



## Dyslexia for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language



### Project

Dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty that has an effect not only on literacy skills in students' first language, but also on foreign language learning. In order to ensure that dyslexic students successfully acquire the necessary levels of foreign language competence, they need additional support. Foreign language teachers often lack sufficient understanding of the nature of dyslexia and the difficulties it causes in foreign language learning, and they might not be familiar with the relevant teaching techniques and methods to further the language learning processes of dyslexic students. Therefore, the preparation of teacher training materials for this target group of language learners is both timely and necessary.

In a recent project lasting until September 2013, seven partners from Poland, Hungary, the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Germany and Austria are developing a training course and self-study materials for pre- and in-service teachers of English as a foreign language in order to raise their awareness of the foreign language learning needs of dyslexic students. As a first milestone in the project, a detailed needs analysis survey has been carried out to identify pre-service and in-service foreign language teachers' professional development needs with regard to teaching individuals with dyslexia.



### Needs Analysis

A survey of relevant educational documents, legal regulations and teacher training courses and institutions was conducted in all project partner countries. Our research has revealed that despite the fact that, in all partner countries, different laws and regulations require educational institutions to accommodate the needs of students with specific learning differences, little seems to have been done in the geographical areas surveyed to adjust educational materials, instructional techniques and methods of assessment to ensure that dyslexic students can also successfully acquire a foreign language. The survey also shows that there are very few training opportunities provided at either pre-service or in-service levels that could help foreign language teachers learn about the nature of dyslexia and the difficulties it causes in second language acquisition. It is apparent that the declaration of a policy to provide inclusive education for dyslexic learners does not automatically guarantee that the policy is implemented in practice. For the successful realization of such a policy, appropriate support in teacher training at both pre-service and in-service levels is essential.

The need for training courses and materials for teachers in the field of dyslexia and foreign language learning is also underscored by the results of our online questionnaire survey. In our research, 375 participants from the six partner countries, and some other European countries, responded to questions about the training they received concerning dyslexia and specific learning differences, the teaching and assessment practices they apply when working with dyslexic students and their attitudes towards dyslexic learners. The results show that in most of the researched countries, and especially in the area of pre-service teacher training, there is a lack of courses that prepare teachers to help dyslexic language learners. In some of the countries in-service teacher training opportunities exist but are not widely available. Most of the participants admitted that they lack sufficient information about the nature of dyslexia, the difficulties it causes in language learning and that they are not familiar with teaching methods that can facilitate the language learning processes of dyslexic students. Furthermore, the teachers also reported that they are not confident about the accommodations these learners should be entitled to in assessment and that they were unsure of how best to evaluate their performance. A great majority of the respondents, however, were interested in obtaining further information and training about teaching English to dyslexic students.

In the survey we also asked teachers to indicate the kind of training they would need in this field and the types of teacher training activities and tasks that would interest them. Based on the results of the needs analysis, we are developing a complete teacher training course that will be available as a teacher trainee's and trainer's booklet and as a repository of self-study materials on the Internet. We hope to be able to share some example units from our course by the time our next newsletter is published.

**University of Lodz, Faculty of Philology, Chair of Pragmatics**  
mpodogrocki@uni.lodz.pl  
jnijak@wp.pl  
www.proedu.uni.lodz.pl

**TAK – The Society for Alternative Education**  
basiajar@yahoo.com  
www.tak.opole.pl

**RCNS HAS–Research Centre for Natural Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences**  
sarkadiagi@gmail.com  
www.mtapi.hu

**LU – Lancaster University, Department of Linguistics and English Language**  
j.kormos@lancaster.ac.uk  
www.ling.lancs.ac.uk

**MU – Masaryk University, Faculty of Education**  
hanusova@ped.muni.cz  
www.ped.muni.cz

**VHS – Volkshochschule im Landkreis Cham e.V.**  
asikorska@vhs-cham.de  
www.vhs-cham.de

**BEST Institut für berufsbezogene Weiterbildung und Personaltraining GmbH**  
karin.kronika@best.at  
www.best.at



Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission can not be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Project number 518466-LLP-1-2011-PL-COMENIUS-CMP  
Grant agreement number: 2011-3631/001-001