorrectly or according to their own specific patterns. According to Zelinková (2003, p. 43-44), such problems are caused by weakened language and speech development or different levels of cognitive functions and processes such as automation, working memory, fast recalling etc. In addition to this, Michalová (2004, p. 18) speaks about insufficiently developed auditory perception including auditory memory, analysis, synthesis, or audio-motor coordination. Not being able to use much of rules automatically, the issue of lack of time emerges on the surface again.

It is important to point out that there are certain differences between Czech and English languages, especially the orthographies. Concerning the English orthography, it is perfectly described by Reid (2016, p. 31-32 [online]. The English orthography belongs to less transparent ones since there is no, or very low and rare correspondence between letters (written symbols or graphemes) and sounds (phonemes). It means that "...a letter may represent several sounds; a particular sound may be represented by different letters depending on the context within which the letter or sound is presented." (Reid, 2016, p. 31-32 [online]) On top of that, there are also silent letters which are not pronounced at all together with other exceptions and irregularities. Therefore, the English orthography is really challenging and demanding for Czech pupils learning English as a foreign language.

1.3.5 Summary

To sum up this part, all the symptoms and characteristics mentioned above can indicate dyslexia, dysgraphia or dysorthographia. Nevertheless, this does not mean that anybody who is contended with such problems must be necessarily diagnosed as afflicted. Similar troubles may be caused by a psychological or intellectual issue. Therefore, pupils who display some of those symptoms should be referred to a specialist who is competent (qualified) to assess the conditions and give his opinion on particular problems.

Dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dysorthographia do not only afflict reading and writing but also cognitive processes, pupil's social relation, and generally, the whole personality.

1.3.6 Other SpLDs – Dyscalculia, dysmusia, and dyspinxia

Besides the three best known specific learning difficulties mentioned above, there are also others which are, as compared with those, rarer and relatively new in research. We are talking about dyscalculia, dysmusia, and dyspinxia.

Dyscalculia is a difficulty in learning or comprehending arithmetic. As stated by Michalová (2004, p. 23) it is characterised by troubles with understanding, manipulation and processing numbers, numerals, and numerical operations. Dyscalculia also affects the skill to acquire mathematical terms, understanding and doing certain operations which are often learned by heart. In the case of memory failure, a pupil makes unusual mistakes. He is not able to follow the symbolism of numbers and work with an abstract thinking. Generally, there are more types of dyscalculia and then different fields of mathematical skills can be influenced, geometry included.

Concerning dysmusia, it is an inability to distinguish differences in pitch, to recognize or reproduce tunes, rhythm, and music in general. Relatively, it belongs to specific difficulties occurring more frequently. However, it has not as serious impact on learning as dyslexia, dysgraphia or dysorthographia. (Michalová, 2004, p. 24)

Since those two difficulties do not directly have to do with English language teaching, it is not necessary to be concerned with them in more detail. Although songs and singing are a part of a language lesson quite often, it is not a perfect

musical performance on which the main emphasis is put. Songs are usually included to give a certain message, show a piece of grammar or illustrate particular vocabulary or phrases.

Finally, dyspinxia is also important to be mentioned. It is probably the one of those three which can be most affecting English language lessons because various drawing exercises, maps or plans are commonly used and made during lessons. Dyspinxia is a drawing abilities disorder. According to Matějček (1995, p. 93), the basic symptoms of it are a low level of drawing, an inability to depict certain objects themselves or to depict them age adequately, an incapability to copy and imitate a particular object. Simply, the overall act of drawing looks prominently primitive. Dyspinxia is quite closely related to dysgraphia. Just as dysgraphia, dyspinxia results in a wrong manipulation with a pencil, an atypical pen grip or convulsive finger grip.

1.4   Causes of SpLDs

This section of the thesis is aimed at the issues on account of which specific learning difficulties are caused. There is no need to deal with this matter in much detail. On the other hand, this section should not be omitted completely because each teacher, even the English one, should be familiar with the basics of this issue. Moreover, the causes of SpLDs must be mentioned to complete the overall picture of specific learning difficulties.

For every teacher, it is essential to know what the origins of difficulties are. Only then he is capable of understanding not only the troubles his pupils have to face up with but also their feelings which are very important too.

In the following part, some theories are going to be presented since there is no official agreement among scientists and educators. The causes of SpLDs are probably multidimensional as Pokorná (2010a, p. 77) states in her book. In this respect, I am going to outline briefly some of the theories to show a wide range of opinions. However, this topic is still a subject of research.

Generally, three contemporary and most common explanations of SpLDs are to be presented. This includes biological, cognitive, and environmental approaches. First, however, it is essential to speak about internal conditions for skill acquisition and describe the issue of Czech research.

1.4.1 Internal conditions for skill acquisition

At the very beginning of this part of the thesis, I would like to focus on the fact that we cannot work on the assumption that there is the only and single ability for any skill. I am going to use reading as an example. As Matějček (1987, p. 60) says, being able to read, a lot of basic particular functions (such as visual and auditory memory, feeling the rhythm, time and space sense etc.) must be in harmony. Therefore, any skill must be first developed and a particular maturity is also needed.

In regard to the matter of development and maturity, Matejček (1987, p. 60-61) describes three occurrences or cases that may arise. The first one speaks about ordinary people where all the basic functions are synchronized and so the reading skills are ready to be learned. Then particular aptitudes and preconditions gradually turn into abilities which are the inner psychological basis for a given skill to be acquired. Always, a certain level of psychological development is demanded when learning anything.

In other cases, the basic functions are normally organized but their development, maturation, and transformation into abilities are slower, delayed and imperfect. This is the case of so-called pseudo-dyslexia. Pseudo-dyslexia may appear as a result of child's low intelligence, neglect in a family, long or frequent absence from classes, child's lack of interest, teacher's incompetence, improper approach application, etc. Even though such children are not dyslexic they still need a helping hand to overcome their problems.

The last example is focused on developmental dyslexia. In this case, the basic functions are organized in another way or are disrupted; some of the key components are either missing completely or are developed poorly. This is probably caused by genetic mechanisms or damages to brain structures before, during or short after birth. Owing to this, the particular psychological functions cannot be working properly.

It is then obvious that the individual functions evolve in different ways, mature at different rates and consequently, their efficiency may be various at the same level of child's development. It is believed that the individual components are well-developed and coordinated between the age of six and seven. This age is appropriate for reading or writing skills to be learned. However, if something does not work, problems arise. Such problems are usually the first symptoms of a dysfunction. It is

important to note here that the problems themselves do not indicate whether we deal with a dysfunction or disrupted, delayed or uneven development, as Matějček (1987, p. 62) points out. Therefore, a diagnostic examination helps us to clarify the given situation.

1.4.2 Czech research of SpLDs

In the history of the research of specific learning difficulties there used to be two main attitudes. The first stated that SpLDs are of hereditary origin, the second emphasized brain damages. The approach of Czech authors is based on a research of O. Kučera from 1960's. Many of the Czech authors still commonly refer to it, for example, Michalová (2004, p. 25). In the 1960's O. Kučera presented his findings from a group of first diagnosed dyslexic people at Children Psychiatric Hospital in Dolní Počernice, Prague. He worked on a thorough analysis of individual cases and according to this, he distinguished four basic causes of dyslexia. (Matějček, 1995, p. 76)

As Matějček (1995, p. 77-78) states, the first group is called encephalopathic with almost 50 per cent of cases. This group is characterized by a mild brain damage obtained before, during or early after birth. The next one is hereditary with about 20 per cent of dyslexics. There is an obvious evidence of a disorder occurring within close relatives of dyslexic children. Within the third group, dyslexia is caused by both heredity and brain damage and so is named hereditary-encephalopathic. This one stands for about 15 per cent of diagnosed children. The last one belongs to a neurotic or unclear category with 15 per cent.

This systematic classification of causes used to be an undoubted progress of that time. As mentioned at the beginning these categories are still used even though they have been deepened.

1.4.3 Biological attitude to SpLDs

This approach is aimed at biological causes of specific learning difficulties. There are different points of view; therefore this section is going to be divided into parts. As Pokorná (2010b, p. 67) states, It is already documented in European and American scientific literature that dyslexic difficulties are related not only to the education of mother tongue but also of foreign languages. Therefore, she says that

learning difficulties do not depend on the language since there are various reasons why they appear.

Genetic influences

The influence of heredity and genes is an object of research. It is believed that man's genetic material is comprised of thousands of genes. In this context, Zelinková (2003, p. 21), Schneider (2003, p. x) or Reid (2016, p. 19) point out the conclusive evidence that SpLDs are not matters of one single gene but at least several crucial genes. Such genes are probably combined with other factors and collectively contribute to the occurrence of SpLDs. However, it is still not evident which concrete genes they are. There are also opinions dealing with a particular chromosome as being responsible for the transfer of SpLDs (Zelinková, 2005, p. 5; Reid, 2016, p. 19; Jošt, 2011, p. 168). A lot of studies have been also done on twins (see Pokorná, 2010a, p. 80; Pokorná, 2010b, p. 69; or Matejček, 1987, p. 68). Nevertheless, any exclusive role of genetic factors has been proved.

This approach implies that pupils whose brothers, sisters or parents have been identified with dyslexia or dyslexic difficulties may experience the same or similar difficulty. These so-called at-risk pupils should be then given a special interest. What is positive on this is that those parents who were able to cope with their own troubles successfully have a better chance to manage the same with their children.

In connection with this issue, Pokorná (2010b, p. 68) also mentions Olson's opinion. Olson has convicted that genetic factors are closely related to family traditions. He claims that genetic influence is not sufficiently proved. According to him, within a family, a certain way of life is handed down, including reading attitudes and habits. A good and positive attitude to reading usually depends on parents' relation to reading and education generally. This suggests that a manifestation of genetic predispositions is affected by the given environment. However, it is still not clear what the proportion between environmental and genetic influences on specific learning difficulties is.

Neurological influences

There are numbers of researches and findings focusing on the neurological point of view. Since the subject of the thesis is not dealing with causes of SpLDs themselves, I am not going to go into great depth. The crucial thing is that this issue

is connected with functioning and structure of the brain. As described in Zelinková (2003, p. 22-23) and Jošt (2011, p. 138) a brain of a dyslexic pupil has a different structure and functions than a brain of a child with no disability. Such dissimilarities reflect into different ways of learning. It cannot be said that a dyslexic brain works worse or better but it works in a different way.

Furthermore, Matějček (1995, p. 45-46) and Jošt (2011, p. 138) speak about differences in the size of brain regions, about the diverse cooperation of brain hemispheres, about a dominance of one of the hemispheres or about a certain brain damage in prenatal, perinatal and postnatal periods.

1.4.4 Cognitive attitude to SpLDs

Impairment in cognitive processes is one of the most commonly used approaches to explain specific learning difficulties. On a level of cognitive processes, Zelinková (2003, p. 26) distinguishes several areas in which a discrepancy might have an impact on learning. The areas include phonological and visual deficit, problems with memory, speech and the process of skill-automation or a combination of deficits.

Concerning phonological deficit, its presence has been proved by most of the dyslexic pupils. In relation to this issue, Pokorná (2010b, p. 79) speaks about phonological processing as an ability to distinguish and analyze speech aurally. Any speech consists not only of individual sounds but also of words and sentences. The individual sounds are blended together as a speech is usually fluent. Undoubtedly, the ability to distinguish the words in a sentence as well as the sounds of the words is essential for successful acquisition of writing skills. Besides this, phonological awareness is a widely discussed issue related to SpLDs. Phonological skills are important for learning to read and spell. As described by Westwood (2004, p. 94-95 [online]), a learner with SpLD "...seems to have difficulty in all aspects of phonemic awareness (identifying sounds within spoken words) and in undertaking the alphabetic principle (that letters and letter groups represent the sounds of language)...." On the other hand, phonological awareness is defined as "...as inability to understand how words can be decomposed into sounds." (Westwood, 2004, p. 77 [online]) Since there is the imbalance between graphemes and phonemes, a dyslexic child finds it difficult to read. A much bigger problem appears when there are some

unknown words present in a text and a child cannot guess the meaning out of the context.

The ability to distinguish shapes of letters and their order is essential for correct reading. If the ability is weakened we are talking about the visual deficit. Such deficit probably results from eye movements of dyslexics whose eyes are uncontrollably moving on a page when trying to fixate a word. (Zelinková, 2003, p. 27)

Regarding the automation and memory, they can be put into a close relation. Dyslexics also have difficulties with recalling and retrieval of information (words or letter-sound correspondences) quickly from memory. Finally, it may influence the ability to name pictures, objects or letters rapidly. (Westwood, 2004, p. 77 [online])

1.4.5 Environmental attitude to SpLDs

Lastly, with a view to providing a complete picture, it is quite important to mention the environmental influences even though they are usually not regarded as the primary causes of specific learning difficulties. There is no definite rule saying that every dyslexic child is at the same time negatively influenced by the environment he lives in. However, the environment may have some kind of influence on SpLDs.

Among the Czech authors, Pokorná (2010a, p. 88) is one of them who is dealing with this issue and she divides it into family environment conditions and school environment conditions. Regarding the family environment, Pokorná focuses on a general social position of a family, a level of education achieved by parents and an emotional climate of a family. According to Pokorná (2010a, p. 90), the crucial factors are parents' interest, support, and expectations connected with child's performance as well as their own attitude to school and education in general. Concerning the school environment, she emphasizes the importance of a high level of our schools which is mostly dependent on an overall school management and teachers' way of working. (Pokorná, 2010a, p. 91)

As for the foreign authors, Westwood presents the following possible influences on learning difficulties (collated from Chan, 1998; Cheng, 1998; MacMillan & Siperstein, 2002; Naparstek, 2002; Westwood, 2003) that usually appear in various combinations:

- "Inadequate or inappropriate teaching
- Irrelevant and unsuitable curriculum
- Classroom environment
- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Poor relationship between student and teacher
- Poor school attendance
- Health problems
- Learning through the medium of a second language
- Loss of confidence
- Emotional or behavioural problems..." (Westwood, 2004, p. 54 [online])

Essentially, the above-mentioned influenced are similar or even the same as those in Pokorná but they are expressed by more concrete terms.

Undoubtedly, all the stated influences and factors should be taken into consideration not only by teachers but also by parents and their children and everyone should try to avoid them. Finally, if a child experiences some difficulties even though none of these factors is present, a deeper interest should be taken in him because a SpLD is more likely to be a threat.

According to Jošt (2011, p. 179-180) who specializes in dyslexia, reading depends on the interaction between a hereditary disposition and the environment a child is growing up in. He does not directly speak about heredity but he uses term heritability. Concerning reading, the conclusions made in his book show that the environment (especially family) influences children's grammar and vocabulary range. On the other hand, features like fast object naming or phonological awareness are rather influenced by heritability.

Nevertheless, the environmental influences are contrary to the definition of SpLDs by *National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities* presented in one of the previous sub chapters where such factors are not taken into account when dealing with SpLDs.

1.4.6 Pseudo-dyslexia

A similar view is taken by Matejček (1995, p. 97-98). With regard to the above-mentioned environmental factors, he speaks about pseudo-dyslexia. Matějček defines pseudo-dyslexia as a disorder which is not based on a deficiency or disruption of the primary/basic abilities as is the case with SpLDs. Pseudo-dyslexic pupils are characterized by a generally lower level of their performance at school. (Matějček, 1995, p. 97)

Matějček (1995, p. 97) describes two types of reasons related to pseudo-dyslexia. Firstly, he focuses on the internal causes that appear as a delayed intellectual development (= mental retardation). The delayed intellectual development has consequently an effect on child's development in general, ability to learn included. Secondly, he speaks about the external causes which are the environmental factors stated by Pokorná or Westwood. There are quite a few of them such as a tense situation in a family or at school, poor school attendance, didactically or pedagogically inappropriate teaching, a relationship between teacher and pupil, neglect in a family, poor health or diseases, bilingual family education.

However, Matějček takes the environmental influences into account too. He states that some of the basic functions might be disrupted by the action of some of the external or environmental factor. He even proves the opinion on a number of studies made at Children Psychiatric Hospital in Dolní Počernice, Prague. (Matějček, 1995, p. 98)

Of course, even pseudo-dyslexic pupils should be provided support, care, and attention. However, a remediation is aimed differently from dyslexic ones. In many cases, it is not easy to distinguish between dyslexia and pseudo-dyslexia since the problems of both are often similar.

To sum it up, the external factors pose quite an unpleasant circumstance but are not the main cause of specific learning difficulties. Generally, it is said that SpLDs are unlikely to be caused by a single factor. There are probably more factors involved.

1.5　Diagnostics of dyslexia

Diagnostics is a crucial point of any difficulty, disease or problem. Therefore, a sub chapter focusing on diagnostics cannot be missing. Diagnostics sets up the basis of steps that should be following, especially remediation. The importance of diagnostics of SpLDs can be regarded from various points of view, such as an affected child's, his parents', his teachers' and his peers' viewpoint. From the perspective of the child, diagnostics helps him to understand what is wrong with him, why it is happening to him and why he is other than his peers. Mainly, any diagnostics is a tool that should show him the way how to overcome and face up with the difficulty. In the case of parents, it also helps them to understand not only the particular difficulty but also their child's situation and feelings. Diagnostics shows them the importance of support and care that must be given to their child. In the context of teachers, diagnostics should change their attitude to a dyslexic child and suggest the following required steps (for example special teaching methods and techniques etc.) that should be taken for a successful remediation and better school performance.

To sum it up, diagnostics is a fundamental issue that provides the important facts about any SpLD. It shows what aspects causing a SpLD are affected and what impact they have on a child and his performance. Finally, several proposals for a successful remediation should be given. Diagnostics itself is totally pointless if there is no remediation following.

1.5.1　Diagnostics as an interdisciplinary issue

In the previous chapters, I was trying to characterize the specific learning difficulties and refer to the variety of their etiology and symptoms. It is important to bear this fact in mind when talking about diagnostics of specific learning difficulties as the diagnostics is not a matter of the only single person or branch of science. It is an interdisciplinary issue.

It is essential to proceed from the elementary definition of dyslexia that says that dyslexia is a disorder of reading learning. Considering this, we have to find out the quality of child's reading and discover whether the inability to read is based on the issue of psychology or whether it is a consequence of any sensual defect, disease or other conditions. Next investigation is focused on child's study results, the way he or

she is educated at school, his or her intelligence and the impact of the environment. Finally, the basic cognitive abilities must be checked by consistent psychological examination. It follows that when diagnosing dyslexia, a cooperation of pedagogy, psychology, medical and social disciplines is necessary. (Matějček, 1987, p. 118)

To sum it up, the diagnostics of dyslexia consists of 3 primary stages:

- First, it is essential to detect if it is really a question of developmental dyslexia, not false.

- Furthermore, a detailed analysis of the particular case is done to find out the following issues: the source and the type of the disorder, its characteristics and characteristics of mistakes the child is making.

- Finally, it is significant to deal with all the conditions and circumstances that are important for the consequent correction and child care. This stage includes acquiring information about child's personality, interests, and attitudes, about his or her family background and a possibility to cooperate with family as well as accessibility and possibility of remedial assistance.

The three stages mentioned above basically represent the sense of diagnostics as it helps a particular person to overcome any obstacles and to be integrated into ordinary society without noticeable troubles. (Matějček, 1987, p. 119-120)

1.5.2 Labelling or not?

Whenever giving any diagnosis, there is a question whether it is only a label or if it helps too. Is it all right to label someone with a particular foreign term? We are usually asking if a diagnosis can help or hurt someone. Matějček (1987, p. 29) states that in general discussions we come across both extreme opinions. The first one is against labelling as it is always discriminatory, wrong and humiliating. The second opinion takes it as a matter of course and necessity.

As far as I am concerned, the truth lies somewhere in between. Always it depends on a stance adopted on this issue. Any diagnosis can be beneficial as far as it is used as a kind of helping tool. This is the case of those who really desire to cope with a difficulty or to support someone with a difficulty. The diagnosed ones need to feel support not only from parents but also from teachers who both support and encourage them. Additionally, teachers should provide particular methods and techniques as well as any essential support measures recommended by the

specialists. However, it is sometimes misused by those who only want to get certain easements or benefits. This is the case of those pupils who do not intend to do anything with their difficulty but only want to get the mentioned easements and benefits (for example tolerant assessment etc.). In the case of teachers, pupil's diagnosis reduces teacher's responsibility for his lower school performance. Schools generally need their disabled pupils to be diagnosed since they may receive a financial contribution. The issue of finances is briefly commented by Pokorná (2010b, p. 160). Concerning parents, with a diagnosis they partially get rid of a pressure that is put on them by a school dissatisfied with their child's results. Besides this, a certain diagnosis is socially more acceptable and it alternatively excuses child's behaviour and worse performance at school.

To sum up this matter with Pokorná's (2010b, p. 164) words, diagnostics makes sense only if a systematic and effective remediation or therapy comes after. Without it, diagnostics is only a label. Pokorná (2010b, p. 165) compares it to medicine since a doctor also does not only make a diagnosis but gives a counsel to his patient and tries to solve his problem too. In addition to this, a therapy and remediation must be done in collaboration with all the insiders, including children, parents, teachers, and given specialists.

1.5.3 Teachers' role in diagnostics

When talking about diagnostics, teachers are usually an essential part of it. Teachers are undoubtedly the ones who are competent to express their opinions about child's performance at school. In general, teachers are the first who are able to find out that something is wrong. They have an opportunity to observe pupils over a long period, assess any signs of progress or stagnation of their performance. Teachers also compare pupils with other pupils in a class or at school and judge their ability to manage the requirements set by a curriculum.

Pupils' school performance is usually influenced by a class and school atmosphere as well as by teacher's personality. A pedagogical diagnostics taken by a teacher is carried out every day in classrooms. It focuses on the level of child's knowledge and cognitive functions that affect the knowledge. If any derivation from a broader norm appears, it is important to concentrate on peculiarities typical of specific learning difficulties (as mentioned in the chapter Classification and

characteristics). Teachers should have at least a basic knowledge of specific learning difficulties and they should be able to cope with them. Teachers can use different techniques and methods suitable for those with SpLDs even before pupil's examination by a specialist. Frequently, even little changes lead to improvement, for example, demand reduction or work pace slowdown. (Zelinková, 2003, p. 50)

The active interest of teachers is much appreciated. However, Pokorná (2010a, p. 195) points out that teachers are not the only people who are responsible when dealing with specific learning difficulties. Even though they may suspect an occurrence of any SpLD, they cannot label anybody as having a SpLD. Their only competence is to draw parents' attention to it or recommend a visit to a specialized centre (the educational and psychological counselling centre or the specialist pedagogical centre). Always, a consultation with relevant specialists is a fundamental part of any diagnostics. Such specialists are usually special pedagogues and psychologists. They are the only ones who are competent to make a diagnosis officially.

2   Legal framework and education of individuals with SpLDs

The most important legal standard dealing with the education of the individuals with SpLDs in the Czech Republic is Act No. 178/2016 Coll. of 20 April 2016 on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary, Professional and Other Education (the Education Act) in the version in force from 1 January 2017 to 31 August 2017.

Besides the Education Act, there is Decree No. 27 /2016 Coll. regulating educational rules of children, pupils and students with special educational needs (and gifted ones). The Decree provides different approaches that are consistent with pupil's interest.

There is Section 16 of the Education Act focusing on Education of Children, Pupils and Students with Special Educational Needs. The pupils with SpLDs are described here as pupils with development deficiency in learning and they belong to the group of children, pupils and students with special educational needs together with other disabilities and deficiencies (for instance mental, physical, visual or auditory disability, autism, development deficiency in behaviour etc.). (The Education Act, 2017, Section 16 [online]) I am going to cover just the most important facts.

According to Section 16, pupils with SpLDs should be provided certain support measures to fulfil their educational opportunities and exercise their rights. The support measures represent necessary educational modifications which must be applied with correspondence with pupil's conditions and needs. The support measures comprise the following matters:

- Advisory assistance
- Form, method, content, organization and evaluation adjustment
- Provision of special textbooks and special didactical and compensatory teaching aids
- Modified conditions for entry and completion of education
- Modification of expected outcomes
- Following an individual educational plan
- Teacher's assistant or other teaching staff employment, etc.

Generally, support measures are divided into five stages according to organizational, pedagogical and financial requirements. The support measures of the first stage are implemented by school whenever necessary without the advice of school advisory facility. However, the other stages require being agreed by pupil's legal representative. As stated in Decree No. 27 /2016 Coll., support measures of the first stage represent a minimal modification of methods, organization, and evaluation of education and they are offered to anyone who manifests any need of adjustment. The support measures from second to the fifth stage are provided with a recommendation of a school advisory facility and in keeping with pupil's diagnosed educational needs.

However, before any support measures of the first stage are initiated, an educational support plan is processed by a school. The plan comprises a description of pupil's difficulties and special educational needs, support measures of the first stage and the aims of the support. The support plan is updated continuously in accordance with a development of pupil's special needs. (Decree No. 27/2016 Coll. Title III Section 10)

Section 18 of the Education Act introduces the individual educational plan (IEP) that might be provided for pupils with special educational needs after written recommendation of a school advisory facility at the request of pupil's statutory representative. Education according to an individual educational plan must be permitted by school's headmaster. Nevertheless, detailed information about the individual educational plan is available in Decree No. 27/2016 Coll. Title II Section 3 and 4. According to this Decree, IEP is a binding document based on a school education plan guaranteeing pupil's special educational needs. Several crucial specifications must be included in IEP (see Decree No. 27/2016 Coll. Title II Section 3(3)). IEP can be supplemented or edited according to pupil's needs during the whole school year. All the teachers who cooperate with such a pupil must be familiar with his IEP. Finally, implementation of the IEP must be regularly evaluated.

Evaluation of pupil's results of education is depicted is Section 51 of the Education Act. With regard to a pupil with a learning difficulty, the headmaster decides upon implementing verbal evaluation at the request of pupil's statutory representative.

All the documents, laws and decrees are available online on pages of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (http://www.msmt.cz/dokumenty-3/skolsky-zakon-ve-zneni-ucinnem-od-1-1-2017-do-31-8-2017).

3   Teaching English to learners with SpLDs

Within this chapter of the diploma thesis, I am going to focus on teaching English as a foreign language to learners with SpLDs which is slightly less theoretical and a bit more practical. First of all, the situation about foreign language teaching in the Czech Republic is briefly described. The attitudes of the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports are presented by means of the Framework educational programme for basic education. Then conditions of dyslexic pupils at Czech schools are mentioned. Finally, general characteristics of English and lower secondary education are included together with the importance of foreign language learning.

3.1   Foreign language teaching

To introduce the current state of teaching foreign languages at Czech elementary schools, documents like the Framework educational programme for basic education are necessary to be applied.

According to the Framework educational programme for basic education (RVP ZV, 2016, p. 14 [online]), the educational field "Foreign Language" belongs to the educational area "Language and Communication through Language". This educational field is compulsory from the third to ninth grade and is taught three times a week. It is possible to start with foreign language teaching even at lower grades provided that a pupil shows interest and his statutory representative agrees with it. As it is specified in the Framework educational programme for basic education (RVP ZV, 2016, p. 142 [online]; FEP, 2007, p. 112 [online]), "...pupils must be offered English before other languages; if pupils (their statutory representatives) choose a language other than English, the school must provably inform the pupil's statutory representative of the fact that the educational system cannot guarantee continuity in the education of the chosen foreign language in case of the pupil's transfer to another basic school or to secondary school."

Concerning second foreign language, the curricular document (RVP ZV, 2013, p. 16 [online]) defines it as the part of the educational area "Language and communication through language" since the school year 2013/2014. Since the time, second foreign language is obligatory and it must start no later than in eighth grade

with a minimal time allotment of six lessons. Until then, second foreign language was a part of "Complementary Educational Field" and it was offered by schools as an optional subject (FEP, 2007, p. 18 [online]). As stated by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Nezařazení, 2013, p. 1 [online]), in some cases (legitimate cases), teaching of second foreign language is not included and the particular pupils continue in consolidation and development of (the first) foreign language. The legitimate cases are the following:

- Special educational needs of a pupil (according to section 16 of the School Law)
- Pupils from foreign countries
- Organisational reasons (temporary personal problems with teaching arrangement or temporary spatial problems with teaching arrangement)

Moreover, pupils may be provided by more than six lessons of second foreign language all well as of (first) foreign language. Finally, in some valid cases, second foreign language may be substituted by subjects of special pedagogical care that are further specified by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Nezařazení, 2013, p. 2 [online]).

As second foreign language, schools may offer German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Slovak, Polish or another language. However, English as Second Foreign Language must be offered to pupils who did not choose English as their first Foreign Language (RVP ZV, 2013, p. 142 [online]).

According to the Framework educational programme for basic education (RVP ZV, 2013, p. 17 [online]), pupils of the first foreign language are expected to acquire level A2 while second foreign language learners are supposed to achieve level A1 (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Both levels are further described on the above-mentioned page of the document.

Finally, both Foreign Language and Second Foreign Language are very important educational fields. Undoubtedly, they play a fundamental role in the process of education since they "...contribute to understanding and discovering facts that go beyond the experience facilitated by the mother tongue. These fields provide a vivid language basis and the prerequisites for the pupils' ability to communicate within and integrated Europe and the rest of the world." (FEP, 2007, p. 19 [online])

3.2 The importance of foreign languages, including English

Generally, it is worldwide believed that learning foreign languages is a beneficial activity and it is worth the effort. As stated by Tánczos, Mónos and Wiewczaroski (2011, p. 1 [online]), a foreign language is extremely important especially for the people whose mother tongue does not belong to commonly used languages and so is spoken by only a small number of people. Undoubtedly, this is the case of Czech people and Czech language. Since the world has been permanently globalised, the magnitude of the issue is constantly increasing. Therefore, a study of foreign languages means a considerable advantage as compared to those who do not master it.

Since foreign language plays such an important role in people's life, no one should be deprived of the opportunity to study it, particularly those with special educational needs, the ones with specific learning difficulties included. This attitude is shared by most experts and authors dealing with the issue of foreign language learning and specific learning difficulties, for example, Tánczos, Mónos and Wiewczaroski (2011, p. 1 [online]), Crombie (1999, p. 1 [online]), Wilson (2014, p. 1 [online]), Difino and Lombardino (2004, p. 1 [online]), Zelinková (2003, p. 161) and many others. All of them come to an agreement that with appropriate care and support, dyslexic learners can somehow manage to be successful in foreign language learning. There is a widespread belief that language learning is not an easy task which is especially true for learners with SpLDs. Fortunately, there is a wide range of possibilities how to support them. As mentioned in the article by Tánczos, Mónos and Wiewczaroski (2011, p. 1 [online]), teachers are able to "...develop a repertoire of skills, strategies and methods that can be applied in normal classes, in the spirit of inclusion, to the teaching of FLs to students with learning disorders." Such skills, strategies, and methods will be described further in another chapter.

Going back to the state that no one should be deprived of the opportunity to study a foreign language, I would like to mention the Convention on the Rights of the Child which is a human rights treaty focused on children. Generally, it is said that whether a pupil has a trouble with a mother tongue acquisition, learning a foreign language is probably going to be even more demanding for him. However, this may not be complete truth, as Pokorná (2003, p. 161) points out. Therefore, pupils with SpLDs should not be absolved from teaching a foreign language. The same view is

held, for example, in the Convention on the Rights of the Child which came into force in 1990 (Pokorná, 2003, p. 161). Firstly, the treaty is dealing with general and basic rights to various freedoms (such as freedom of expression etc.). There is also an article focusing on children with disabilities. This article, for example, includes right to a full and decent life. In addition, right to education, special treatment, acknowledging the needs, professional training etc. is pointed out. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990, Article 23 [online]) Besides this treaty, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is another important document containing the term "special educational needs". Concretely, the articles 21,28,29,31 and 42 are aimed at dyslexic people. The articles talk about the individual approach, the adjustment of the educational process to the needs of children, providing care and support, teachers' training for such situations. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 40)

Concerning the benefits of foreign languages, there is a huge number of them. Wilson (2014, p. 1 [online]), for example, emphasizes students' "...access to the cultural and intellectual heritage of cultures other than their own" which is provided by foreign languages. Regarding Crombie (1999, p. 1 [online]), she speaks not only about the chance to communicate with people from different places in the world but she also promotes the benefit of "...an extended range of employment and recreational opportunities."

Regarding English, it is definitely one of the most frequently spoken languages in the world which implies that English belongs to the languages that are most commonly chosen by pupils at school. This fact is established by Vančurová (2010 [online]) as she was monitoring the increasing number of pupils choosing English as their foreign language. The reasons why English is so popular (besides the main one mentioned above) are probably very rich. As far as I am concerned, the popularity of English among the learners arises from the overall situation within the world where the majority of modern music production, computer games or programs and other activities attracting young people is produced and available in English. As well as lots of pupils' heroes and idols are from the English speaking world and pupils want to follow them and understand them. On top of that, today, there are more opportunities to travel to different countries and visit different places and English is usually a language that is useful to learn.

3.3 English at different grades of basic education

As we already know, a foreign language, usually English is compulsory from the third to ninth grade. Initially, as English is a new subject for the third graders, they usually have a positive attitude to it. They are curious about the new subject, its content and new attractive books full of pictures and illustrations and they generally look forward to starting something new. Such enthusiasm dominates as long as the lessons are enjoyable, based on learning unconsciously mainly through various games, songs, chants, pictures, flashcards, drawing or physical response. Teachers usually start with audio-lingual method since it does not require reading and writing. Therefore, this method is also suitable for pupils with SpLDs. All in all, English is a popular language owing to its wide range of usage and its possibility to meet it in everyday life. Furthermore, the lessons of low graders usually take place in pupils own and fix classrooms which also have a favourable influence on the process of learning in general. Pupils stay in one classroom which they are used to.

Within the transition to the higher grades, meaning lower secondary education, lots of things change and particular problems are more probable to come to light or to appear more intensively. Concerning the ways English is taught, there is usually a return to more traditional techniques of teaching, even though the situation is much better today, in my opinion. Nevertheless, there is much more stuff to be learnt and the demands are on the increase at large. Reading and writing are used constantly; the pace of learning is much faster, games and other attractive things are used less often. The pupils are moving from classroom to classroom, they have more subjects to study and they must get used to various styles of teaching since they meet with different teachers. Generally, much more pressure is put on the learners.

Regarding the pupils with SpLDs, the transition from stage one to stage two is really demanding for them, especially when problems with reading are considerably persisting. Due to the continuing troubles, they are not able to learn new things by means of reading and it limits them in all subjects, English included. (Michalová, 2004, p. 31) What's more, English is extremely challenging for pupils with SpLDs as there are differences between pronounced and written forms of English words.

To sum it up, specific learning difficulties represent a certain barrier to foreign language learning regardless of the stage of education. It is not, at all, an easy

process both for the learners and the teachers. Still, it is essential to provide them the opportunity to learn a foreign language and so increase their future chances and ensure somehow their life standard.

3.4   Characteristics of English

English belongs to the most often chosen foreign languages and it is even highly recommended by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Concerning the choice of foreign language, Zelinková (2003, p. 165-166) points out that it cannot be said for certain what language is the best for all dyslexic pupils. It is not possible to choose any language to be easier for them since every dyslexia and specific learning difficulty is different and it manifests individually in various areas.

Nevertheless, it is believed that the less a given foreign language is similar to the mother tongue, the better it is for a dyslexic pupil. If there are too many similarities between these two languages, pupils with SpLDs are usually more confused, they often mix up the languages and it is more complicated to master the foreign language. On the other hand, the dissimilarity between the mother tongue and a foreign language may be challenging too since there are lots of new and different issues that pupils are not familiar with.

All in all, every language has its specific features among which some of them make the particular language easier to be learnt and others make it more challenging. In the following text, I am going to describe some crucial characteristics of the English language.

First of all, the English orthography is quite a challenging matter. In English, words are written and read differently. English is one of the languages with an inconsistent orthography. This means that there is no regular correspondence of phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters) and the same grapheme can be pronounced in many different ways. Pronunciation of most letters depends on their position within a word and the context. Moreover, many exceptions are permitted, for instance, the silent letters etc. All this makes the pronunciation of English words quite irregular. Generally, the more inconsistent the orthography the more demanding it is for pupils with SpLD to cope with reading and writing. Knowing any English word means, among other things, knowing how to write it and read it.

Secondly, in English, there are different sounds represented by various types of symbols, for example, ʌ, ɑː, æ, ə, ɜː, ɒ, ɔː, θ, ð etc. This is closely related to the previous paragraph. In most English textbooks used at schools, such symbols are involved in vocabulary lists. That is why pupils must be familiar with these symbols to be able to manage a new vocabulary properly and pronounce it correctly.

Next, the English word order is worth mentioning. English, in contrast to Czech, is an analytical language. In Czech conjugation and declension determines the function of a word in a sentence because of the variety of endings added to words. However, it is not the same in the case of English. In English, it is the word order which specifies the function of words and so is an essential feature of the language. If we do not observe the rules and change a word order, a sentence may either have totally different meaning or it is an absolute nonsense. The English word order is necessary for understanding the meaning of a sentence.

Concerning the prepositions of English words, there is a huge number of them which is another challenging aspect of English. In many cases, there are several possibilities of prepositions that can be used within a word and of course, they are applied in different contexts with different meanings. Generally, the English words have usually few meanings and it is good to know when a particular word fits into the context and when not.

Eventually, the English tenses may be complicated for pupils with SpLDs. Compared to Czech, there are much more tenses in English. Therefore, it may not be easy to understand them and use them correctly.

3.5 How dyslexia affects the acquisition of foreign language

Specific learning difficulties and the ways they manifest form considerable barriers to learning a foreign language. The difficulties may occur in different combinations and at various levels. They influence each other and their weight is multiplied. The more problems, the more demanding the learning of foreign languages is. Generally, the major obstacle lies not only in the inability to read and write but also in cognitive processes that are not developed enough. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 26)

Lina Knudsen (2012, p. 13-14 [online]) includes the following aspects of the foreign languages that have been found as challenging for the dyslexic pupils:

- " ...the learning of phonemes, graphemes, and digraphs that are different from their native language and understanding the connection between them
- Comprehending a new syntax (learning past/present/future tense, ordering of words in a sentence etc.)
- Remembering vocabulary words and being able to quickly retrieve them from their long term memory
- Spelling new words that may not follow the rules they have learned in their native language
- Being able to hear the differences between similar phonemes
- Pronounce words that contain silent letters unlike those they have already learned in their native language
- Intonation and use of accents that vary from their native language
- Comprehension of a written text since most effort is placed on reading each individual word."

Margaret Crombie (1999, p. 2 [online]) points out processing time as a crucial factor since dyslexic pupils usually need more time to process information. They require more time to absorb information as compared to their peers. Therefore, slowing the pace at which lessons are run is highly recommended. She also speaks about troubles with short-term memory and its impact on learning vocabulary. Not only dyslexic pupils find it difficult to remember vocabulary. They are usually muddling words too and it takes them longer to retrieve words and information from memory.

Zelinková (2003, p. 162-165) divides the difficulties into several areas such as reading, writing, articulation, automaticity, memory etc. Regarding reading, dyslexic pupils are not able to decode words as quickly as their classmates. They have troubles with uncommon font types. Due to their attention is mostly focused on word decoding; they are not capable of perceiving a meaning of the text fully. When writing they usually make lots of mistakes which include: omitting some letters (mother-moth), phonetic writing (train-trejn), transposing letters (from-form). They have a difficulty with copying and rewriting texts. Moreover, dygraphia makes

writing even more slowly and also illegible. Pupils with SpLDs may also suffer from worse articulation, especially with words consisting of hard and strangely ordered sounds (e.g. world). English grammar belongs to another area that is usually problematic. A major problem lies in orientation among the English tenses as well as parts of speech. Bad orientation in texts and on pages influences following teacher's instructions when setting any work or exercise. Concerning memory, not only a short-term memory but also long-term memory is affected. Therefore, dyslexic pupils need more time to retrieve anything from memory as well as they must learn things over and over. This is closely related with automaticity. Dyslexic learners need to go back to things they have already learnt very often. Only then they have a chance to do them automatically. As for attention, they are able to concentrate for a shorter time and their attention is being easily distracted. (Zelinková, 2003, p. 162-165)

Similar lists of troubles are available in almost every book or article written by someone who is interesting in SpLDS and foreign languages and the signs are more or less the same. Quite well-arranged lists of difficulties are presented by for example Difino and Lombardino (2004, p. 7 [online]) or Bogdanowicz (2006, p. 3 [online]).

Generally, it is not easy at all to master a foreign language. It is said that everyone needs to experience success when learning anything. If failure appears repeatedly, it may result in frustration, poor self-esteem, loss of motivation and other secondary features, disruptive behaviour included. This is especially true for learners with SpLDs. Therefore teachers must be interested in pupils' individual needs and use such strategies, methods, and approaches that are friendly to at-risk pupils. Such strategies, methods, and approaches are going to be described in the next chapter.

4 Methods of teaching English

This chapter of the diploma thesis is supposed to be less theoretical and more practical. It is mostly aimed to a class work including a variety of teaching principles and methods, a number of educational approaches and opinions related to teaching pupils with SpLDs. The chapter also deals with some PC and online activities and programs that may be good for pupils with SpLDs as well as examples how particular language skills may be taught.

There are plenty of teaching methods that can be applied in the education process. Some of them are more effective than the others. Concerning the learners with learning difficulties, there are several methods that are friendly to them and through them pupils can be encouraged to do their best.

Before identifying the particular teaching techniques, general teaching principles are going to be described. Every time, I will also try to assess them from my personal point of view. Moreover, some observations gathered during my teaching training are going to be included too.

All the following methods are said to be frequently recommended in any teaching learning process. Generally, they are suitable and effective for all English learners, not only for learners with difficulties. Concerning those without difficulties, they can take an advantage of the methods since they may help them to learn even faster, more effectively and almost without much effort. Regarding the dyslexic ones, such methods are essential to be included since they provide conditions necessary to succeed at least in something and acquire English more easily.

4.1 Basic teaching principles

In my opinion, the most important teaching principles are:

- Friendly environment/atmosphere
- Teacher's attitude and his relationship with pupils
- Motivation
- Self-esteem and self-confidence
- Clear instructions
- Interventions and review

This is just a list of individual basic principles. However, in practice, most of them are closely related to each other, especially the first four. They cannot be considered separately as one is based on the other.

According to Tánczos, Mónos and Wiewczaroski (2011, p. 9-10 [online]), motivation mostly depends on appropriate teacher's behaviour, a friendly and supportive classroom atmosphere and positive attitudes towards the English language. Creating realistic expectations about the teaching learning process is fundamental together with expectations of success since underestimation, degradation and low self-esteem are not the issues supporting pupils' motivation and boosting their self-confidence. Encouraging retrospective and positive self-evaluation is also emphasized by the authors.

As for self-esteem, it is crucial to set achievable goals, enable pupils to show their strengths and try to appreciate even slow and little progress. Moreover, dyslexic pupils should be evaluated individually which means "...evaluating their progress and achievements against their own previous attainments, rather than against others' achievements." (Tánczos, Mónos and Wiewczaroski, 2011, p. 10 [online])

Among the other authors, Reid (2015, p. 5 [online]) emphasizes regular consultations with the learners (or also their parents) to provide feedback about their own personal progress and a variety of strategies to improve their English learning. This may help them to believe in better Fridays even though it takes a lot of effort which is indispensable for motivation. Besides getting feedback from a teacher, pupils should also take control of their own learning and develop their own responsibility for it. That is why self-assessment is a frequently discussed topic. Pupils should be able to talk about their achievements and difficulties and assess where they are becoming better or where not. (Reid, 2015, p. 6 [online])

Concerning the classroom atmosphere, it usually arises from teacher's attitude to learners and teaching learning process in general. Firstly, a teacher working with learners with specific learning difficulties must have a good knowledge of the issue to understand pupils' situation. Secondly, relationships between the teacher and his students should be friendly, supportive but also based on his faith in pupils' abilities and chances to make progress. On the other hand, the classmates and their interaction contribute to the global atmosphere in the class. Therefore, it is believed that

everyone in a particular class should be familiar with difficulties dyslexic pupils have to tackle. In order to establish a positive and acceptable attitude to learners with SpLDs, this is an important prerequisite. Only then, everyone can understand their troubles and reasons why dyslexic pupils are provided certain concessions and no feelings of injustice or inequality are present. It is up to teacher to clarify the fact tactfully and sensitively to the rest of the class. Even though all this is a general fact, the matter is closely studied by Matějček and Vágnerová (2006, p. 234-235) and also supplemented by their research.

Not only teachers but also dyslexic pupils themselves must believe in their abilities and possibility of any improvement. A certain level of self-confidence is necessary to be kept for all people. However, this is especially the case of pupils with SpLDs since their experience and self-belief is influenced by the difficulty. This issue is much discussed by Matějček and Vágnerová (2006, p. 41-42). Such pupils are usually incapable of achieving the same results as the others even though a great effort is made and lots of time is spent. Therefore, much attention is needed to be paid to motivation. Motivation is not only about a positive assessment of pupils' performance or behaviour. Motivation is mostly based on how any dyslexic learner is considered, accepted and supported by his environment. That is why children with SpLDs should be accepted positively and emotionally by people around them since anyone usually sees himself as others see and asses him. Such attitudes give confidence and courage and boost self-esteem which helps to cope with all the troubles.

The matter of motivation, self-esteem and positive attitude towards dyslexic pupils is talked over by Katarzyna Bogdanowicz (2006, p. 3-4 [online]) too. Her point of view is similar to those mentioned above. Additionally, she emphasizes a need to find out about dyslexic learners' ways of learning. It means that a teacher should respect pupil's learning style since every person has individual preferences for processing information. This idea is closely related to the so-called multisensory approach that is going to be presented in the following part of the thesis.

Another significant principle is the clarity of instructions. The best way of using directions is to present them both orally and visually. Short, coherent and clear instructions and directions without unfamiliar words are an important part of any English lesson. It is usually recommended to lead foreign language lessons in the

particular language, meaning English in this case, without using a Czech equivalent or a complete translation into Czech. Using more complex expressions, it is better to add simple nonverbal means of expression, for instance a movement, gesture, mimics or pointing rather than translation into Czech.

Interventions or tolerances are based on particular needs of pupils with SpLDs and they are basically described in the Education Act of Czech Republic or they are usually part of a diagnostic report. The most common ones are related to the following areas: ways of taking notes, knowledge testing, preference of written or oral testing, providing extra time, shorter or different types of exercises, opportunity to work in groups, using grammar tables and overviews or other similar tools, well-structured texts with appropriate font size and type and length, different assessment, etc.

The next principle is review and regular repetition. It significantly helps learners to keep things in mind and develop a certain level of automaticity.

Probably, the above list of basic teaching principles is not complete and some principles might be added. However, in my view, the list includes all the key points that are essential to be followed within a teaching learning process.

4.2 Teaching techniques and approaches

As it has been already mentioned, teaching and learning a foreign language is usually challenging for learners with specific learning difficulties. Dyslexic pupils do not form a homogeneous group and the variety and different levels of difficulties manifest in all sorts of combinations. In addition to this, there are not only pupils with SpLDs in a class but also the whole group of various kinds of other learners and learning styles that a foreign language teacher must handle.

This means that no single method or technique would be the best for all the different learners. For teachers, it is important to find the most effective methods of teaching a foreign language. Therefore, there are numbers of teaching techniques and methods that are recommended to be applied in everyday classes and for all the learners.

4.2.1 Multisensory approach

This principle has been already asserted since the period of J.A. Comenius. In the USA and other countries, multisensory teaching is a fundamental requirement for working with dyslexic learners. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 78) By means of this approach, information is provided by a number of different ways, so-called sensory channels and it enables pupils to receive the information by the channel that is best developed. Any pupil's activity is characterised by using speech, pictures, objects, experiencing specific situations together with particular movements and reactions. Within the multisensory approach, all available senses are utilized simultaneously. The more senses are involved the more channels bring a signal to the brain and finally, the more the brain is activated to remember a new piece of knowledge. (Reid, 2015, p. 7 [online]) In parallel, there is a visual, auditory as well as tactile and kinaesthetic processing of information which "...facilitates the coding, storage and retrieval of information from memory..." and makes learning more effective. (Tánczos, Mónos and Wiewczaroski, 2011, p. 3-4 [online])

Within the multisensory approach, sight, hearing, speech, and motor activity should be involved in parallel. According to this, a pupil sees pictures, objects or situations and links them with written words. For a dyslexic child, it is essential to hear not only teacher's and fellow pupils' pronunciation but also his own. There must be opportunities to repeat words many times and compare the pronunciation of a pupil and a teacher. Sample records are usually the most frequently used aids. However, recording pupils' pronunciation and then hearing it is highly recommended too. Currently, a variety of PC programmes and mobile applications are available to provide such a service. Regarding speech, it is said that every pupil should speak English and repeat words and phrases as much as possible during the English lessons. Frequent speaking is extremely important for eliminating the fear of speaking and making mistakes as well as for motivation. Speaking in groups is one of the popular ways to practise speaking and it is commonly used nowadays. Of course, there is not enough time for it in every lesson but teachers should take the fact into consideration. Concerning using the motor activity, this might be applied by representing the meaning of a word by a movement or writing and pronouncing the word in the same time. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 79)

We have already known that dyslexic learners suffer from deficits of their visual and/or auditory information processing. That is why more senses are important to be involved. If some of the senses fail there are still the others to be used to fix the information successfully. Nevertheless, touching and movement are hardly ever applied in foreign language teaching. Tánczos, Mónos and Wiewczaroski (2011, p. 4 [online]) refer to a few ways how even these senses may be involved in language classes. One of these is a role-play. Using a role-play any information is fixed deeper in mind since the emotions included play an important role. Furthermore, project work is emphasized to be a really effective form of dealing with topic-related vocabulary. Mimics together with gestures and movement may also make vocabulary learning more playful and effective as well as using different cards or real objects.

Going back to the visual perception, which is probably most often employed, there is a huge variety of visual aids to be used, such as pictures or colour coding. Colour coding is frequently used when dealing, for example with prefixes and suffixes or parts of speech. It means that different colours are needed to highlight the individual parts of speech which finally help children with sentence creation or word formation.

Based on the experience from my teaching practice/training, lots of teachers have been familiar with this approach and they have been applying it at least at lower grades of lower secondary school. Concerning the higher graders, such as eighth and ninth graders, teachers usually do not feel such a need to focus on the multisensory learning.

4.2.2 Communicative approach

This approach is based on speaking more than writing or reading and not so much attention is paid on the grammar of a language. The ability to communicate naturally is much appreciated even at the cost of using a simple language. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 81) Mistakes are tolerated if they do not directly have an influence on the meaning.

The communicative approach includes several basic abilities. A pupil is supposed to perceive the speaker, comprehend his or her message, express his own personal needs and ideas and be actively participating during the English classes. Of course, nothing is possible without making mistakes not only in case of learners with

difficulties but also those without them. Making mistakes is a natural phenomenon and the analysis of mistakes usually contributes to better understanding of the curriculum. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 81)

Despite the fact that this approach is often recommended to be applied for learners with SpLDs there are still many difficulties these pupils have to struggle with. According to Zelinková (2005, p. 81), any communication requires more steps to be done simultaneously: recollection of suitable vocabulary and its pronunciation, grammar, tense and its specifications, sentence structure etc. Therefore, speaking is much demanding than it might seem to be. Therefore, a certain level of automation is necessary to be achieved to make speaking less demanding and more fluent and natural as fluency is probably the main goal of speaking. Dialogues are one of the most commonly used matters to develop automation during the lessons.

Being able to communicate in a foreign language in real life situations is much appreciated and it is one of the crucial goals of education. Additionally, this approach is really motivating and encourages every pupil not to be afraid of using English. The English lessons are based on dealing with situations that most of the pupils are familiar with. There is an obvious link between English and their real everyday life. Therefore, they can see that learning English is worth of such effort.

Currently, communicative approach is mostly positively accepted in Czech schools as arises from my observations during the teaching practice. This approach is involved more frequently than it used to be a few years ago. Much attention is paid to the ability to communicate. This is clearly evident from a number of international projects that lots of schools are joined in. Thanks to the projects, pupils are encouraged to communicate with pupils from different parts of the world by using a variety of aids such as email, Skype, social networks or face to face communication during the frequent visits and events spent together. As far as I am concerned, such projects are really beneficial for all the learners.

4.2.3 Structured approach

This approach is one of the approaches that is recommended by many authors, for example by Gavin Reid (2015, p. 7 [online]). Structuring is a key point for learners with specific learning difficulties since they themselves are not able to see a logical continuity of given information. Therefore some materials need to be

structured for them to create a certain logical and clear relationship between them. (Tánczos, Mónos and Wiewczaroski, 2011, p. 6 [online])

As an example of words that might be taught together in a logical group because of their similar structure are the following: bought, brought, thought, fought or drought. All of them consist of –ought but differ in the initial letters. This fact makes their memorizing easier.

The approach is usually applied when teaching vocabulary. On the basis of this approach vocabulary is preferred to be presented in certain units (for example according to rhyming element, a sound similarity of words, a relation of words etc.) rather than in thematic groups. Words acquired this way are believed to be remembered easily. Naturally, some pupils prefer learning vocabulary which is thematically related. To sum it up, no way of learning vocabulary should be rejected since the individuality of each pupil plays a decisive role.

On the other hand, structuring might be involved even when dealing with English grammar. Even though teachers usually follow the units in English textbooks, from time to time some pieces of grammar are needed to be presented differently and more logically.

4.2.4 Sequential approach

According to Reid (2015, p. 7 [online]), "sequential approaches are usually appropriate for children with dyslexia because it may be necessary for them to master sub-skills before moving to more advanced materials."

To respect the principles of sequential approach, language is broken down into manageable units and small steps from the already known to the new are taken. The connection of the units is fundamental. Each part of the language must be practised enough. Then more complex units are ready to be taught. Such slowly and cumulative process finally leads to the automation of knowledge which means that the acquired information are applied automatically without much thinking and long recalling. The new curriculum is slowly linked up to the already existing structures. Consequently, the approach enables pupils to experience the joy of success and it supports their self-confidence. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 81)

Not respecting the sequencing, pupils are learning new things without mastering the previous ones. New pieces of knowledge are learnt separately and without any relationship to already existing one. Therefore, coping with English is much more demanding and hard to be remembered too.

Concerning my teaching practise, the sequential approach is the one that is trying to be applied inevitably even though there is not always enough time to do it perfectly.

4.2.5 Metacognitive approach

Basically, metacognition is thinking about thinking. In the case of teaching learning process, metacognition denotes thinking about the learning process.

Every pupil should be aware of the co-responsibility for his or her education and they ought to be taught to take such a responsibility as early as possible. In Tánczos, Mónos and Wiewczaroski's words (2011, p. 7-8 [online]), "...successful learners are those who regularly think about their learning: they observe what strategies work best for them in various circumstances, and also check the efficiency of their learning." However, such sophisticated reflection is possible to be applied within a certain level of cognitive development.

It is not easy at all to use the metacognitive strategies. Consequently, it is essential to encourage pupils to use them as soon as possible. Initially, we can start with a simple expression of pupils' feelings. Children may be asked to write down what they did or did not do well. Subsequently, seeking causes and answers to a question why I have managed it or not is the following step. Finally, thinking about the improvement and searching for suitable strategies is employed. (Zelinková, 2005, p. 83)

On the account of my teaching practice, evolving metacognitive strategies is usually believed to be a must, especially for learners with SpLDs. They need to think about the learning process and reflect their achievements and failures in order to make their learning more successful. In practice, it is not as simple as it may seem to be because pupils need to be taught to employ metacognitive strategies and they need time to get used to it.

4.2.6 Repetitive approach and over learning

Repetition and over learning belongs to the fundamental approaches in any teaching learning process. The major importance of the approach lies in automation. Only automatized pieces of knowledge can be used without much effort and applied in more complex tasks. As it was mentioned many times, automation is one of the most challenging issues of learners with SpLD and they have quite significant difficulties to achieve it.

According to Schneider and Crombie (2003, p. 17), over learning is the way to reach automation. Over learning is based on multiple repetitions of knowledge by using a variety of methods and principles. Such repetitions are essential to be used even though a pupil thinks that he has already mastered it. However, any repetition is a very time-consuming activity as well as considerable patience is required not only from the pupil but also the teacher.

Sometimes, it may seem to be needless to do the same things again and again but it is by no means true. Nevertheless, education should not be limited to drill exercises. On the other hand, a certain form of drill is also effective and inevitable concerning some pieces of knowledge. In addition, repetitions and over learning enable learners to experience success which has a positive impact on their self-esteem, self-image and motivation. (Schneider; Crombie, 2003, p. 17-18) Having difficulties with short and long-term memory, over learning is the best thing to reinforce it and make learning English less demanding for pupils with specific learning difficulties. (Reid, 2016, p. 7 [online])

As being emphasized by Crombie (1999, p. 4 [online]), currently, there is a number of options to make over learning both attractive and efficient as lots of various materials are commonly available. Moreover, new a new technologies and programmes are still coming into existence. Therefore, computers, tablets, Smartphones, CD Rooms, DVDs, videos, audiotapes, interactive white boards, e-learning, programmes, applications, and other materials that can be downloaded may be really supportive to attractive and effective repetitions, over learning and teaching learning process in general.

As far as I am concerned and based on my teaching practice, repetitions and over learning is the basis of teaching and learning English since using grammar and

vocabulary automatically without much thinking and effort is the main purpose of speaking and it makes speaking fluent and natural. Generally, English teachers usually take an advantage of the variety of ways available to practise pieces of knowledge differently. They also find it really important to include them in English lessons since they are extremely helpful especially for those with learning difficulties.

4.2.7 Total Physical Response (TPR)

Besides the traditional methods of teaching foreign languages, there are also the alternative ones. Total Physical Response is one of the alternative ways to teach English. It is usually mentioned when talking about the learners with specific learning difficulties. This method was invented in the 60s of the 20th century by the American psychologist James Asher. The method is based on non-linguistic reactions to linguistic impulses. An English teacher gives verbal instructions and pupils respond physically according to it. By acting according to teacher's instructions, pupils show they understand. The instructions may be simple as well as more complicated. The method of TPR stresses the fact that listening of a foreign language usually comes before producing it verbally. (Bartoňová, 2012, p. 73)

However, this method is said to be employed especially at the beginning of foreign languages courses when learners are not able to make a whole sentence and they comprehend mostly due to context. Therefore, TPR is probably used at the first stage of education. On the other hand, a certain place might be given to it even at lower secondary schools (the second stage of basic education) when dealing with problematic issues of the English language.

As for the English teachers cooperating on my survey, they have been familiar with this method. Nevertheless, they do not apply it frequently. They usually find it interesting for the younger learners but not as much for the older ones since they will probably fell embarrassed acting in front of the whole class.

4.2.8 Theme Content-Based Instruction

According to this approach, one single theme is presented in every English lesson. This principle makes learning more meaningful and less demanding since the pieces of knowledge of the single lessons are always related to a particular topic or

context. Partially, this approach is applied in everyday lessons as the English textbooks are divided into individual units and topics.

4.2.9 Mnemonic devices

A mnemonic device is a tool that supports learners to memorize words by means of different principles. It helps pupils to remember and retrieve information from memory more easily and without much effort. Plenty of mnemonic devices involved in the following list is offered by Schneider and Crombie (2003, p. 32-42).

- sound clues
- letter-shape clues
- crazy stories
- picture clues
- acronyms
- keywords
- songs and sounds
- gesture and motion clues
- personalisation

I am going to briefly introduce some of them. Sound clues are focused on a certain similarity between the English and mother tongue letter sounds (for instance: skirt = sukně X shirt = košile).

Picture clues are based on doing visual illustrations that somehow represent new vocabulary. Each time, a pupil sees a particular word, he calls its visual illustration to his mind and the word is recalled easily.

The acronym is a word made up by the first letters of each word that you need to remember. Finally, you make a new word from all those letters (for example: to remember the names of the Great Lakes you make the word HOMES = Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, Superior).

Songs and sounds may be useful for remembering pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar better (for example using the sound of hissing snake to remember the –s ending in the 3rd person singular of present simple tense).

4.2.10 Presentation techniques

The way a foreign language is presented plays an important role not only for pupils with SpLDs but also for the others who can profit from it too. There is a huge variety of techniques that are employed both for presenting vocabulary and grammar.

Concerning grammar, there are two basic methods of presenting a new piece of grammar, deductive and inductive. The deductive one goes from rules to examples. It means that at first a grammatical rule is being explained by a teacher. He describes when a how a particular grammar is used. After that, an example sentence is given to illustrate it. On the other hand, the inductive principle goes from the example sentence to rule explanation. As stated by Bartoňová (2012, p. 75) the inductive way of presenting new grammar is more friendly for learners with SpLDs since they need to concentrate right on the application of rules. Remembering grammatical rules is really challenging for them. However, grammar, especially tenses may be also presented by using, for example, acting or gestures.

Regarding the presentation of vocabulary, lots of different techniques are available to be used, such as:

- Illustrations - by using flashcards, pictures, real objects, charts or maps, drawing pictures and diagrams, projecting anything on an interactive white board, pointing at different objects etc.
- Demonstration – a new vocabulary can be presented by mime, facial expressions, gestures or acting
- Context – telling a story or a sentence in which a new word occurs and then guessing its meaning
- Synonyms, antonyms or hyponyms examples
- Explanation or description – giving a definition of a word to make pupils understand it
- Translation – one of the easiest ways to present a new vocabulary
- Teamwork – pupils who know the word can explain it to those who don't know

In my opinion, all of these techniques are very useful because they help pupils to remember vocabulary which is an important part of any learning-teaching process. It is well known that remembering anything is influenced by the circumstances under

what it is learnt. It is good to appeal to all the senses of the pupils like sound, smell, touch and taste which is related to using different channels – we should enable pupils to hear, say, see or touch a new vocabulary and we can be sure that they will understand and remember it better. However, it is impossible to present all the vocabulary in this way because it takes a lot of time and after some time it will be boring for pupils. I think it is good to use these techniques but change them often.

4.3 PC and online activities and programs

The current situation provides series of interesting materials, both printed and online, programs and applications available on PCs, tablets and mobile phones that contain a variety of things from grammar tables and overviews, through attractive activities to online test. Thanks to these materials on web pages and application, pupils have an opportunity to practice and improve their English. Such variety of materials and activities is beneficial mainly for those with specific learning difficulties since getting information by means of more senses and channels is highly appreciated by them and it helps them to remember it more easily. The online activities, in particular, represent an attractive, entertaining as well as effective way of learning and practicing English. It depends on individuals what better fits to them and what materials they decide to use because, as it was mentioned many times, every child is different and prefers something else.

There are some web pages focused on learning and practicing English that are even recommended by Krejčová (2014, p. 173-175) in her book dealing with specific learning difficulties.

Helpforenglish.cz is one of the well-known pages. Primarily, this web page is not targeted only at the learners with difficulties but they can profit from it too. The English lessons are completely free and the materials are available for different age categories and language levels. Possibly, the dyslexic pupils may need help with initial orientation on the pages. Concerning the accuracy, the pages are administrated by an English teacher, therefore, certain rightness should be guaranteed. All tests, exercises, and quizzes are evaluated immediately and right and wrong answers are displayed directly. On top of that, an explanation of right and wrong answers (in Czech) is automatically offered to understand it. There is also a special online vocabulary tester. Words that pupils have difficulty with are remembered by the

program and they arise again and again to be learnt properly. The online vocabulary includes translation, English definition, transcription, picture and sound recording of most of the words which are essential especially for pupils with SpLDs. Concerning grammar, it is explained quite simply and series of example sentences and following tests are joined too.

Another web page dealing with English is kaminet.cz. Mainly, it provides a simplified explanation of grammar and follow-up tests and exercises. The grammar is presented in Czech that makes it even simpler not only for learners with SpLDs but also for parents who do not master English. Moreover, there is a section focused on the development of perception but it is no longer in English.

www.jazyky-bez-barier.cz is a page specially created for young and also older dyslexics to assist them with English learning both at school and at home. It is a program or application that can be run on PCs, mobiles and tablets. The program is accessible for free download. It presents several interesting prearranged files and materials. In addition, own teaching materials are possible to be made there. By means of the program, pieces of knowledge can be seen and heard simultaneously. Every word or sentence can be repeated as many times and as fast as pupils need. The individual words or sentences can also be "touched", covered, written, colored etc. This is what makes it suitable for dyslexic pupils. A lot of additional materials, workbooks, visual aids as well as information, tips and pieces of advice are provided on this web page. It enables teachers to use any course book or share the electronically created one with the others. Such application makes revisions effective and entertaining and it motivates learners to get better and better.

The last page recommended by Krejčová (2014, p. 173-175) is dyslang.eu. It is rather intended for English teachers since it offers tools and strategies appropriate for teaching pupils with SpLDs.

Concerning Zelinková (2005, p. 118-119), she recommends also using pictorial dictionaries and magazines. For example, she speaks about UFIN magazine which helps children coping with English in an attractive way. It is probably intended for younger learners; however, its place may be found also at lower secondary school, at least at sixth or seventh grades. The magazine contains several crosswords, coloring books, cloze tests etc. usually related to one particular topic.

In conclusion, the list of the previous materials advisable for learners with SpLDs is not comprehensive at all. Of course, there are more of them. However, naming all the materials was not the aim of this subchapter. I just wanted to note that currently, there is a variety of opportunities supporting working with dyslexic pupils with respect to the individual peculiarities of each of them.

4.4   Suggestions for teaching language skills

This part of the thesis is going to demonstrate how different language skills can be taught in English lessons. Generally, there is a plenty of methods that can be applied in school lessons. Any method is closely related to a particular teacher since his personality, opinions, habits and experience are projected to it and to his work in general. A method itself is not a dogma. Always, a character of any method is dependent on a teacher who applies and modifies it usually according to his experience or a current situation.

Communication, pronunciation and vocabulary

Communication is the principal aim of teaching and learning foreign languages. Based on the knowledge and experience of many foreign as well as our teachers, it is recommended to lead language lessons in the particular language – it is English in this case. According to this theory, it is important to build a direct connection between a certain situation and an English term without translations. When dealing with more complex expressions, it is better to add nonverbal means of expression (a movement, gesture, mimics or pointing) rather than Czech translation. Not being sure whether pupils understand or not, instructions can be translated by any pupil.

Concerning the communication of dyslexic pupils, there are usually some barriers present as they have usually troubles with retrieving words from memory and their auditory perception is afflicted too. Consequently, both pronunciation and vocabulary are affected by their difficulty. Therefore, it is useful to employ the following exercises that have been listed by Zelinková (2005, p. 85-89):

- Communication
  - Using dialogues and dramatizations on topics that are close to learners
  - Using daily and useful situations to practice speaking
  - Describing pictures or telling a story according to a picture
- Pronunciation
  - Listening to recording together with repetition
  - Graphically illustrated or orally explained shapes of mouth (tongue and lips)
  - Rhymes, poems, songs
  - Cards with sounds – a teacher says words and pupils show a card with the sound they hear
  - Exercises based on distinguishing sounds
  - Graphically illustrated sentence melody
- Vocabulary
  - Creating model situations
  - Creating concrete situations
  - Using different visual aids
  - Pantomime, mimics and gestures
  - Assigning cards with words to a picture
  - Interpretations of words in groups and guessing them
  - Deducing unknown words from a context
  - Asking someone in a class to explain a word
  - Describing pictures or answering questions according to pictures
  - Drawing a picture – pupils draw a picture based on teacher's description in English
  - Taking out a word which does not belong to a group and specification of the reason
  - Forming words from letters
  - Manipulation with dominoes, pairs and cards with vocabulary (written or illustrated)
  - Working with synonyms and antonyms
  - Defining words (category, function, description, etc.)
  - Using computer programs, softwares and applications to practice vocabulary.

Grammar

Regarding grammar, it is another demanding part of English teaching and learning. As in the case of other language skills, specific learning difficulties manifest differently and the extent to which pupils are able to acquire them is very individual. It cannot be said that if one pupil with SpLD is able to master a certain grammar issue the others must make it too. Janíková (2004 in Zelinková, 2005, p. 89-90) recommends the following principles:

- Using inductive methods when explaining a new piece of grammar (from example to rule approach)
- Concentrate only on one grammar phenomenon
- Practicing each phenomenon in various types of exercises and situational contexts
- Using illustrations or demonstrations to explain some pieces of grammar (for instance tenses)
- Creating and using overviews of grammar
- Using colors to differentiate the individual parts of speech.

Going back to overviews of grammar, they can be created by teachers, parents or pupils themselves. Such overviews are beneficial especially for those learners who prefer system and visual perception. It provides an assurance as well as helps with remembering a grammar. According to Janíková (2004 in Zelinková, 2005, p. 90), pupils with SpLDs should use them as long as they feel a need to have it on them. It also positively influences child's motivation and self-image since he or she is not afraid of making mistakes or has a chance to correct them. However, even the work with a grammar overview must be learnt to be able to use it quickly and correctly.

As for using colors to differentiate parts of speech, there is a plenty of ways how to operate with it. For example, colored cards can be used to practice a word order in a sentence (also possible to do it by using an interactive board).

Reading

Reading in English is much demanding because of a little correspondence between graphemes and phonemes. However, difficulties related to reading are firstly compensated or remediated at primary school (from 3rd to 5th grades) where pupils start with reading. Therefore, I would not focus on it.

Concerning the characteristics of any text, it is vital to use a larger font and an appropriate font type, meaning a simple one without special effects and decorations that may be challenging for dyslexic pupils. A text should be also well structured and divided into individual sections to be coherent enough. Of course, the length of a text is crucial too, so when possible, it is necessary to make a text shorter or use only a part of it because long texts together with small fonts lead to loss of motivation. Any text or worksheet should have a similar structure throughout the year if possible.

When talking about reading with comprehension, pupils should be familiar with most of the vocabulary included in a text. This makes reading, especially comprehension less demanding. There are some approaches collected by Zelinková (2005, p. 92):

- Listening to recording if possible
- Listening to a teacher reading a text (also with using visual aids)
- Reading together sentence by sentence
- Reading individually
- Translation, illustrations, forming questions and seeking answers
- Dramatizing story content by pupils (or drawing)
- Dividing class into groups – each group reads different part of a text and makes the others familiar with it.

If getting information from a text, fluent and perfect reading is not the aim of it. The main aim is to comprehend and to be able to seek information in a text. Therefore, the following types of exercises can be implemented:

- Looking at a text and guessing (according to title, pictures, frequently repeated words, etc.) what a text is going to be about
- Finding a particular word in a text and guess or ascertain its meaning
- Scanning (seeking out information quickly)
- Orientation in a structure and main ideas of a text
- Anticipating content or following actions

Writing

Writing (no matter if transcription, copy, creative writing or test writing) is the last language skill that is not easy to be managed by pupils with SpLDs. On that account, more time is needed to be given. Longer written exercises may need to be divided into smaller pieces which help pupils to organize their time better. Moreover, examples of answers should be included in order to help pupils with understanding the instructions. Concerning taking notes, it is often the less problematic issue of English lessons since there are usually not a lot of notes necessary to be taken. Nevertheless, even such issue must be taken into consideration and should be customized according to pupils needs. Providing shorter or easier tests, cloze tests or multiple choice tests are one of the modifications that may be provided to learners with SpLDs.

4.5 Summary

In conclusion, there is a huge diversity of methods and strategies that are recommended to be applied for teaching pupils with specific learning difficulties. They are often explained in detail, highly promoted by numbers of specialists who emphasize that a particular method is the most appreciated one etc. In practice, it much depends on a teacher, his personality, habits and experience. First and foremost, it mainly depends on the pupils whose difficulties always have an individual character. No difficulty manifests in the same way, no pupil has the same character and needs. Therefore, a teacher must be able to see the individual nature of every pupil and his difficulty and do whatever is in his power to provide an appropriate care and support and help him to cope with his troubles. It is up to every teacher what methods, strategies and principles are involved in teaching and learning English. However, they should be always based on pupils' strengths and weaknesses as well as on their individual needs.

Besides the quantity of teaching methods and strategies, the basic teaching principles, such as friendly school environment, teacher's attitude and relationship with pupils, motivation and boosting self-esteem, cannot be ignored by no means. As far as I am concerned, these teaching principles are crucial for the whole teaching learning process. Of course, they are closely related to the methods and strategies mentioned above. Together, they can create an environment where pupils are encouraged to achieve something. Finally, it is up to the individual pupils how they decide to handle it.

II Practical part

The practical part of the diploma thesis is dedicated to the research concerning a study of attitudes to pupils with specific learning difficulties in the English language teaching at lower secondary schools. This part is based on interview surveys conducted among teachers of English at lower secondary schools accompanied by observations of particular English lessons.

At the beginning, the practical part focuses on the aims of the research and hypotheses. A choice and characteristics of schools and interviewees will be presented and the methods of research will be described. Furthermore, analysis of research is going to be provided. Finally, verification of hypotheses and final conclusion will be included.

5 Research

The subject of the research is teaching English to pupils with specific learning difficulties within ordinary classes at lower secondary schools. The research took place in three elementary schools in the region of Hradec Králové. The main aim of the research was to characterise the attitudes of English teachers to pupils with specific learning difficulties and to provide an overall picture of their situation. The next aims were to focus on the period when pupils are usually diagnosed as having a certain learning difficulty and on teacher's experience with parents' cooperation in coping with a difficulty. The next objective was to define how crucial motivation, positive attitude and friendly atmosphere are (according to the teachers) for pupils with specific learning difficulties. Another aim was to present a picture of methods and approaches that are applied by the teachers when working with pupils with SpLDs. Furthermore, the objective of the research was to ascertain the areas where an individual teacher's approach is mostly employed when dealing with pupils with learning difficulties.

5.1 Research methods

The data were mostly collected by means of an interview further accompanied by few observations. The research was done among the teachers of English language at lower secondary schools. The interviews were anonymous and neither teachers' names nor names of the schools would be used in the research. The data were collected in three elementary schools in different parts of Hradec Králové region. I approached some of the English teachers who I got to know during my whole pedagogical training or during my own primary schooldays.

The interview encompasses 15 basic open-ended questions with several sub-questions. Since the interview is semi-structured, any additional questions can be asked to clarify both any question and answer. The questions go from more general, introducing the issue, to more specific and personal ones. The interview is based on direct questioning, meaning a direct verbal communication with the respondents. The teachers were interviewed individually one by one. The reason why the semi-structured interview was used is to get deeper into the problem and discuss the personal experience of every teacher involved in the research.

The teachers were asked the following questions:

- Are there any pupils with SpLDs at your school? What is the average number of pupils with SpLDs in each class? What is the nature of the difficulties?

- When are pupils usually diagnosed as having a specific learning difficulty?

- What about parents and their attitudes to their children with SpLDs? Are they willing to cooperate with you or do they only call for special treatment?

- Do you use any PC programs or applications when working with pupils with SpLDs in English lessons?

- Do you hold any extra English lessons for pupils with SpLDs?

- What is the general nature of support measures you apply when working with pupils with SpLDs? (For example assessment, modified materials, usage of computer, less reading or writing, providing more time, etc.)

- What do you think is the biggest problem when talking about pupils with SpLDs and English lessons? What kind of difficulties do you usually deal with?

- When applying any special techniques or approaches in the English lessons, do you employ them only for those with SpLDs or for the whole class?
- How important is the role of basic teaching principles such as friendly environment, teacher's attitude and his relationship with pupils, motivation, praise, self-esteem, clear instructions, optimism, etc. when working with dyslexic pupils?
- Do you use certain class routines during the teaching learning process? Do you think it is important for pupils with SpLDs to follow such routines?
- How is usually a new piece of grammar presented? Deductively or inductively? Do you think that presenting grammar inductively is less demanding for pupils with SpLDs?
- Is it helpful for dyslexic pupils to revise things frequently and in different forms of activities and exercises?
- There are certain teaching techniques that are believed to be beneficial for pupils with SpLDs. Can you express your opinion on them? Do you apply them in your English lessons?
  - Multisensory approach
  - Communicative approach
  - Sequential approach
  - Structured approach
  - Metacognitive approach
  - Repetitive approach
  - Presentation techniques
  - Total physical response
- Where do you draw your inspiration from when teaching pupils with SpLDs? Did you undergo any training course focused on teaching such pupils?
- Do you see any progress after devoting a lot of time and effort to pupils with SpLDs?

Regarding the observation, this method was applied to really see what is happening in English lessons where pupils with SpLDs are presented and supplement the interviews with a kind of real material. Of course, there was not enough time to observe all the issues described in the diploma thesis, especially in the part called

Teaching methods. However, at least some of the features were able to be observed and analysed. In the first place, I wanted to observe the following phenomena:

- A class atmosphere
- Teacher's attitude to pupils
- Teacher's relationship with pupils
- Giving clear understandable instructions
- Ways of motivating pupils
- Individual approach

These phenomena can be observed in any type of English lesson regardless it is a reading, writing, speaking or another kind of lesson and that is why they were chosen. Besides those, also other phenomena were observed depending on the type of lesson and activities applied in it. All the observations will be put together with the data gained by interviews and they will be employed in the analysis of the research.

5.2   Ethical aspects of interviews and observations

All the teachers that were interviewed and observed were given prior information about the purpose and procedure of the research. They agreed to be recorded (only for my own use) during the interviews using a Dictaphone in order to be able to better analyze their responses later and to do not disturb them by making notes when answering the questions. The teachers were also familiar with the fact that the research will be a part of the diploma thesis that would be later accessible for university teachers and other students, that it is completely anonymous and neither their names (or names of the pupils) nor the name of the school would be used in the research. Just short and brief characteristics of the schools and the teachers would be given to introduce them. All of them agreed to the previous issues and were willing to be a part of the research.

5.3   Choice and characteristics of schools and interviewees

The target group of interviewees was the lower secondary English teachers teaching at three different elementary schools in the region of Hradec Králové (at the second stage of elementary schools). At the beginning, I contacted more schools to participate in the research; however, it was not easy at all to convince them to

cooperate with me since they were probably afraid of doing an interview with someone they do not recognize well. Finally, some English language teachers who I got to know mostly during my pedagogical training were willing to help me and take part in the study.

The final choice of schools and teachers was really positive and beneficial since I have already known most of the teachers and I have had the opportunity to observe their work a few times and not only once. Moreover, due to a certain relationship with the teachers, I hoped to create a relaxed atmosphere for interviews where the teachers would definitely feel more comfortable and would be willing to share their opinions, thoughts and personal experience. In total, three elementary schools and four English teachers became involved in the research.

Generally, all three elementary schools are divided up into primary school (grades 1-5) and lower secondary school (grades 6-9). Although, the research is aimed only at lower secondary ones. All the three schools are located in towns and cities of various sizes, are attended by a different number of pupils and have a totally different number of the individual classes within the particular grade.

The first school (School in B) is rather a small school in a small town surrounded by several villages. The school is completely renovated and equipped with new modern furniture as well as technology and it provides really pleasant environment for all the learners. The school participates in a large number of projects, a lot of them focusing on foreign languages. The school is attended by about 250 pupils among whom some pupils are with special educational needs provided by special re-educational care (at the first stage of elementary school). Mostly, there are two classes in every grade of the school. Concerning the pupils with SpLDs at the second stage (at lower secondary school), extra English lessons are offered once a week. Even though the extra lessons are not intended only for pupils with SpLDs, they are usually attended right by those ones.

The next school (School in HK) is situated in the centre of a part of a large city. This school is rather small (of family type) with about 200 pupils attending the school. There is only one class in every grade. The school is also renovated and it provides well-equipped classes with all the necessary modern technologies. The school takes part in few projects and it pays increased interest in pupils with

developmental learning difficulties and ADHD. No extra English lessons are provided for those with SpLDs. However, teachers are available anytime by the means of school email or during their office hours at school. Generally, the school is aimed at a positive school climate and teaching-learning partnership.

The third school (School in T) is the largest one out of the three schools involved in the research. There are about 500 pupils attending the school with usually three classes in every grade. It is found in a bit larger town and it is the only school in the town. As the previous schools, this one also participates in few projects and is engaged in certain care for pupils with specific learning difficulties. The situation with extra English lessons is the same as in school in HK.

Table n. 1 – Schools involved in the research

SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH				
	City size	**Number of pupils**	**Experience with SpLDs**	**Extra English lessons**
School 1	A small town	About 250	Yes	Yes
School 2	A large city	About 200	Yes	No
School 3	A larger town	About 500	Yes	No

Concerning the selected teachers, they are going to be briefly introduced in the following part. All of them were interviewed separately for about one hour. The teachers are of different ages and they have worked within the educational field for different amounts of time.

Teacher M.P. is a man and he is quite a young teacher (about 28 years old) with about 5 years of pedagogical experience. He teaches mostly English. He has been working on many different projects and he is really successful in his job. Due to his friendly and partner-like attitude to pupils, he belongs to favourite teachers at school.

Teacher M.N. is a language teacher. She teaches English, Russian and Spanish language. She is about 42 years old and her teaching experience is 17 years long. She has a really friendly attitude to pupils and her English lessons, in my opinion, are full of enthusiasm and positive atmosphere.

Teacher I.P. is a woman with more than 28 years of pedagogical experience. She teaches English and History, however, most of the time, she devotes her attention to being the headmistress. Her school is known as being successful in a variety of projects.

Teacher M.F. is an English and German teacher. She is about 37 years old and her teaching practice is almost 10 years long. She is the only one (among the respondents) who is not qualified as the English teacher.

5.4 Hypotheses

Based on the aims of the research, I have formulated a set of following hypotheses:

H1: Pupils are diagnosed as having a specific learning difficulty when attending the first stage of elementary school.

H2: Teachers at lower secondary schools do not hold any extra or special English lessons for pupils with SpLDs.

H3: Teachers' experience with parents of pupils with SpLDs is positive since the parents are interested in their children to make progress in English.

H4: Motivation and teacher's positive attitude is fundamental when working with pupils with SpLDs in English lessons.

H5: The English teachers do not use programs specially created for pupils with SpLDs.

H6: Methods and approaches employed in English lessons are applied for all the pupils in the classroom and there are none specially used only for pupils with SpLDs.

H7: An individual approach is applied mostly when examining (testing) and assessing pupils with SpLDs.

H8: A multisensory approach is employed in the English classes regardless of pupils' age.

H9: A metacognitive approach is a common part of teaching English to pupils with SpLDs.

5.5   Analysis of research

Interview and observation data were collected and classified and the research results are presented in the following part. All the data are classified according to the questions the teachers were responding to and their individual point of view will be described there. Even some of their answers or parts of them (translated into English) are going to be quoted.

Naturally, the particular dialogues were initiated by more common and personal questions of everyday life to create a pleasant and relaxing atmosphere of trust. However, these questions are not involved in the following analysis of research.

1. **Are there any pupils with SpLDs at your school? What is the average number of pupils with SpLDs in each class? What is the nature of the difficulties?**

There are several pupils with specific learning difficulties at every school that was involved in the research and all the English teachers have had a particular experience with them. These pupils are present in all the classes at lower secondary schools (the second stage of elementary schools). In some classes, only one or two pupils have difficulties but there is no class that would be completely without such pupils. The teachers came to a conclusion that the average number of pupils with difficulties within a class is about 4. The nature of difficulties also differs a lot in all the schools. Some learners with SpLDs seem to have almost no noticeable troubles and they are successful at coping with it. On the other hand, there are also cases where enormous difficulties appear and significantly affect the process of teaching and learning English. Besides this, there are also pupils that are weak or lazy in general together with the gifted ones. All in all, the teachers sometimes find it challenging to cope with such heterogeneous groups of pupils.

2. **When are pupils usually diagnosed as having a specific learning difficulty?**

Based on the research, the majority of the teachers replied that pupils are usually diagnosed as having certain learning difficulty at the first stage of elementary education, principally at the period when reading starts to be taught. Only teacher I.P. remembered a case where "a pupil with really mild difficulties was not diagnosed, but after being afraid of passing the entrance exams, his mother wanted to get confirmation about his troubles." However, this was the only and exceptional case.

3. **What about parents and their attitudes to their children with SpLDs? Are they willing to cooperate with you or do they only call for special treatment?**

According to teacher's personal experience, cooperation with parents of pupils with SpLDs differs a lot from case to case. None of them can say that the experience is only bad or good. Teacher M.P. and teacher I.P. consider cooperation with parents as rather good. Techer I.P. said that "parents are mostly interested in the issue and are willing to support their children to achieve certain results." As teacher M.N. and M.F. said, the cooperation is really individual. According to teacher M.N., "some parents take the difficulties as a kind of handicap on which it is necessary to work, some take it as a way of getting particular relieves for their children without trying to work on it."

Parents, as well as pupils, have plenty of opportunities to discuss anything with the teachers since they all are regularly available at office (consultation) hours. In addition to the hours, the teachers can be contacted by means of phone or email and they are willing to deal with any kind of problem whenever possible.

4. **Do you use any PC programs or applications when working with pupils with SpLDs in English lessons?**

Programs or applications particularly designed for pupils with SpLDs are not used by any of the teachers in English lessons. Concerning the remedial lessons held for pupils with SpLDs, there are some programs used by teachers specially qualified for this kind of work.

However, even the English teachers at the second stage of elementary school employ certain programs or applications to revise vocabulary, pieces of grammar or practise listening and writing. Even though they are not intended exclusively for learners with learning difficulties, they may be also very beneficial for them. Each of the teachers has his or her favourite ones they like to use.

Concerning teacher M.P., he is in favour of using different modern technologies. He said: "I like online tests and web pages where various English games and activities can be created. For example, duolingo is a perfect application for pupils with SpLDs as they can hear the language here and try to say it on their own and the application checks whether it is right or wrong." He is familiar with a lot of good PC programs that are, unfortunately, paid. Communicating through Skype is another

favourite activity applied in terms of a few international projects where pupils from different foreign schools communicate by using Skype to practise everyday communication.

Teacher I.P. is also familiar with employing Skype to English lessons. Besides this, an interactive board is a tool that is used almost in every lesson.

Regarding teacher M.N., she said: "From time to time I hold English lessons in a multimedia classroom where pupils do a variety of exercises that are also friendly to those with SpLDs since they do not have to write by hand, they usually only fill in the right answers or do multiple choices and listening exercises." Learningchocolate.com is one of the popular programs that is also beneficial for learners with SpLDs as well as the weaker ones since there are different levels of individual exercises. "Quizlet is another tool that pupils frequently use during home preparation for English. It is good for writing practise for instance. Anyone can act at his own pace and according to his abilities. There is also a possibility to print vocabulary." Apart from all this, the school has a shared disk where a plenty of materials is available for pupils. There are grammar presentations, exercises focusing on current topics, links to interactive exercises and a lot more.

Teacher M.F. works mostly with a variety of attractive exercises and activities by using an interactive board. In her opinion, "the interactive board is a great device that can be really helpful for dyslexic pupils since there are plenty of actions, attractive games, quizzes and exercises that can be created or used. They can see it, touch it, move with different objects and sometimes even hear it." Additionally, from time to time, she works with helpforenglish.cz where several different and interesting materials are available.

In general, interactive boards are devices that are most frequently used by all the teachers.

5. Do you hold any extra English lessons for pupils with SpLDs?

None of the schools provides extra English lessons specifically for pupils with SpLDs. However, there are extra lessons at school in B where anyone who struggles with English is welcome. The lesson takes place once a week and is provided by teacher M.P. Based on his experience, some pupils with SpLDs attend it regularly and some are not interested in it.

Concerning the other schools and teachers, they are willing to help any pupils whenever possible since they are regularly available at their office hours. Moreover, any consultation can be arranged by mutual agreement.

6. **What is the general nature of support measures you apply when working with pupils with SpLDs? (For example assessment, modified materials, usage of computer, less reading or writing, providing more time, etc.)**

All the teachers stated that support measures are mostly based on the legal documents where particular support measures are described. Of course, it depends on the nature of a specific learning difficulty. Furthermore, schools are obligated to follow recommendations given by an educational and psychological counselling centre.

As for the personal experience of the individual teachers, teacher M.P. emphasizes that "anyone needs to experience success and have an opportunity to become better." Therefore, his attitude to pupils with SpLDs is a lot individual. Generally, he provides printed vocabulary and grammatical overviews (see in Attachment D); he uses shorter texts for reading, provides more time for completion of any work if necessary or gives shorter exercises. Moreover, pupils are given an opportunity to choose whether they prefer oral or written exams. In some cases, he must really find something that a particular pupil is able to manage to grade him. Concerning a slower pace of work or speaking slowly, he does not consider it as a crucial thing which was also evident during the observations. "As for oral examinations, I usually use headphones and some pupils with SpLDs are also tested separately during breaks to prevent them from stress", he said.

Teacher I.P. applies mostly the same tolerances as mentioned above. She only added a tolerance of phonetic spelling of vocabulary.

Regarding teacher M.N., she stated: "I am not for making special and modified written tests for pupils with difficulties." She only marks a part of a common test that a particular pupil should be able to handle. If he is not able to manage the rest, it does not matter. "When preparing any additional texts, I prefer using a larger font and clear text structure." She would welcome using assessment expressed in words (together with marking) but none of the parents require it so far. She also gives

opportunities to be examined orally but 90 percent of pupils choose written tests as they prefer to think still about answers.

Teacher M.F. usually provides the same tests for all pupils and does not modify them. She stated: "I tolerate only minor errors that are influenced by a particular difficulty." When necessary she provides being retested orally when pupils' written expression is poor and she provides more time for tasks to be completed. Concerning reading, most texts in course books are usually not as long and each pupil usually reads one or two sentences. She said: "When pupils are supposed to read a longer text on their own, I regularly observe those with difficulties and give them support if necessary."

Concerning all of them, assessment is the main phenomenon that is important to be tolerated. Pupils with SpLDs are not evaluated same as those who do not suffer from any. Mostly, pupils with difficulties are given about one to two grades better mark. However, all the teachers emphasized that assessment is much influenced by pupils' attitude to their difficulties. Every time, a certain effort of pupils must be evident. They cannot get better marks and do nothing for making even little progress.

7. **What do you think is the biggest problem when talking about pupils with SpLDs and English lessons? What kind of difficulties do you usually deal with?**

Based on the research, difficulties manifest a lot individually and it is not possible to generalize them. Nevertheless, the teachers tried to sum them up.

Teacher M.P. stated: "I consider embarrassment and being afraid of making mistakes the biggest obstacle when dealing with pupils with SpLDs." He does not see reading problems as crucial. However, written expression is something which is demanding for most dyslexic pupils. Therefore, they are often retested orally. "Another usual problem is remembering written form of words and a need of permanent revisions."

According to teacher M.N., "a slow pace of working and confusion when working with any text is probably the most apparent problem. Pupils have troubles with seeking information quickly in a text."

Teacher I.P. emphasizes difficulties both in written and spoken language.

On the other hand, teacher M.F. pointed out that "quality and pace of reading is the most serious obstacle which goes hand in hand with weak comprehension of texts." She mentions slow pace of working too.

8. **When applying any special techniques or approaches in the English lessons, do you employ them only for those with SpLDs or for the whole class?**

Based on the answers of all the teachers, any techniques, methods or approaches are applied within the whole class and they find it best for all pupils. They don't feel a need to differentiate activities in the classes. Teacher M.N. said: "I am not for it because I do not accept dividing pupils according to their abilities since it may violate class atmospheres and relationships between pupils." She thinks that everyone should be given same opportunities regardless of individual abilities.

9. **How important is the role of basic teaching principles such as friendly environment, teacher's attitude and his relationship with pupils, motivation, praise, self-esteem, clear instructions, optimism, etc. when working with dyslexic pupils?**

The teachers agreed that motivation, friendly environment, praise, positive attitude and good relationships with pupils are the fundamental issues of teaching learning process in general. All pupils need and want to be praised since praise is usually one of the most motivating things. However, in the case of pupils with SpLDs, it is sometimes really hard to find something for what they could be praised. Therefore, they must be praised for any little progress to be motivated to go on. Everyone should be given an opportunity to success in something.

Concerning teacher M.P., he puts emphasis on "having a specific approach when working with such pupils." He said: "Any teacher can apply the best methods, use best aids but it is totally useless when pupils are not interested in the subject and do not like the teacher. The pupils must feel that a teacher is interested in them and that he cares about their interests, needs or troubles."

Generally, teachers M.P. and I.P. find international projects as being highly motivating since pupils have an opportunity to use English in real and everyday situations. They see that thanks to English, they can communicate with anybody in the world. "Even though such projects do not provide mastering grammar, they make pupils not being afraid of speaking English," stated teacher I.P. Those two teachers

also have their own specific way of evaluating ordinary exercises and activities during English lessons which was also observed during the lessons. Pupils are given likes and stamps which motivate them to finish any work. For a certain number of likes or stamps, they get an A mark. As it was already mentioned in question 4, teacher M.P. uses a variety of online programs and applications which are also motivating. He also runs his own kind of web pages, where pupils have an opportunity to practise English. There is a plenty of links to various web pages focusing on English as well as links to interesting books, magazines, dictionaries etc. The web page also includes several attractive reasons why pupils should be able to speak English. The same reasons are also stated in one of the main notice boards in the language classroom of the school.

As in the case of teacher M.P. and I.P., teacher M.N. uses stickers and sweets as a reward or they are playing a game at the end of a lesson. "Working with PC programs and computers is another motivating feature. Pupils have usually a free choice and they can deal with anything they like, in English of course."

A system of likes or small marks is employed by teacher M.F., too. However, likes and extra small marks are usually given to those who finish an exercise first. Besides this, games and attractive activities seem to be favourite and motivating.

Providing clear instructions during English lessons was mostly emphasized by teachers M.N. and M.F. According to teacher M.N., "it is necessary to be aware of teaching pupils that are often completely different and the contrasts are sometimes remarkable a lot."

10. Do you use certain class routines during the teaching learning process? Do you think it is important for pupils with SpLDs to follow such routines?

Based on the experience of all the interviewed teachers, routines are believed to be a really important aspect of any lessons, especially for pupils with difficulties. According to the teachers, most lessons should follow a certain structure that is familiar for pupils as they usually like to expect what is going to follow. Naturally, some lessons are specific and the routines are broken.

Teachers M.P., M.F., and I.P. usually start lessons with warm up questions based on current topics. So pupils are woken up by kind of short speaking. On the other hand, teachers M.N. prefer short warm up activities revising grammar and

vocabulary. The middle part of a lesson usually depends on current topics discussed. Concerning teacher M.N., she usually applies some activities during which pupils can move. At the end of a lesson, short playful activities or quizzes are often employed together with a quick summary of a lesson.

11. **How is usually a new piece of grammar presented? Deductively or inductively? Do you think that presenting grammar inductively is less demanding for pupils with SpLDs?**

In general, both deductive and inductive presentation of grammar is applied by the teachers depending on a type of issue. However, none of them thinks that the inductive way is less demanding for pupils with SpLDs.

For example, teacher M.P. tries to follow the inductive approach. "There is usually a diversity of pupils' reactions. Sometimes, they are successful in creating a certain rule, sometimes not." Teachers I.P. and M.F. follows mostly the deductive presentation. According to them, pupils are used to this type of presentation. Regarding teacher I.P., she said: "I usually try the inductive approach with older pupils who have more experience with English." Teacher M.N. uses both approaches. "However, when dealing with something which does not exist in Czech, I prefer the deductive one," she said.

12. **Is it helpful for dyslexic pupils to revise things frequently and in different forms of activities and exercises?**

The issue of frequent revision and over learning by using different forms of activities and exercises is thought to be fundamental for most of the pupils regardless of having difficulties or not and the teachers feel it as a general principle of any activity. If having enough time, they do the maximum for pupils to revise as much as possible. Moreover, teacher M.N. states that "curriculum is repeating in cycles so there are enough opportunities to over learning."

13. **There are certain teaching techniques that are believed to be beneficial for pupils with SpLDs. Can you express your opinion on them? Do you apply them in your English lessons? (Multisensory approach, communicative approach, sequential approach, structured approach, metacognitive approach, repetitive approach, presentation techniques, total physical response etc.)**

Generally, most of the teaching techniques or approaches are commonly used in English lessons and the teachers are aware of them. Nevertheless, they are not regarded as being crucial only for pupils with specific learning difficulties. The teachers came to a conclusion, that these techniques would be employed in English lessons even when no learner with difficulty would be present. However, they find them (at least most of them) fundamental.

As for the multisensory approach, it is believed to be friendly especially for sixth and seventh graders as they still have a need to use more senses to learn and remember better. The teachers usually do not apply it when teaching ninth graders as their personality is completely different. Teacher M.P. and M.F. likes playing activities where gestures, facial expressions, movements, descriptions, drawing pictures and making sounds are used to express English vocabulary. It helps children to remember it better, more quickly and for a longer time. All the teachers are using the interactive boards that are somehow related to multisensory approach as pupils can see things, touch and move things and sometimes even hear. Most of the programs and application used by the teachers (as described in question 4) are based on the principle of more senses. Activities involving movement are emphasized by teachers M.N. and partially by M.P. In their lessons, pupils have usually quite lots of opportunities to learn and move at the same time.

Concerning the communicative approach, the teachers stated that it is employed much more frequently than it used to be several years ago. According to them, usage of this approach depends on situations English is used. "When learning, practising and testing grammar, grammatical rules must be followed and mistakes must be corrected," stated teacher I.P. On the other hand, in another type of activities, natural and fluent speaking is more appreciated. For example, teacher M.P. favours communicative approach when communicating with foreign schools, during the international meetings of pupils from different parts of the world or within any class activity that is based on speaking. Teacher I.P. stated that "English consist of several different fields that are evaluated by marks of various values." Being able to speak more or less fluently and not being afraid of it is one of the fields. Teacher M.N. and teacher M.F. mention that it depends on what needs to be practised. When a real and natural ability to speak is needed, teacher M.N. encourages pupils to express themselves and to not be scared of making mistakes. Concerning teacher M.F., "the

communicative approach is sometimes employed according to the abilities of particular classes." Based on her experience, some classes are so weak that they are not able to speak on their own or to discuss any more complex topic.

As for the sequential and structured approaches, all the teachers agreed that they undoubtedly belong to a standard way of teaching English.

Metacognition is something that is not spread much widely among the teachers involved in the research. However, most of them find it as an essential part of making progress and taking advantage of learning from mistakes. Teachers M.P. and I.P. are trying to follow this approach but it is quite challenging as pupils are not accustomed to it. They attempt to implement it step by step and teach learners to evaluate themselves and think about their strengths and weaknesses. According to them, the older the pupils are, the abler they are to discuss what they may do to become better. Regarding teachers M.F. and M.N., the approach is applied mostly at the end of individual periods (like trimesters and semesters) when pupils are encouraged to evaluate their progress and failures.

A repetitive approach was already discussed in the previous question.

Concerning the presentation techniques, varieties of techniques are mostly used when dealing with vocabulary and grammar. All the teachers are using pictures, flash cards, mimics, gestures, movements, descriptions or definitions to express any word or phrase. In classes of teachers I.P. and M.P., pupils are sometimes asked to explain something to their mates. Teachers M.F. and M.N. also ask pupils to explain vocabulary or pieces of grammar to each other.

14. **Where do you draw your inspiration from when teaching pupils with SpLDs? Did you undergo any training course focused on teaching such pupils?**

Teachers M.P., M.F., and M.N. find inspiration mostly on the Internet or literature focusing on the issue of dyslexic pupils. Sometimes, they are also inspired by their colleagues as specific learning difficulties are one of the frequently discussed topics among the teachers. Teacher I.P. usually cooperates with his colleague and they endeavour to create something that may be useful for learners with SpLDs as her long teaching experience and a great enthusiasm of her younger colleague are put together. All in all, none of the teachers has undergone any special

training course focusing on teaching pupils with SpLDs. Usually, their teaching experience help them to deal with pupils with difficulties even though the cases are usually really diverse.

15. Do you see any progress after devoting a lot of time and effort to pupils with SpLDs?

As for teacher M.F., she sometimes feels as being frustrated when much effort is taken to the pupils and the effect is not as good as they are supposing to be. However, she does not give up as she likes her job. Teachers M.P. and M.N. assume that "even little progress is worth of working hard on it." Teacher I.P. states that it is not possible to teach everything to every pupil. "It much depends on pupils' attitude to learning and their effort and interest to become better and make progress. Any teacher, who likes his job, must be willing to do as much as possible to support the learners and mostly, he has to believe in himself."

5.6 Verification of hypotheses

This subchapter focuses on verification of the hypotheses on the basis of research conducted among teachers of English language at the second stage of elementary schools.

H1: Pupils are diagnosed as having a specific learning difficulty when attending the first stage of elementary school.

The answers on question n. 2 are used for verification of hypothesis 1. Based on the experience of all the teachers, pupils are diagnosed as having a specific learning difficulty when attending the first stage of elementary school. There was only one case when a pupil needed to be diagnosed later to be able to pass entrance exams for secondary school. Therefore, the research shows that hypothesis n. 1 can be confirmed.

H2: Teachers at lower secondary schools do not hold any extra or special English lessons for pupils with SpLDs.

As displayed in results of question n. 5, all the teachers are ready to help anyone whenever possible. Regular English lessons are provided by one of the teachers. However, these lessons are not held exclusively for learners with SpLDs but for anyone who is interested in it. On that account, the hypothesis can be disproved as no lessons of English specialized in learners with SpLDs are held by the teachers.

H3: Teachers' experience with parents of pupils with SpLDs is positive since the parents are interested in their children to make progress in English.

The data arising from the research show that teachers' experience with those parents differs case by case. Some parents are willing to cooperate and help their children to overcome their troubles, some totally ignore it. Only two teachers consider cooperation with parents of pupils with SpLDs as rather positive. However, this is not enough. The hypothesis n. 3 cannot be confirmed.

H4: Motivation and teacher's positive attitude is fundamental when working with pupils with SpLDs in English lessons.

The results of question n. 9 and 15 are used for verification of this hypothesis. According to the results, all the teachers agreed that motivation and teacher's positive attitude are the essential aspects when dealing with pupils with SpLDs in

English lessons. It is closely related to praise and friendly relationships between teachers and pupils. First of all, pupils must be engaged in the subject and they need to feel that teachers are interested in them. Only then, application of any method or technique can be successful. It implies that the hypothesis can be confirmed.

H5: The English teachers do not use programs specially created for pupils with SpLDs.

Even though the programs and applications used by the teachers are not officially labelled as being particularly designed for pupils with SpLDs, most of them are beneficial for those pupils too, as described in question n. 4. The results of the research show that the hypothesis n. 5 can be partially confirmed.

H6: Methods and approaches employed in English lessons are applied for all the pupils in the classroom and there are none specially used only for pupils with SpLDs.

Based on the data arising from question n. 8 and 13, methods and approaches employed in English lessons are applied for all the pupils in the classroom. According to the teachers, they belong to a standard way of teaching English. On that account, the hypothesis can be confirmed.

H7: An individual approach is applied mostly when examining (testing) and assessing pupils with SpLDs.

The results of question n. 6 and 7 are used for verification of the hypothesis. An individual approach is usually applied in every aspect of English but is mostly differs from case to case as pupils' difficulties appear in different combinations. All in all, the individual approach is mostly employed when examining and assessing pupils with SpLDs since these two fields of language belong to daily routines. That implies that hypothesis n. 7 can be rather confirmed.

H8: A multisensory approach is employed in the English classes regardless of pupils' age.

As stated in question n. 13, a multisensory approach is preferred to be used especially for sixth and seventh grades, in few cases it is applied even in higher grades. According to this, this hypothesis must be partially disproved.

H9: A metacognitive approach is a common part of teaching English to pupils with SpLDs.

Analysis of the research showed that even all the teachers are familiar with this kind of approach and they try to apply it as often as possible, it is not a common part of teaching learning process so far. Therefore, it is not possible to confirm hypothesis n. 9 on the basis of the results gained from the research.

5.7   Summary of results

The results of the research show that methods, techniques, and approaches are generally employed for all pupils in a class. In addition to this, they are not aimed only at pupils with specific learning difficulties but are beneficial for all of them and they would be used even if no pupils with SpLDs would be present in classes. They are considered as being a common part of any teaching-learning process. In general, the teachers do not form special groups based on pupils' individual abilities and they also do not use totally different materials or aids. The attitudes and materials are usually only modified according to the nature of difficulty to be less demanding for pupils with specific learning difficulties.

Application of some approaches is sometimes influenced by the age of pupils. Therefore, learning through more senses in mostly employed at lower grades of secondary school. On the other hand, the metacognitive approach is most often used at higher grades where pupils are more experienced and they are able to think more about their strengths and weaknesses and they are capable of analysing their attitudes to learning.

According to the responses that I got, the individual approach to learners with specific learning difficulties mostly arises from legal documents (described in chapter 2) and recommendations given by an educational and psychological counselling centre. Additionally, the teachers' approaches are also built on their own pedagogical experience with these pupils.

The research ascertained that the difficulties are very individual and no pupil can be defined as having the same kind and magnitude of troubles. Therefore, it is really challenging for the teachers to provide as much as possible to support the learners and help them with coping with their difficulties. Pupils' success and

progress are partially based on a good cooperation with their parents who may have a considerable impact on children's attitude to their kind of handicap. However, the research showed that even a cooperation with pupils' parents if very individual.

All in all, the teachers try hard to provide their pupils with a variety of interesting and attractive materials and activities. They apply a plenty of different ways of learning, revising and testing pupils' knowledge. Nevertheless, motivation, friendly class atmosphere and teacher's positive attitude to pupils have proved to be the fundamental aspect of teaching learners with SpLDs. As described in the analysis of the research, a lot of things are used to motivate pupils, from giving likes, sweets or stamps to interesting PC programs, applications, and games.

Finally, the research data showed that pupils are diagnosed as having a certain type of difficulty at the first stage of elementary schools and much care is taken to them (especially in the form of remedial lessons). However, even at the second stage, they need to be supported as their difficulties persist. The teachers take a lot of effort and the effect is sometimes not as good as they supposed to be. Even though they are aware of not being able to teach everything to all pupils, the teachers involved in the research likes their job and they are willing to support the learners and they believe that their effort is worth it.

Conclusion

In conclusion of the thesis, I would like to sum up the results I came to. The main aim of the diploma thesis was to introduce specific learning difficulties and put them into a context of English language teaching and learning. The thesis is based on teaching English at lower secondary schools (at the second stage of elementary education).

The main objective of the practical part was to characterise the attitudes of English teachers to pupils with specific learning difficulties and to provide an overall picture of their situation. The practical part is mostly dealing with results of the research that was conducted among four teachers of English at three different elementary schools (the second stage of elementary education). The research showed that all the teachers have quite a rich experience with teaching English to pupils with specific learning difficulties. All the data are analysed in the fifth chapter of the thesis.

The research established much of data depicted in the practical part of the thesis. It showed that specific learning difficulties manifest very individually and the pupils usually suffer from a variety of combinations of troubles. This was proven by the fact, that the teachers were not able to make a list of the most frequent difficulties because they differ from case to case. Therefore, a number of techniques and approaches are applied to make learning English less demanding.

It was also ascertained that the approaches employed by the teachers are applied for all the pupils in a class since they might be useful even for learners without learning difficulties. A more detailed summary of results is introduced in the last subchapter of the research.

Moreover, the research showed that positive class atmosphere, motivation, praise and teachers' friendly and caring relationship with pupils is the crucial aspect of working with those pupils. Without all of this, any special methods and approaches are useless. This fact corresponds to data that were discussed in chapter 4 of the theoretical part dealing with methods of teaching English.

On the basis of gained facts, I conclude that dealing with pupils with specific learning difficulties is still a topical problem and they need to be supported even at

the second stage of elementary schools. To integrate or include them fully, they should be providing the same opportunities as other pupils since integration is not only about tolerating their difficulties. A lot of effort, from a teacher and pupil (as well as parents), must be taken to make learning English less demanding and stressful. When applying the approaches and techniques, described in chapter 4 and analysed according to the research, any pupil with specific learning difficulty is able to somehow tackle his troubles and make progress.

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Attachments

Attachment A

This is wrlat a learning-disadleb chilb
often has to contenb with
when attemqting
to need a dook.

Picture 1 – How dyslexics see words[2]

The problem is in the wa
(P)rets what the eyes
an optical illusion, excep
mis match between wha
and reality happens with
prit on a page.
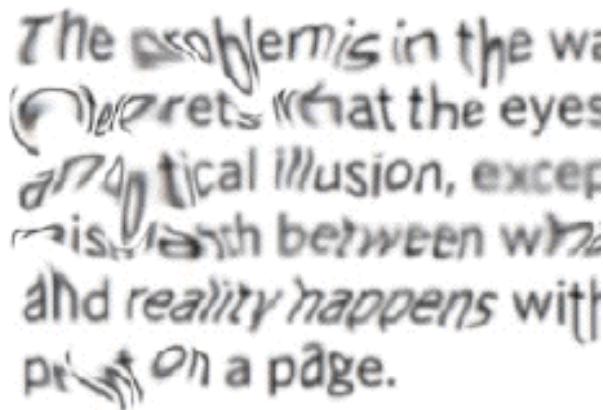
Picture 2 – How dyslexics see words[3]

What
dyslexic
users see.
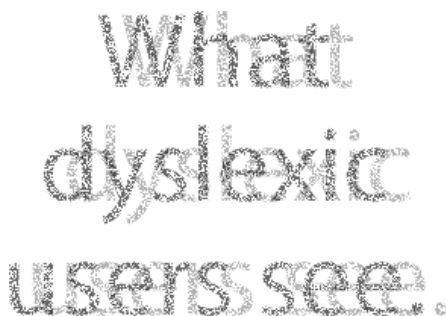
Picture 3 – How dyslexics see words[4]

[2]https://www.google.cz/search?q=dyslexia&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjisaSar4nUAhWEDZoKHWw_D_
YQ_AUIBigB&biw=1600&bih=794#tbm=isch&q=examples+of+dyslexia+words&imgrc=7H0LSCxYi-1BgM
[3]https://www.google.cz/search?q=dyslexia&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjisaSar4nUAhWEDZoKHWw_D_
YQ_AUIBigB&biw=1600&bih=794#tbm=isch&q=examples+of+dyslexia+words&imgrc=OfiyMl4r170DXM
[4]https://www.google.cz/search?q=dyslexia&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjisaSar4nUAhWEDZoKHWw_D_
YQ_AUIBigB&biw=1600&bih=794#tbm=isch&q=how+dyslexic+see+words&imgrc=oVCIimTavwPzAM

Attachment B

Picture 4 – Dyslexic writing example[5]

Picture 5 – Dyslexic writing example [6]

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[5] https://dyslexiastories.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/scan00141.jpg
[6] https://dyslexiastories.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/scan0012.jpg
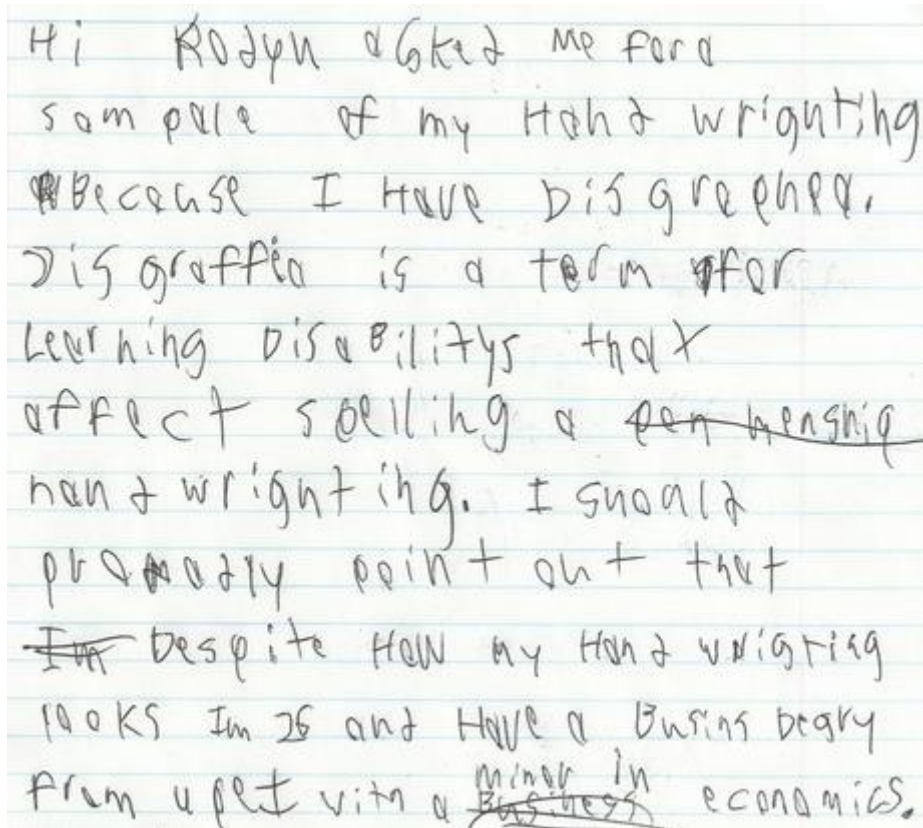
Attachment C
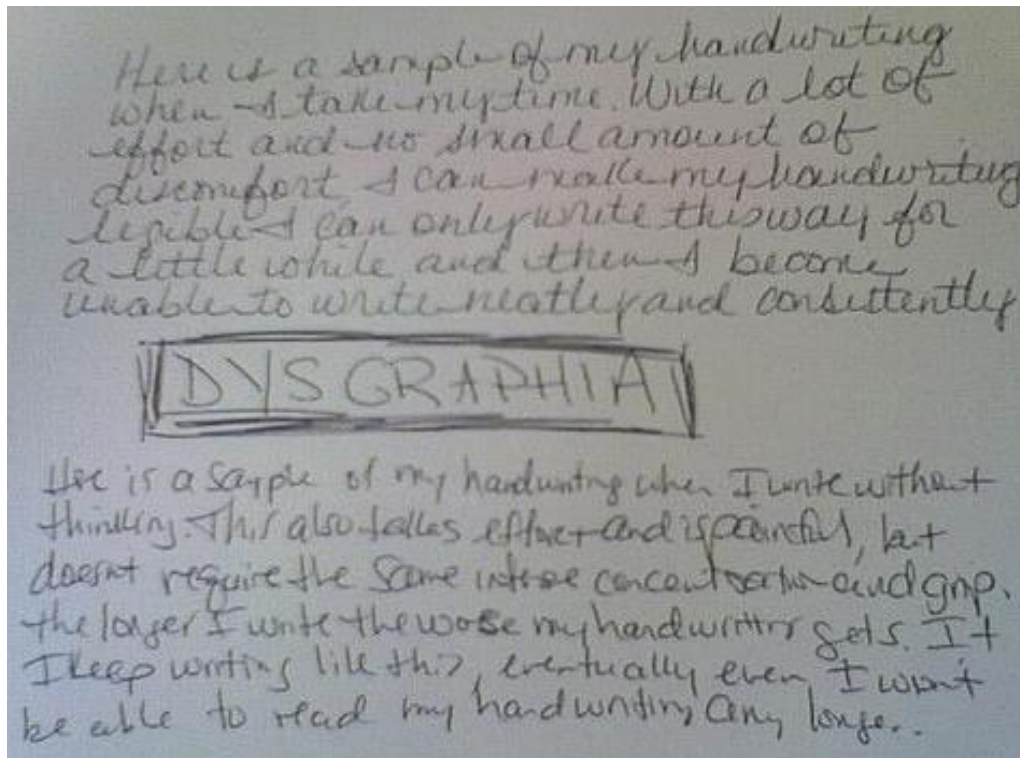
Picture 6 – Example of dysgraphia[7]

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[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dysgraphia#/media/File:Dysgraphia.jpg

Picture 7 – Example of dysgraphia ("Hi, Robyn asked me for a sample of my hand writing because I have dysgraphi**a**. Dysgraphia is a term for learning disabilities that affects spelling and handwriting. I should probably point out that despite how my hand writing looks, I'm 26 and have a business degree from UPEI with a minor in economics.**")**[8]

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[8] http://ldapei.ca/corporate-sponsorship-opportunities.html

Attachment D

Examples of grammar overviews provided to pupils (school in B)

Present continuous – Přítomný čas průběhový

✓ Právě teď se něco děje (Právě teď si čtu. - I am reading.)

1) Kladné věty

✓ Tvar slovesa to be (plný či stažený tvar) a sloveso s příponou -ing.

- **I am read**ing. (Právě teď si čtu.) • **He is sing**ing. (On právě teď zpívá.) • **We are draw**ing. (Právě teď kreslíme.)

Právě teď sleduji televizi. _____

On právě teď hraje fotbal. _____

My právě teď jíme. _____

2) Záporné věty

✓ Tvar slovesa to be, not a sloveso s příponou -ing. Rovněž lze použít stažené tvary (isn't, aren't).

- **I am not read**ing. (P. teď nečtu.) • **He is not sing**ing. (On p. teď nezpívá.) • **We are not draw**ing. (P. teď nekreslíme.)

Právě teď nesleduji televizi. _____

On právě teď nehraje fotbal. _____

My právě teď nejíme. _____

3) Otázky

✓ Změna slovosledu stejně jako u slovesa to be.

- **He is sing**ing. (On právě teď zpívá.) • **We are draw**ing. (My právě teď kreslíme.)

- **Is he sing**ing? (Zpívá on právě teď?) • **Are we draw**ing? (Kreslíme my právě teď?)

Hraje on právě teď fotbal? _____

Koukají oni právě teď na TV? _____

4) Krátké odpovědi

✓ Stejně jako u slovesa to be.

- **Is he cook**ing? (Vaří on právě teď?)

Yes, he is. (Ano, on vaří.)   **No, he isn't.** (Ne, on nevaří.)

Are you reading? _____

Is he working? _____

Are they eating? _____

Koncovka – ing:

➤ Infinitiv končí na němé –e -> toto e odpadá (come -> coming, make -> making, have -> having)
➤ infinitiv jednoslabičného slovesa končí na souhlásku, před níž je jedna samohláska-> koncová souhláska se zdvojí (stop -> stopping, swim -> swimming, sit -> sitting)

9

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9 The material was provided by school in B

Sloveso to have got (mít)

1) Kladné věty

	Plný tvar	Stažený tvar
Já mám	**I** have got	
Ty máš	**You** have got	
On má	**He** has got	
Ona má	**She** has got	
Ono má	**It** has got	
My máme	**We** have got	
Vy máte	**You** have got	
Oni mají	**They** have got	

Já mám bratra.

_____

_____

Ona má psa.

_____

_____

My máme auto.

_____

_____

2) Záporné věty

Přidáme **not** mezi have/has a got. U stažených tvarů vynecháme o, které nahrazuje apostrof (have not -> haven't, has not -> hasn't).

	Plný tvar	Stažený tvar
Já nemám	**I** have not got	
Ty nemáš	**You** have not got	
On nemá	**He** has not got	
Ona nemá	**She** has not got	
Ono nemá	**It** has not got	
My nemáme	**We** have not got	
Vy nemáte	**You** have not got	
Oni nemají	**They** have not got	

Já nemám bratra.

_____

_____

Ona nemá psa.

_____

_____

My nemáme auto.

_____

_____

3) Otázky a odpovědi

Měníme slovosled – změníme pořadí podmětu a slovesa have/has.

They have got a cat.   He has got a bike.

Have they got a cat?   Has he got a bike?

Yes, they have. X No, they haven't.   Yes, he has. X No, he hasn't.

On má kolo. _____   Oni mají dům. _____

Ty nemáš knihu. _____   Má ona penál? _____

Mají oni pravítko? Ano, (oni) mají. _____

Má ona dlouhé vlasy? Ne, (ona) nemá. _____

10