

Report of the 4th *ELT well* Research Round-up 2017

As usual, a small but enthusiastic group of professionals met to share research findings in the field where dyslexia / SpLDs overlaps with language learning / multilingualism.

Anne Margaret began by sharing developments, which indicate that interest in the field is spreading around the world. The new IATEFL SIG '*Inclusive Practices and SEN*' ran its first event before the IATEFL conference in Glasgow in April this year. This was well supported and received by participants, and the first *IP&SEN* SIG newsletter will be out this month. TESOL France and IATEFL Chile both ran conferences on the theme of inclusion, and BrazTESOL is also planning one. Other national organisations are following suit, showing that this is an issue that teachers are concerned about everywhere.

Bimali Indrarathne, who presented her work at this event last year, is now running the '*dysELTSL*' project in Sri Lanka, through which she is training English teachers across the country in how to identify and accommodate dyslexia.

The 2012 book by Judit Kormos and Anne Margaret Smith, "Teaching Languages to Students with Specific Learning Differences" is being translated into Japanese.

The FutureLearn and Lancaster University on-line course "*Dyslexia and foreign language learning*" ran again in April, and will probably run once more in 2018.

ELT well is also busy, producing two new activities books this year: "*Including Dyslexic Language Learners*" will be available later in June, and "*Raising Awareness of SpLDs*" will be out in the autumn. In connection to this second activities book, *ELT well* is working with Dekko comics to produce an easily-accessible resource to help young people understand what it means when they are identified with an SpLD.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Three research reports were presented, which sparked a lot of discussion among the group and encouraged future projects.

Krista Court (Personal ELT) International students with SpLDs in UK HEIs

Krista reported on a survey of UK HE institutions' provision for international students with SpLDs carried out by her and Anne Margaret. Both quantitative and qualitative data was gathered, including numbers of international students who have disclosed SpLDs, points of disclosure in their academic journey, and aspects and uptake of provision. The preliminary data analysis revealed widely varying amounts of information known about international students, but in general, there seems to be low numbers of disclosure and uptake of additional learning support.

The **next step** will be to analyse the data more thoroughly and follow up the anomalies in the data, perhaps developing case studies with some institutions, and try to determine what the key elements of current best practice are.

Agnieszka Kałdonek-Crnjaković (George Mitchell School) EFL teachers' knowledge of dyslexia

Aga reported on a study that she and Zrinka Fiser conducted, investigating EFL teachers' knowledge about dyslexia and their dyslexia-friendly classroom practices. They had interviewed and observed 16 EFL teachers in primary and secondary schools in different areas in Croatia. Here, Aga focussed on the findings from the lesson observations.

She reported that they observed teachers' practice, looking for examples of these 8 techniques:

- multisensory teaching
- explicit teaching
- structured teaching
- cumulative teaching
- raising metalinguistic awareness
- use of mnemonic devices
- meeting individual needs
- accommodations

Overall, they found that the classroom practice of these Croatian EFL teachers is generally dyslexia-friendly, to a greater or lesser extent, and makes use of most of these aspects. However, there was little awareness on the part of the teachers of *why* or *how* these techniques were useful in supporting dyslexic learners.

Next steps might be to investigate some of these aspects in more details, particularly multisensory teaching, and to extend the study to a greater number of teachers. The need for awareness-raising and CPD for the teachers was also something that was suggested by the findings of this study.

Fiona Boyd and Christine Davies (Glasgow City College) Assessing ESOL learners for Specific Learning needs

City College Glasgow has 1200 students enrolled on part time ESOL courses, as well as a large number of students on 'mainstream' courses for whom English is an additional language.

There are a number of students whose reading and writing skills do not appear to develop at the same rate as their peers and are unexplained in terms of their ability. The perceived problem is that these students, who are displaying persistent literacy difficulties, are unable to access the additional support that native speakers can access, as there is an assumption that these difficulties are a consequence of the language learning process and not a Specific Learning Difference such as dyslexia.

In order to develop more equitable additional support for ESOL students a pilot study was conducted using the **ELT well** Cognitive Assessment for Multilingual Learners (CAML +) writing task, to highlight students who may have a specific learning difference.

254 participants took part, representing 51 nationalities. 86 of these wrote less than expected, according to the existing database, and these cases were taken up with the teachers to see if there were any explanations and if their performances tallied with their usual ways of working. Students who would benefit were offered workshops and, in some cases, formal assessments.

An unexpected positive side-effect of this pilot was that members of staff began to show more interest in the individual needs of their learners, and to seek more information about how best to support them.

The **next steps** here are to continue to raise awareness amongst the teaching staff, around the issues of SpLDs and how to include more learners, and also to pilot the use of a nonlinguistic task for learners who have not had access to education prior to starting at the college.