”Dyslexia Becomes a Disability When Learning Differences are Overlooked”:

A Case Study of English Language Teaching and Dyslexia Provisions in a Swedish Upper Secondary School
Abstract

Reading and writing difficulties and dyslexia affect how a student performs at school and, thus, their future lives (Borodkin & Faust 2014). This has been known and researched for the past decades (Fletcher 2009). Considerable studies have been carried out regarding dyslexia and first language acquisition, though dyslexia in second language is comparatively underrepresented. This underrepresentation, in turn, means that dyslexia and second language is less researched, and consequently, less known. This is problematic as there is then less knowledge on how to help students with dyslexia in a second language.

This case study investigates how an upper secondary school in Sweden works with defining and diagnosing dyslexia, and which provisions students with dyslexia receive. To answer these questions the Head teacher, Special Needs Education teacher, English teachers and a dyslexia test analyst have been interviewed. The results showed that dyslexia is described differently by the people interviewed, it is diagnosed with a software called LOGOS and the provision depends on the student having (or not having) a diagnosis. The conclusion is that English teachers and special needs teachers must work closer together. It is therefore suggested that cooperation between the teachers and special needs department should put each student in the centre and develop methods and strategies based on the individual student. It is hypothesised that the school has many unidentified students with dyslexia and in those cases additional adjustments in the classroom are vital. This would allow the student a better chance of performing according to their abilities in school and thus expanding the limits of their world ensuring they become fulfilled, employed democratic citizens.

Key words:

Dyslexia; Swedish upper secondary school; second language; English lesson; provision/s.
Dedication

For my moon walking brother Edward
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1 Introduction

There are few world languages spoken by many people across the globe; included in this rare set are Arabic, Standard Chinese and Spanish. In a time when companies are global and cooperation between countries is common, internationalisation calls for increased communication (Helland & Kaasa 2005). The question of a second language might not be as vital in countries with an international language as their official language, such as the UK, France and Spain (Helland & Kaasa 2005). However, for a monolingual person in the Netherlands, Iceland or Denmark, not having access to a more international second language can dramatically alter a person’s future. Speakers of one small language can become isolated and fail to be a part of ever increasing globalisation (Crombie 2000). Therefore, knowing a world language is hugely important for speakers of a rarer, less global language.

On a personal level, a foreign language can contribute to a different perspective on the world. The contradictory nature of the increasing globalization of our economies (Scott 2017) versus an amplified nationalization from a political perspective (Akerman, Mudde and Zaslove 2013) means being bilingual is beneficial in participating in the first and countering the second. Lingual capabilities do not merely benefit the student but the global community (Gy 2011). Through the learning of a second language students gain new perspectives on the world and can partake in globalised study and work (Gy 2011).

English is the international language taught in Sweden and one of the core subjects in Swedish schools but becoming fluent in English is no easy task. “While few would debate the usefulness and desirability to young people of learning a modern foreign language, few it seems have found the secret of achieving success for all” (Crombie 2000, p. 113). Though Crombie discusses the usefulness of foreign languages in the UK, the ideas can be applied to Sweden. The English language vastly expands the limits of Swedish speakers’ ability to express themselves and explain the world around them (Gy 2011). Learning the English language is therefore essential, both in terms of career but also to expand one’s world view (Gy 2011). From a democratic perspective, the understanding of cultures is aided by having a mutual language of communication. English language, therefore, plays an important role in forming the national and global citizens of tomorrow and without it one is less likely to access the benefits of a global community.

For students with reading and writing difficulties such as dyslexia the English language presents a greater challenge. For these students, school can be experienced as a struggle both upwind and uphill (Karlsson 2011). Foreign language teaching in particular, can
be seen as impossible to comprehend and acquiring the language as a farfetched goal (Crombie 2000). If Swedish students with dyslexia struggle during English lessons they do not only lose competence in the language, they can also be excluded from the global community due to a disability. Foreign language lessons must consider “appropriate and effective teaching strategies that meet the needs of all pupils” (Crombie 2000, p. 113). Consequently, it is important for English teachers to know how to make provision in the classroom for students with dyslexia.

In Sweden, additional adjustments (Sw: extra anpassningar) are made in the classroom by the teacher for all students who may benefit (Skolverket 2015). Additional adjustments are an integral part in meeting the Swedish schooling values and tasks which state that the teaching should be adapted to every student’s conditions and needs (Gy 2011). Students with dyslexia should either have adjustments made for them or the lessons should already be adapted for them. Adjustments could be listening to texts, instructions printed in an easy-to-read font and answering questions orally instead of writing them down. Such provisions could make the English language an obtainable goal for students with dyslexia and help to place them within the global community. With the stakes high, it is crucial to establish whether and how English language teaching is adapted for students with dyslexia in Swedish schools.

1.1 Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to define how one school works with dyslexia during English language lessons. The goal is furthermore to identify how the school defines dyslexia and how students are diagnosed in order to better analyse the former premise.

These are the three research questions which delimit that purpose:

1. How is dyslexia described by different actors in the school system?
2. How are students in the local authority diagnosed with dyslexia?
3. What provisions are made for students with dyslexia in the English language classroom?
2 Theoretical Background

This section presents a discussion on the surrounding research including the theoretical definition of dyslexia, the effect of dyslexia on the learner, dyslexia and second language learning, dyslexia and teaching and finally, dyslexia in Swedish school law.

2.1 Definition of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a fluid concept that depends on the time, country and academic discipline considered. Dyslexia, according to Borodkin and Faust, is “a neurodevelopment disorder that affects individuals throughout their lives” (Borodkin & Faust 2014, p. 133). The cause of dyslexia is located in the brain and can affect one or more languages. Though the condition is lifelong, it is possible to improve a person’s abilities in one or more languages. The difficulties people with dyslexia face are “often a result from a deficit in phonological processing that cannot be accounted for by any other cognitive abilities or environmental factors” (International Dyslexia Association in Borodkin & Faust 2014, p. 133). Thus, dyslexia is located in the brain and impacts phonological awareness.

Phonological awareness is essential to “map, or translate, printed symbols into sound, commonly known as the grapheme-to-phoneme coding skill” (Ingeesson 2007, p. 17). People with dyslexia struggle to connect the symbol of the sound to the sound. Reading and writing can thus be a slow experience for people with dyslexia as the grapheme-to-phoneme decoding is a laboured process. The trouble with phonological processing in people with dyslexia “is likely due to limitations in how phonological representations are stored in the mental diction and/or how they are accessed by people with dyslexia” ¹ (Hedman 2010, p. 39). The difficulty with the grapheme-to-phoneme coding could then either be due to how the visual memory is stored or how it is accessed. Both possibilities mean that people with dyslexia store or access information differently than people without dyslexia. The definition of dyslexia can thus be explained as a neurodevelopment disorder (Frith 1999) which causes a deficit in the phonological processing (Ingeesson 2007).

However, there are multiple definitions of dyslexia. According to Mortimore, over 40 accepted definitions of dyslexia exist (2008). This lack of a definite and solid description is addressed by Elliott and Grigorenko who state that the “term has variously been

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¹ My translation: antas bero på begränsningar i hur fonologiska representationer lagras i det mentala lexikonet och/eller hur åtkomliga dessa är
seen as different from, and synonymous to, several other labels that involve problems with literacy” (2014, p. 5). Thus, the difficulty to define dyslexia is linked to the inconsistency in definition. Testing symptoms is thus not reliable as they can be regarded as the same or different to reading and writing difficulties. Frith (1999), on the other hand, suggests that the definition of dyslexia needs to become more static and less paradoxical. This could be accomplished, according to her, by observing dyslexia from an interdisciplinary perspective which would take into account pedagogy, neuroscience and psychology aspects. This would combine the different aspects of dyslexia and make it easier to clinically test.

In the most commonly used definition of dyslexia it differs from reading and writing difficulties. Reading and writing difficulties can be thought of as an umbrella term, a result of things as diverse as intelligence, emotional and social factors (Jacobsson 2006). Dyslexia on the other hand is a specific type of reading and writing difficulty based on the phonological processing of words. Troubled reading without the cause of dyslexia can be due to poor vocabulary, lack or training or a lower lever intelligence (Jacobsson 2006). General reading and writing difficulties do not have the same neurobiological basis as dyslexia, though the impact on the individual can be strikingly similar.

The different definitions of dyslexia have not merely changed over time but also differ between countries (Alm 2004). This discrepancy means that it is difficult to compare the percentage of people with dyslexia in different countries. This is exemplified in the differing percentage estimates in each country recording those who have dyslexia: 15-20% in America with signs similar to dyslexia and 10% of school children in New Zealand (Elliott & Grigorenko 2014, pp. 31-2). In Sweden, the figure is 5-8% (Høien & Lundberg 1992 in Alm 2004). The Swedish percentage is supported by The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools (SPSM) (Specialpedagogiska myndigheten) who present the same figures (SPSM 2016). This implies that in a Swedish classroom of 20 students, on average 1 to 2 students may have dyslexia.

2.2 Dyslexia and Effect on Learners

Apart from difficulty reading and writing, dyslexia can affect learners in less apparent ways such as reduced self-esteem. Literacy is deeply associated with intelligence; one’s ability to read is seemingly linked to the person’s level of intelligence (Ingesson 2007). Thus, people who find reading hard can be perceived by themselves and others as less intelligent. Shame and low self-esteem is the individuals value of oneself in relation to an expected performance (Ingesson
A person who experiences shame or humiliation in school would then counteract that feeling by striving to become better and living up to the expectation or, failing that, avoid situations which can potentially be shameful or humiliating. It is therefore possible that a student with dyslexia would avoid teaching situations or simply stop trying to avoid failure.

Studies have shown further emotional responses to dyslexia can “include a lack of self-confidence, self-doubt, sensitivity to criticism, behavioural problems, truancy, competitiveness disorder, withdrawal, isolation and psychosomatic pain (Mortimore 2008, p. 77-8). These feelings are connected to how people with dyslexia experience the diagnosis, not the diagnosis itself. To avoid low self-esteem and self-doubt, goal setting should be personalised and achievable and adequate provision should create successful learning experiences in school and at home.

2.2.1 Critique of Dyslexia Definition

Countless writings on dyslexia are concerned with medical aspects. Words such as “illness”, “risk” and “retardation” are common when describing dyslexia. From this perspective people, with dyslexia are “vulnerable victims of their own flawed biology, plac[ing] them at the mercy of experts who will label them and stigmatise them and who will take control of the delivered ‘treatments’ or ‘cures’” (Mortimore 2008, p. 57). A clear indication of the focus on abnormality can be seen in the expressions “dyslexic students” or “dyslexics”. Students become synonymous with and identified by their diagnosis. To prevent this identification this thesis will, therefore, use the expression “students with dyslexia.” Students are not, nor should they be defined by their individual diagnosis, but first and foremost as people with individual needs.

2.3 Dyslexia in a Second language

In terms of second language acquisition (L2), the brain works slightly differently than when learning a mother tongue (L1). The “neurological dislocation of languages” (Lundberg 2002, p. 177) illustrates that the brain engages different parts when learning and speaking a first and second language. It is therefore possible for students with dyslexia to learn a second language. It has even been observed that there are some “rather paradoxical cases of dyslexic individuals in Sweden who find it easier to read and understand English than Swedish” (Miller-Guron & Lundberg in Lundberg 2002). As the areas of brain activity differ between the languages, it is even possible to learn to read an L2 to a higher degree than the L1. Despite the lingual
dislocation, it is, nevertheless, possible for students with no or few signs of dyslexia in their first language to have dyslexic difficulties in their second (Helland & Kaasa 2005).

Dyslexia is mainly tested in the first language but can be tested in a second language too. Dyslexia in English as a second language, though,

is sometimes mentioned as especially difficult for the dyslexic pupil, but is rarely systematically assessed. This is due to several factors: usually the tester has no formal competence in L2 teaching, there are no formal tests of L2 assessment

(Helland & Kaasa 2005, p. 45).

This means that the lack of testing for dyslexia in a second language is due to lack of experience and lack of tests. The lack of testing in a second language does not merely correspond to Sweden and the English language. The same is true for any student whose mother tongue differs from the teaching language. Many students in Sweden for example have Swedish as an L2 language and English as an L3. According to Lindberg and Hyltenstam, around 20% of Swedish students are multilingual (Lindberg & Hyltenstam 2012, p. 41). This means that only students with Swedish as a first language can be comprehensively tested for dyslexia in Swedish schools. As a result, provision in the classroom when teaching English language in a Swedish school setting are extremely important in order for each student to reach their potential.

2.4 Dyslexia and Teaching

Dyslexia, as stated before, does not need to be a problem for the individual. It does, however, become “a disability when the learning differences are overlooked or when the support offered is inappropriate and results in a failure to thrive” (Mortimore 2008, p. 58). Thus, dyslexia can become a hindrance in classrooms when an individual student’s access to education is not met. Successful learning situations for people with dyslexia need to, according to Mortimore, decrease the extra work these students do in an attempt to try to access knowledge, relate to the material, use it in an inventive way that makes sense to them and, finally, have strategies for how to work (Moretimore 2008).

The “overload” mentioned by Mortimore, refers to the way in which students with dyslexia minds work to compensate their dyslexia. The phonological deficit, means that people with dyslexia work hard when they are reading and it is important to not add extra load while in this process (Mortimore 2008). It is therefore important that strategies are aligned with the
student’s own preference and way of thinking. Forcing someone who is visually inclined to use verbal strategies means extra cognitive load for that person. Strategies developed with the individual in mind would reduce the overload, work with the person and streamline the process (Mortimore 2008).

The need to interact with the material is not specific for people with dyslexia. Everyone is aided in their memory process when working with the material. People learn in different ways, some are more prone to visual, audial or oral learning (Mortimore 2008). There seems to be a link between people with dyslexia and visual learning (ibid). This means that teachers can use pictures and colours to aid learning. Strategies can involve colour coding and association of words with pictures. It has also been established that people tend to remember information better if the knowledge is processed. Thus, remembering information has to do with interacting with the learning. This means that teaching should be repetitive to some extent as well as the knowledge addressed in different ways. In language learning this could include using speaking, listening, reading and writing strategies.

Creative power of imagination can be useful when trying to learn something. By connecting knowledge through association, the information becomes a concept rather than separate things (Mortimore 2008). This can be applied when learning words that are not connected, such as a glossary. Students who are visual can then create a picture that links the words together and verbal people can create a story (Mortimore 2008). These are strategies developed in line with how the mind stores learning.

Clear structure and strategies can help students with dyslexia in and outside of school. People with dyslexia can have difficulties with sequencing, meaning that it is not always clear for them how to tackle a problem. The problem with identifying where to start and finish can make obstacles insurmountable. By developing strategies, the sequencing of the task becomes clearer. If a student always approaches texts, glossary homework or reading assignments in the same way the obstacles can be overcome from which self-confidence and self-worth can prosper.

Apart from these strategies for students and teachers in the English language classroom, the special needs department plays an important role in making teaching accessible. “Effective provision for all will require modern language teachers to collaborate with special needs staff to find the most effective solutions” (Crombie 2000, p. 121). Cooperation between the special needs department and language teachers is key when developing successful dyslexia provision. If the special needs department and the teacher work in partnership the strategies established could both be beneficial to the student and possible for the teacher to perform in the
classroom. In such a way the student is supported from two directions. Constant encouragement and ability to help guide the student through hardship means that dyslexia need never become a disability if the support offered is appropriate (Mortimore 2008).

The student’s individual learning style aside, technology can be used to make teaching more accessible. A simple thing such as a spellchecker on the computer can help students with dyslexia write comprehensible texts. Software such as speech synthesis can read out the written text to the student so they can hear the actual text. There are well developed dictation programs where the student speaks and the computer writes down the sentences, for example Spellex, Dragon Dictation and Text Help. In terms of computer assisted work not all fonts are suitable (Rello & Baeza-Yates 2013). Times New Roman (TNR) is considered harder for people with dyslexia as the letters have serifs. The serifs, which are meant to guide the eye to hold a straight line when reading, can confuse the interpretation of the letters (Rello & Baeza-Yates 2013). In Arial Rounded MT Bold (ARMTB) the thickness, lack of serifs and space means that this font is often considered among the easiest for people with dyslexia to read (Rello & Baeza-Yates 2013). Although fonts might not seem like an important area when making material appropriate for dyslexia, they are a simple way teachers can support students with dyslexia (Evett & Brown 2005).

Dyslexia-suitable teaching need not be a complicated procedure. Inclusive teaching would include the cornerstones defined by Mortimore (2008) to reduce the overload, interact with the material through a process, teaching with a clear structure and include the individual’s learning style. Inclusive teaching would, furthermore, include technology which allows students with dyslexia to write, either by typing or talking out loud, and listen to the produced text or their teaching material. Written texts would be typed in a font that is easy to access for people with dyslexia and that can be listened to while read. With a healthy cooperation between the special needs department and English language teachers it is possible to make second language learning a success for students with dyslexia.

2.5 Dyslexia in the Swedish School Law

In 2014, Sweden established a new school law, with the aim to clarify the rules regarding additional adjustments. The idea was to make provision in the classroom more readily accessible for teachers and students.

Prior to the change, students who were expected not to reach the minimum requirements (grade E) would have been speedily investigated for special support (Sw: särskilt
stöd) (Skolverket 2012). If the investigation showed that the student was in need of special support, then an action program (Sw: åtgärdsprogram) was developed (Skolverket 2012). Receiving special support was thus a lengthy process; it could take considerable time before the student received it.

With the 2014 law, the responsibility for additional adjustments was placed on the teachers. Special support still exists but additional adjustments (Sw: extra anpassningar) should have been made first (Skolverket 2015). Additional adjustments are alterations that can be made in the classroom by the teacher to benefit the student. If additional adjustments are not enough to help the student, then an investigation in terms of special support should speedily be carried out (Skolverket 2015). The law clarified that a student did not need a diagnosis in order for provisions to be employed to support their learning. This change thus means that every student is entitled to additional adjustments according to their individual needs and circumstances (Skolverket 2016). This in turn makes the law ambiguous as the need for additional adjustments can come from the students, parents or the teacher.

A second consequence of the implementation of the law is that students who are in need of additional adjustments are not separated from their class. Provisions would, prior to 2014, have mainly occurred outside of the classroom with students separated from their peers (Asp-Onsjö 2014). Removing students from the classroom however was also in direct opposition to the equality and inclusion the Swedish school system is built upon (Gy 2011). The idea behind the additional adjustment and Equality Act is that learning does not take place in a void but in interaction with others. This, furthermore, suggests students’ learning detached from their peers could be regarded as counteractive.

The 2014 school law aimed to clarify the rules regarding additional adjustments. Students with, for example, dyslexia should receive support quicker. Students should have the ability to access education in the classroom together with their classmates. For some students, this means that additional adjustments should be supplied by the teacher.
3 Method

A case study was performed at one upper secondary school\(^2\). The aim was to gain a clear understanding of how a Swedish upper secondary school structure their support for students with dyslexia in the English language classroom.

3.1 Case study

A case study is, according to Gerring, “best defined as an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across larger set of units” (2004, p. 241). The idea is that the small segment can shed light on a larger question. A case study can only be specific in terms of the studied object but is forced to theorise when questions outside that area arise. In this thesis that “small sample” is how one upper secondary school in Sweden work with dyslexia and English language. The “generalisation” can be found in how the school works with other subjects such as Swedish or Mathematics in relation to dyslexia or, indeed, how other upper secondary schools in Sweden might work with dyslexia and English language lessons.

A difficulty when performing a case study is that the cases themselves “must also achieve variation on relevant dimensions” (Seawright & Berring 2009, p. 294). The case studies can, thus, not be examined from one perspective only; there is a need for differentiation. The differentiation in this thesis is that the participants interviewed have different positions in school and therefore, different ideas and experiences of how the school works with dyslexia and English.

3.2 Participants

This case study is built around an upper secondary school in Sweden. The upper secondary school was chosen due to its reputation for progressive teaching, a tight knit community, a stable interaction with local businesses and its semi-rural location. The school has around 300 students who study either vocational programs or university preparation programs. The school has a number of partner schools in different parts of the world and arranges international exchanges both to and from these schools continually throughout the academic year. The case study school aims to create an open climate to promote greater understanding of different cultures. To go on a trip the students have to apply and pass their courses. Provisions made in

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\(^2\) This thesis uses British English. Upper secondary school is the same as the Swedish “gymnasiet” meaning year 10-12 of mandatory schooling. When references to high school are made this means the three years prior, year 7-9. Middle school refers to year 4-6.
the English classroom would therefore not only have an impact on the individual’s academic life but also make it possible for every student regardless of disability to be able to partake in international experiences and to understand other cultures.

This case study is built on material collected from interviews with an Analyst of dyslexia tests, a Special Needs teacher, two English teachers and a Head teacher (see Table 1). The table below details a range of factors contributing to the interviewees’ perspective including age, gender and crucially the number of years in their current position. All the interviews were conducted at the case study school apart from the Dyslexia Analyst. Her position was at a middle school in the local authority as most dyslexia evaluations take place at middle school. When analysing dyslexia provisions in English language teaching these people have different perspectives on the issue, contributing to a more cohesive understanding of the topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Years in Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dyslexia Analyst</td>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Teacher A</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Teacher B</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs Teacher</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teacher</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1; Background information participants*

The balance between anonymity in the school and the ability to arrange an interview is difficult to accomplish. All participants consented to be a part of the study and signed the ethical consent form and the data presented has been anonymised. The ethical agreement (Appendix A) is a solid assurance that the interviews and thesis are anonymous.

3.3 Interviews

The most beneficial research method for this case study was deemed to be the qualitative semi-structured interview in a conversational style. A structured interview is when one respondent “receives exactly the same interview stimulus as the other” (Bryman 2016, p. 198). Though structured interviews have their advantages, such as being able to easily compare answers it was not feasible for this thesis due to the respondents having different roles and working in
different schools. Although this might seem contradictory to the delamination of the investigation, dyslexia analysis, as stated previously, is mainly performed in middle school and very few investigations take place at upper secondary school. All the interviewees are, therefore, a part of the same process and invaluable to shed light of the purpose and questions of this thesis. In order to gain a greater understanding of how the local authority tests dyslexia an experienced dyslexia analyst from a local middle school was interviewed. Teachers A and B had exactly the same questions and each interviewee was asked a standard set of seven questions in the same place in the interview. Of these seven questions though (see question 1 and the final 6 questions in appendix B, C, D and E), only three were relevant to the Dyslexia Analyst. The loosening of the structure means that the interviews were more influenced by qualitative interviewing style.

Qualitative interviews are more concentrated on the respondent’s perspective. Qualitative interviews are, according to Bryman, concerned with what the respondent finds significant (Bryman 2016). The significance is hence what differs between structured and qualitative interviews. This thesis is more interested in “rich and detailed answers” regarding dyslexia and English language lessons rather than “answers that can be coded and processed quickly” (Bryman 2016, p. 467). Focussing on the respondent’s point of view, therefore, means that this case study is a qualitative interview with semi-structured influences.

The methodology of interviewing meant all the respondents were interviewed at their work; the interviews were conducted one-on-one and ranged between 30 minutes to 1 hour and 10 minutes depending on the amount of questions and the interviewees’ willingness to talk.

The questions asked were a mix of closed and open-ended questions based on attitudes, beliefs, normative standards and values, knowledge regarding dyslexia and provisions (Bryman 2016, p. 251). The interpretability of the questions was also in focus to make the questions targeted, easy to interpret and neither leading nor overcomplicated. Open-ended questions were used to gain as much information as possible. Words such as “what”, “in your opinion”, “how” and “in what way” encouraged the interviewee to expand their answers and present their individual reasoning.

Some closed questions were however employed in order to compare answers between the respondents more easily. For example question 8 (see Appendix C) is not an open question. The scale was used to compare the different interviewees’ feelings about dyslexia provision in a quantitively, very visible manner.

The interviewees were asked questions relevant to their field of work. The Dyslexia Analyst was asked 10 prepared questions, English Teacher A and B the same 12, the
Special Needs Teacher 18 and the Head Teacher 13 (see Appendix B, C, D, and E). During the interview, questions also arose from the conversations. The respondents were given the option to do the interview in Swedish or English; everyone chose Swedish. The idea was that the respondents would choose the language they would feel the most comfortable expressing themselves in. As such, the language would help, not hinder, them to articulate their thoughts and opinions. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The quotes used are translated and the original answers are presented in Appendix F.

The location of the interview was likewise a concern. It was important that it was performed in a quiet room where the interview could not be overheard by anyone. The rooms differed in each interview. The interview with the special needs teacher, though held in a good room, took longer than expected and was interrupted. We changed rooms and continued the interview.

The documentation of the interview material is another aspect of the case study. Though the questions and structure for the interview is important, the recording of the answers is equally significant. “[W]e want to be able to say as far as possible that the variation that we find is true variation between the interviewees and not due to a variation in […] the way the answers were recorded” (Bryman 2016, p. 200). In the light of these issues, the interview material was recorded electronically to omit errors.

3.3.1 Pilot interviews

Piloting and using pre-existing questions were made in a manner of speaking. There were initially two meetings with different dyslexia Analysts. The first, though very interesting and informative, could not be used in this thesis as the technology failed. The recording phone, though tested, did not work and thus no sound could be heard on the recording. For this reason, the first interview was considered a pilot for the second interview with a different dyslexia Analyst.

3.4 Analysis of data

The interviews were, as stated above, recorded and then translated when transcribed. The data was analysed according to five different themes. When discussing the results rather than presenting the answers vertically (per informant) they will be presented horizontally (per theme) in order to better compare the different perspectives. The data will be presented with quotes to illustrate the point of view. It is the analysis of the quotations which clarifies the respondent’s
perspective on how the school works with dyslexia, English language and provisions. The five themes will help to answer the research questions.

3.5 Limitations

Though the thesis has a strong basis in academic writing on dyslexia, there are, however, a few limitations. It could be considered a limitation to not include the students’ perspective on English language teaching and dyslexia. The student’s point of view would have contributed with a fascinating perspective on the process but it would not contribute to illustrate how the school structures its support.

This case study is limited to one school and can no more be conclusive for the whole of Sweden than all the schools in the area. The intention is not to be general, rather the opposite, to be specific and detailed.

4 Results and Discussion

The interviewees’ testimonials are analysed in terms of five themes: testing, the hand over process, provisions, attitudes and finally English lessons. This will illustrate how dyslexia is described by different actors in the school system, how students in the local authority are diagnosed with dyslexia and what provisions are made for students with dyslexia.

4.1 Testing

Testing is a part of diagnosing dyslexia. The question of who to test though is somewhat unclear. Testing for dyslexia can according to the Dyslexia Analyst be due to low results on a reading test in year four or might be brought up by the student’s family. Additionally, teachers may be puzzled by the student’s writing and contact the special needs teacher.

Testing for dyslexia in the local authority is conducted by special needs pedagogues who use a software called LOGOS. The person must be certified in the LOGOS system in order to conduct interviews and testing. All the tests are in Swedish. Dyslexia is defined by the Dyslexia Analyst as similar to, or directly correlative to the LOGOS test. To be considered for a dyslexia diagnosis according to the LOGOS test there are seven main indicators. The student should, according to the dyslexia Analyst,

1. perform under the 15th percentile in the decoding areas:
a. reading words count per minute,
b. identifying words,
c. phonological reading and
d. orthographic reading.

2. The student should likewise fulfill the main criteria:
   a. hearing comprehension should be over 30th percentile,
   b. have poor spelling and
c. that the difficulties remain despite early, systematic, and individually customised literacy training.

The student must be assessed as having at least three of the four decoding problems as well as meeting at least two of the three main standards. The LOGOS’s definition of dyslexia is also the local authority’s definition. This means that dyslexia in the case study school is defined as difficulties decoding, a well-developed hearing comprehension and sustained difficulties. This nevertheless, tests the symptoms of dyslexia, not the cause, making the tests less clinical. Testing with the LOGOS software only evaluates dyslexia in the Swedish language. This can be problematic for students who might have dyslexia in a different language, such as English, or who might have a different mother tongue than Swedish.

The test, furthermore, differentiates between more general reading and writing difficulties and dyslexia. The main difference between dyslexia and reading and writing difficulties in the LOGOS testing is, according to the dyslexia Analyst, found in the decoding and hearing comprehension. There would then not be a difference in hardship or ease between the written and the spoken word. The result would therefore illustrate that there is no deficit in the phonological processing (Ingesson 2007). As such, LOGOS, the local authority and the case study school differentiates between general reading and writing difficulties and dyslexia through symptoms.

The percentage of diagnosed students with dyslexia at the case study school is unknown; the special needs teacher estimated 1.5-3% students and the head teacher 2.1-2.5%. According to the government’s special needs authority, 5-8% of the Swedish population have dyslexia. Even if the school’s highest percentage, 3%, is applied, it is, nevertheless, far from the special needs authority estimation (SPSM 2016). The case study school currently has 1 student with diagnosed dyslexia in every other class. The consequences of an increase in diagnosed students to correspond with the government’s special needs authority estimations
would result in 1-2 students with dyslexia in each class. This gap between the school and the special needs authority’s estimation could indicate that around 2% of students are invisible; they have not been tested and are thus not known to the school as having dyslexia.

Most students at the case study school come from two different high schools. According to the head teacher at one school they have no students with documented dyslexia, though there are cases of students with general reading and writing difficulties. The second high school has 2-3 diagnosed students and more with reading and writing difficulties. It is reasonable to assume that there are not fewer students with dyslexia in these schools than the national average. This could indicate that students in the local authority are not diagnosed with dyslexia but general reading and writing difficulties.

This tendency of having undiagnosed students is supported by the English teachers. According to English teacher A she has one student with dyslexia and English teacher B has no diagnosed students. Statistically, though, there should be some undiagnosed students in every single English lesson they hold. The interviewer comments that statistically English teacher B should have 1-2 students in each class with dyslexia. She responds the following:

(1) Yes! We do have a suspected case […] And one more! […] there are at least three students in that group

(English teacher B).

Thus, at the case study school there are suspected cases of students with undiagnosed dyslexia. Having undiagnosed students can be problematic as dyslexia then affects them emotionally, through shame and self-worth, and academically, through their inability to access the teaching (Ingesson 2007). When these consequences of dyslexia are ignored, “the support offered is inappropriate and results in a failure to thrive” (Mortimore 2008, p. 58). Diagnoses are therefore not a reliable way for a teacher to know what additional adjustments to make in the classroom.

4.2 Hand Over

When students with diagnosed dyslexia start to attend the upper secondary school some things are already set in motion through the use of a so-called hand over process. All respondents explained the hand over process in this manner. The hand over process starts in May, according to the head teacher, when the high schools start preparing to send the students to the new school. The hand over addresses medical, psychological, and pedagogical problems, and any diagnoses students might have. In August, two weeks before the students start school, the pedagogical
issues are addressed. The high school then meets with the student health team from the upper secondary school and the prospective mentors. The mentor is the person who is responsible for a certain class and the individuals in it. The mentor then brings pedagogical considerations to the teacher’s attention, such as dyslexia, ADHD or performance anxiety. The teacher should then make adjustments in the classroom. The handover process then exists both between the schools and between teachers at the upper secondary school to ensure that the students’ transfer between schools is smooth. The handover process, though, is not always this straightforward.

None of the respondents thought that the handover processes is a fault-free system mainly due to flaws in the process or lack of diagnosis. This problem with the handover was brought up by English teacher A.

(2) In an ideal situation we would have complete information from the mentor.

In an ideal world, the handover from mentor to teacher would include all details relevant for the teacher to understand the student and make any necessary adjustments in the classroom. However, in reality, the handover sometimes lacks detail and might even be forgotten by the mentor. This view is supported by the Head teacher’s assessment of the process. He observes the following:

(3) this [mentor to teacher handover process] does not work 100%.

Thus, teachers can be unaware of students who have been diagnosed with dyslexia in the classroom as well as those without a diagnosis. The need for additional adjustments therefore falls on the teacher to notice that they are needed and identify what sort of provisions are required for the student.

English teacher B could remember one student in particular who was diagnosed but as a teacher she was unaware of the student’s diagnosis until the student told her herself. At one meeting the student, according to English teacher B, expressed her frustrations:

(4) but have you not understood that I have dyslexia?

(English teacher B)

English teacher B says that she did not have this crucial information from the handover. Thus, teachers have been unaware of diagnosed as well as undiagnosed students with dyslexia at the
case study school and therefore failed to make the necessary adjustments in the classroom. The inclusive teaching with strategies developed with the individual in mind, mentioned by Crombie (2000) were thus lacking. This is problematic as the students are then not able to access knowledge about the English language with their barriers to learning mitigated against.

The Head teacher is aware of this problem and added an additional information session with the mentors two months into the new students’ first year. In October the mentors know their students better; thus it might be helpful to remind them of any conditions. Both English teacher A and English teacher B address structural problems regarding the hand overs within the school. When comparing the processes between schools and within the school it is striking that while the information from the high school is handled in a very structured and planned manner, the information from the mentor to the subsequent teacher is unstructured. Despite adding another information meeting later in the year, the Head teacher said the following:

(5) “it didn’t work so well last year”

(Head teacher).

None of the respondents described any structure regarding how the information should pass from mentor to teachers. It seems that the lack of structure might be the reason why the information does not always reach the teachers.

Hand over strategies and routines are only relevant to those comparatively few students who are diagnosed. The students who are undiagnosed would not have information transferred from the high school to the upper secondary school. As such, the undiagnosed students are the invisible students. English teacher B gives a similar picture with regards to students who are not diagnosed.

(6) If there are students with dyslexia, that should have been discovered in primary or high school… [otherwise it] …must mean that this student has lived with these problems their whole time in school and […] as we have not had a hand over on these issues we assume that the poor quality of texts are due to carelessness or some kind of lower talent.

(English teacher B)
Therefore, from this teacher’s perspective the lack of a diagnosis means that the student has been let down by the school system. To have the problems discovered in upper secondary school means that the issues have been unaddressed until then. The student may have, during that time, been labelled by teachers and perhaps by the student themself as “some kind of lower talent”. It is, therefore, as researchers such as Ingeesson have stated, important to discover students with dyslexia early and put provision in place (Ingeesson 2007). Early intervention would counteract the feelings of stupidity, shame and low self-esteem (Moretimore 2008).

It is vital to have a reliable chain of information from the high school to upper secondary school, from the student’s mentor to their new teachers. Hand overs are thus important for students with diagnosed dyslexia but do nothing for the undiagnosed students. If undiagnosed students fail to be recognised, then it is perhaps of more importance how provisions are made in the classroom for the students who need them.

4.3 Provisions

Provisions, as discussed in the theoretical background, can be many different things of which some can be supplied by the special needs department. One support, according to the Special needs teacher, put in place for students with diagnosed dyslexia, is to take exams orally rather than in writing. Students with dyslexia can similarly have essay questions read out loud to ensure the understanding of the task is not a hindrance. Students with diagnosed dyslexia do also, in terms of national exams, have additional time and the option of writing on a computer according to English teacher B.

The Special needs teacher also mentions the software that is available for students with dyslexia. All students at the case study school have individual computers and use the basic spellchecker in Word. Students with diagnosed dyslexia can also access the spelling programs Stavarex and Spellright to aid the student’s writing abilities. There is software which can read out loud and all students can access audiobooks. The school employs the software Clear Read. Clear Read can, according to the Special needs teacher,

(7) be used for essentially any text one has on the computer [and reads] texts the student has written

(Special needs teacher)

Clear Read can additionally support students by reading out websites and web based books. This means that the written word can be approached from an oral perspective. It is furthermore
possible for students with diagnosed dyslexia to meet with the Special needs teacher and learn strategies, either on their own or during hours dedicated for extra support.

The provisions are there ready to be used but the students have to want to access them. English teacher B, expressed this view by stating the following:

(8) [the students] have to be very motivated to accept it [provisions], because it does not happen automatically

(English teacher B)

Thus, the provisions put in place are accessible for students with dyslexia, though the students might not be ready to access it. This could be due to the feelings of stupidity and shame discussed by Ingeesson (2007) and Mortimore (2008); the student might have given up on trying after repeated failures. This means that failure affects the students’ motivation in school and, ultimately their ability to learn a world language and become global citizens (Gy 2011).

4.4 Attitudes

The respondents’ attitude to dyslexia differs according to their position in school and their knowledge of the diagnosis. English teacher A defined dyslexia in relation to a student:

(9) a difficulty to read the written word and to write the written word. [he] reads choppy and changes the order of letters or he does not read them at all. His writing is similar to his reading

(English teacher A).

This student then exhibits a laboured reading and a confused writing style where letters and words can appear or disappear for no obvious reason. His speaking abilities, though, do not correspond with his difficulties in written form. English teacher A’s attitude to dyslexia exists in relation to a student who exemplifies the difficulties. Therefore, her attitude to dyslexia is from a personal perspective on how the difficulties can influence the individual student.

English teacher B, has a similar idea of dyslexia. She defined dyslexia as following:
(10) reading and writing difficulties [that can manifest itself in] higher or lower level [and severe cases where] the letters are jumping and they [the students] can barely read a text

(English teacher B).

There is, thus the general definition of reading and writing difficulties though with the idea of there being stages. Some stages make the letters more difficult for the student to distinguish, sometimes to the point where they can hardly read for the difficulty of recognising letters and words. In terms of writing, English teacher B has experienced gaps and inconsistencies.

(11) There might be words missing or letters or big issues with the spelling

(English teacher B).

Thus the problems that exist in reading are present in written language too.

To the Head teacher, dyslexia is defined as a difficulty:

(12) a lot about difficulties reading and writing.

He also suggests the following:

(13) the difficulties can be more severe in some subjects [and that it] varies between individual to individual

(Head teacher).

The idea of difficulties with the written word is again present, though it is interesting that the Head teacher says that the difficulties can vary in subjects. He expresses the idea that dyslexia is not a completely stable construct but can change from person to person but also for one person in different subjects. This is particularly interesting as dyslexia is then influenced by context.

The Head teacher, furthermore, compares dyslexia to an illness:

(14) if you had a small illness that you could live with, would you want to know?

(Head teacher).

According to the Head teacher, dyslexia is to some extent an illness that one can live with without knowing, especially at the case study school. The idea that some students with
undiagnosed dyslexia can manage school and “get by” does not concur with students reaching their educational capabilities established by the School Law. It also goes against the academic and emotional support that students with dyslexia need to succeed as discussed by Ingesson (2007) and Moretimore (2008). The Head teacher’s attitude towards dyslexia is one which neither acknowledges the effects the “neurodevelopment disorder” (Borodkin & Faust 2014, p. 133) nor the “deficit in phonological processing” (International Dyslexia Association in Borodkin & Faust 2014, p. 133) has on the individual. This view on dyslexia is problematic as it then does not account for the individual student’s needs.

The Special needs teacher had a similar attitude to dyslexia. To the her there is a difference between dyslexia and reading and writing difficulties. When diagnosing dyslexia the Special needs teacher states the following:

(15) tends to choose to call it reading and writing difficulties

(Special needs teacher)

This is the first respondent who has preferred to call dyslexia reading and writing difficulties, there is thus a conscious decision in the naming which did not exist in the teachers’ or Head teacher’s definition.

(16) To really be called dyslexia […] there is a problem in the decoding specifically

(Special needs teacher).

This difference is based on how people with dyslexia process written information. This division is similar to the one described by the Dyslexia Analyst. It is likewise in line with the neurological deficit defined by Frith (1999) and the problems with phonological processing discussed by Ingesson (2007).

Despite having defined dyslexia, the Special needs teacher expresses ambivalence towards the definition. She comments that she has not connected thoroughly with the definition:

(17) I have not engaged with the splitting of the hair, for me it is enough to know that a student has reading and writing difficulties

(Special needs teacher).
Since the Special needs teacher knows that decoding is the problem, she has in fact “engaged with the splitting of the hair,” though she chooses to not differentiate between the two. She knows the difference between reading and writing difficulties and dyslexia but chooses to use the broader term. The special needs teacher uses the broader term deliberately and gives the following explanation:

(18) I know that the word dyslexia, for some, is a heavy word

(Special needs teacher).

The Special needs teacher’s attitude is that “dyslexia” is a loaded word and that a diagnosis could be difficult for the student to accept. Due to the student’s emotions, it is then preferable to use reading and writing difficulties rather than to specify dyslexia.

Using the words “reading and writing difficulties” instead of “dyslexia” is not uncommon. The Special needs teachers use of reading and writing difficulties is in line with the problems of definition discussed by Elliott and Grigorenko\(^3\) (2014). For Elliott and Grigorenko, it is problematic to employ a word which lacks a static definition. The Special needs teacher, on the other hand, uses reading and writing difficulties based on how a student might feel about the dyslexia diagnosis. This is similar to the Head teacher’s attitudes to the dyslexia diagnosis as being dependent on the diagnosed person’s feelings. The literature on dyslexia used in this thesis does not emphasise or discuss the tested person’s influence when defining the difficulties as dyslexia. The sources’ issue with the word “dyslexia” has consistently been on the lack of static definition. It is the case study school’s duty to disregard the tested student’s feeling for the word dyslexia or any other diagnosis. The focus lies firmly on the difficulties the student experiences, emotionally and academically, and to find strategies to support the student to “develop as far as possible according to educational goals” (The School Law 3 Chap. 2 §). While it is understandable that they want to protect the students’ feelings, this might actually have an adverse effect since it means the students will not get the support they need.

The students’ reluctance to accept the dyslexia diagnosis could perhaps be explained by attitude to dyslexia in the school. The attitude towards dyslexia in the school is also observed in the interviewees by asking the respondents how highly prioritised dyslexia is on a scale 1-10. English teacher A answered the following:

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\(^3\) “The term [dyslexia] has variously been seen as different from, and synonymous to, several other labels that involve problems with literacy” (Elliott and Grigorenko 2014, p. 5).
She experiences the school’s attitude and significance for working with dyslexia as low and vague. English teacher B, on the other hand stated “2”.

Thus, the reason English teacher B gives a low priority is due to the structure of the routines which she feels can be in the way and “over complicate” things. Both teachers who work daily with students with dyslexia feel that the dyslexia is not a prioritised issue at the case study school.

The teachers’ attitude to dyslexia in the school can be compared to the Special needs teacher and Head teacher. The Special needs teacher struggled to answer:

(21) it might not end up the highest at the priority list […] it is a 7-8

There is here an idea that there is a list of priorities and that some are higher or lower, and that some issues ought to be prioritised. The Head teacher similarity stated the following:

(22) I think it has improved, […] but I would say 7

The Head teacher views that dyslexia has a higher priority now as there is more knowledge regarding the diagnosis. Both the Special needs teacher and Head teacher places the relevance of dyslexia considerably higher than the teachers.

There thus seems to be a division in terms of attitudes and priority between the teachers who rate the issue at 2 and 4 and the Special needs teacher and Head teacher who rate it at a 7-8 and 7. This division between the respondents is likely a result of them having different positions, priorities and focus on different parts of school work. The Special needs teacher’s
work evolves around students who struggle in school. She works with finding support, strategies and access for these students. The Head teacher structures the work within the school for personnel and student and as such students with dyslexia could be a more prominent part of their duties. The teachers, on the other hand, work with giving groups of students more knowledge in the English language. It is possible that dyslexia fails to be a prioritised issue in the classroom because the structures from the Special needs department and Head teacher’s office does not reach the teachers. The issue is yet again that “learning differences are overlooked” (Mortimore 2008, p. 58) in the school and specifically in the English language classroom. As a somewhat forgotten issue that has been, and in some instances still is, associated with shame (Ingesson 2007), dyslexia needs to be worked with actively among teachers and students.

4.5 English Lessons

There is a number of undiagnosed students with dyslexia; therefore, additional adjustments in the classrooms are important. English teacher A left comprehensive testimonials as to how she works with dyslexia in the classroom. She was asked how she plans lessons (see Appendix C), and gave the following answer:

(23) I try to think that I include all four, reading, writing, hearing and speech. [...] No, I don’t think about dyslexia as such. But reading and writing difficulties? No, I don’t do that either…

(English teacher A)

English teacher A does not make any deliberate extra adjustments in the classroom to suit students with dyslexia. This means that there are no alternative strategies to approach the tasks in the classroom. English teacher A does express that she knows it is within her responsibility to do so which she expresses in the following quotation:

(24) it is our duty to make provisions

(English teacher A).

Both English teacher A and B state that they make no additional adjustments designated specifically for dyslexia. They do however plan lessons with a clear structure and approach the language from multiple angels in the classroom such as reading, listening and talking. These
strategies are aligned with some of the strategies Mortimore recommends for working with dyslexia (Mortimore 2008). What is interesting, though, is that the teachers neither regard these strategies as additional adjustments nor know that they are beneficial for students with dyslexia. English teacher A and B focus on what they do not do rather than what they do.

English teacher A states that she makes no additional adjustments in the classroom and gives the following explanations:

(25) it sounds like a cliché, […] I blame it on not having enough time […] it is lack of knowledge too

(English teacher A).

There are two reasons why English teacher A does not make additional adjustments, the first being time and the second knowledge. Provisions are, from her point of view, the opposite of time. English teacher B voices similar opinions on the lack of time. She states the following:

(26) teachers live in a stressful environment and sometimes you have to keep going

(English teacher B).

The situation in school then presses the teachers to decide between time and adjustments. There is also a struggle between additional adjustments and grades and assessments. According to English teacher B there is conflict of interest, which she explains in the following way:

(27) time is spent on grades and assessment

(English teacher B).

If English teacher B had time she would make additional adjustments but the time is, among other things, spent on assessing knowledge.

There are, according to English teacher A and B, three issues that oppose additional adjustments in the classroom: lack of time, lack of knowledge and time spent on results and assessments. The support students with dyslexia receive in the English language classroom as additional adjustments are, according to the teachers, not dependent on the help they require but instead depend on time and the knowledge of dyslexia the teacher has. This is problematic as it means that students with dyslexia are neither given the help they are entitled
to (Skolverket 2015), nor guided through their difficulties by the use of dyslexia friendly strategies or material (Mortimore 2008) which, consequently, prohibits their international language learning.

Both English teacher A and English teacher B know that they can turn to the special needs department for more knowledge regarding dyslexia. They are however, reluctant to ask for support.

(28) I have not asked for it [support], but I don’t really feel that I should have to ask for it all the time either. I think perhaps it should come from me and from the Special needs teacher. […] we must perhaps meet half way

(English teacher A).

If English teacher A does not ask for support, she receives none but she feels that support should come from her and the Special needs teacher. This idea of meeting in the middle also illustrates a certain distance between teachers and the special needs department. English teacher B also expresses this distance between the special needs department and teachers. She consequently describes her feeling in the following manner:

(29) you can’t just talk to the Special needs teacher but she has to be given a document […] sometimes you want the Special needs teacher just simply to join the classroom teaching or talk to the student, but it is decided that they have to have some sort of report or documentation before they act

(English teacher B).

The support the student is given in the classroom is then, according to English teacher B, dependent on the support the teachers are given. From English teacher B’s perspective, there seems to be a formal process to get in contact with the special needs department. This process might however be a hindrance. Despite the process English teacher B states that she would like more assistance from the special needs department.

(30) I think we want and desire more support […] in the classroom and prior, during and after the lesson

(English teacher B).
English teacher B, like English teacher A, feels that she needs more knowledge and support in planning, carrying out and evaluating lessons. There is the view that support should not always have to be asked for but be given from both the special needs department and the teachers, together.

This distance between the teachers and special needs department is however in direct opposition to the successful, modern language teaching methods discussed by Crombie (2000). Crombie’s method places the student in the centre of teaching and emphasises the need for language teachers and special needs teachers to collaborate. It is in the interaction between the special needs teacher and language teacher that successful strategies can be developed to suit the individual student and be possible to carry out in the classroom. Successful English language learning for students with dyslexia is built upon accessible English language lessons which can be made possible when subject teachers and special needs teachers work together. It is especially important to make English lessons accessible if there are undiagnosed students in the classes.

Both teachers’ statements seem to illustrate that the lack of adjustments in the classroom are due to lack of time and knowledge among teachers, and a closed, bureaucratic structure that inhibits the cooperation between special needs teachers and the language teachers. This goes directly against the need for close cooperation between special needs staff and modern language teachers emphasised by Crombie (2000). It would therefore be reasonable to hypothesise that lack of additional adjustments or problems with provisions for students with dyslexia at the case study school could be due to among other things a structural inflexibility. If this division between administration and language teachers is overcome, the school is more likely to work successfully with students with diagnosed and undiagnosed dyslexia in general and during English language lessons in particular.
5 Conclusion

This thesis has by an analysis of a range of interview material, determined how the structural barriers in one upper secondary school in Sweden inhibit effective provision for students with dyslexia learning English language. The conclusions are based upon a deeper understanding, offered by the interview material, of how the differing interpretations of dyslexia in the school system create unforeseen gaps in provision; how the system of diagnosing at middle school and the process of hand over to further education is not fool proof; and how cooperative ways of working in the school system do not exist to make the most effective use of all knowledge to empower students with dyslexia in the English language classroom.

It is apparent that different actors in the school system describe dyslexia differently. The Special needs teacher defines dyslexia as problems with decoding, the Dyslexia analyst concurs and adds that dyslexia also has a neurological basis. English teacher A, B and the Head teacher define dyslexia in terms of students’ problems with the written text. The Special needs teacher and the Head teacher though also question the relevance of knowing or naming the diagnosis. In their questioning, they tap into the ideas of shame that can sometimes surround dyslexia, an issue which has been discussed by Ingesson (2007) and Moretimore (2008), but this shame can be counteracted with adequate provision and additional adjustment developed with the student in the centre (Crombie 2000). Schools, teachers and other actors involved should be working toward dyslexia no longer being a shameful diagnosis and further exploratory questions arising from the study would want to consider whether the potential student rejection of the term and proper diagnosis is fostered by the unwillingness of staff to appropriate the term positively. This self-fulfilling cycle needs to be broken by those actors in the system who are able to redefine any stigma and ensure that the diagnosis and term are not seen as a deficit but a useful tool by which to make the right provision for students. It is clear that this reluctance to diagnose leave students without the ticket to receive their rightful adjustments and teachers (such as A and B) without the knowledge that those adjustments need to be provided.

Furthermore, the students in the local authority are tested for dyslexia with the LOGOS software and conversation with a Dyslexia Analyst. LOGOS assesses phonological abilities, as well as listening and reading comprehension. The test for dyslexia with LOGOS is focused on the symptoms of the neurological development disorder and the problems with phonological processing. It does not involve neuropsychological or interdisciplinary assessments (Frith 1999). The testing of dyslexia in other languages than Swedish does not exist.
either (Helland & Kaasa 2005, p. 45). Thus only students with Swedish as a first language can be comprehensively and thoroughly tested for dyslexia in the local authority. It is difficult to draw a conclusion from this fact however it needs to be acknowledged that without testing other languages than Swedish, it is likely there will continue to be undiagnosed students with dyslexia in the classroom. What can be concluded is that statistically, considerably fewer students in the case study school are diagnosed compared to the national average. As detailed previously, the number of people with dyslexia in Swedish is, according to The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools, 5-8% (SPSM 2016). The assumption is thus not that there are fewer students with dyslexia at the case study school, but that they are simply not diagnosed, evidenced by the comments made by the teaching staff in interview. This likely cohort of undiagnosed students may well not link solely with the testing software and lack of other languages but with the former issue of attitude; is there a tendency to hide the diagnosis behind other labels or not to test it at all due to the unwillingness to positively frame what the disability means and tackle associated stigma from those in charge? The consequences of this mean that both diagnosed and undiagnosed students do not fully access the adjustments they need in the classroom creating the risk of lower attainment and less opportunities on the international world stage.

Provisions made for students with diagnosed dyslexia are effective in relation to the use of technology in part; every student at the school has a personal computer and therefore software suitable for students with dyslexia is easy to put in place for the student to access. However, in order to access the software, the students have to have been in contact with the special needs department which then gives them access. This means that the students themselves to some extent are responsible for getting the support they need. This is problematic as it is then only very motivated students who benefit from the technological provision, and again, only those who have acknowledge their difficulties or have a diagnosis.

The wider range of adjustments on top of technology are vital for those with and without a diagnosis. However, English teacher A and B do not know how to make additional adjustments for students with dyslexia during the lessons. They do, nevertheless, unknowingly employ some of the strategies for working with students with dyslexia proposed by Mortimer (2008), such as having well structured lessons and the ability of approach the material from the student’s preferred perspective. The adjustments made by the special needs department do not reach the teachers, the classroom or the students. This makes it all the more urgent for the English teachers and special needs teachers to develop additional adjustments together and a more proactive, knowing approach to their pedagogy. The academic, emotional and
motivational failure students with dyslexia can experience (Ingesson 2007; Moretimore 2008) in English language teaching can, and must, be counteracted (Crombie 2000). In the case study school, there are two necessary areas which could be improved: teachers knowing more about dyslexia and collaborative working between teachers and the special needs department. Through this cooperation, teachers will learn what adjustments can be in terms of needs, context, student’s personality and the teacher’s teaching style and thus being able to make additional adjustments in the classroom. The special needs department will, in turn, better appreciate the barriers teachers face in time and knowledge and make their systems more easily accessible. For example, is it imperative additional paperwork is completed by already stretched teachers before the special needs department complete some informal observation and input? In joint-working, some of these burdensome processes will be unpicked and better implemented.

It is this lack of collaboration that is arguable the most striking conclusion. The personnel at the school do not work together to ensure that students with dyslexia can access the English language teaching. Unsuccessful English learning experiences impacts the student’s emotional and academic knowledge (Moretimore 2008). It is likely that they feel inadequate and give up on school and the English language (Ingesson 2007). As English is the international language taught in Sweden and one of the core subjects, an unsuccessful attempt at learning the language leaves the student isolated to Sweden or Scandinavia at best. Their inability to learn English means that it is difficult to study abroad or hold a professional position that requires international contacts. From a democratic perspective, these students struggle to become the national and global citizens of tomorrow as this requires a good understanding of at least one international language. This does not only go against the current curriculum (Gy 2011), it also goes against the student’s ability to develop as far as possible according to educational goals (The School Law 3 Chap. 2 §). A more tangible result of the lack of cooperation between English language teachers and the special needs department can be found in the international exchanges. The students who struggle to pass, who struggle to understand why the English language is important will not experience it either. It is ironic that a school which prides itself to have international connections to create a greater understanding of culture and global humanity is unable to supply this understanding in terms of its own students.

This inability to meet students with dyslexia and their needs in the English language classroom can be overcome. To improve the teachers’ knowledge about dyslexia requires more information about special needs in the teaching programs (Moretimore 2008). Teachers should know what possible adjustment to make for different issues in the classroom
(Asp-Onsjö 2014). This, however, would not affect the teachers who are already licensed. For them it would, on the other hand, be important that dyslexia is talked about, discussed and made relevant at their school. It furthermore demands that the school keeps this knowledge á jour. When the support is given to students with dyslexia so that they can access the education then dyslexia is no longer a disability but an ability. An ability people like Agatha Christie, Steven Spielberg, Keira Knightly, Richard Branson, Professor Elizabeth Blackburn, Jamie Oliver and many more have learnt to utilise.
6 Bibliography


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Appendix A; Ethical Agreement

Ethical Agreement: Background

My name is Ebba Fredriksen and I am studying KPU (Kompletterande Pedagogisk Utbildning) at Linnaeus University with the goal to become an English teacher at upper secondary school. I am in the midst of writing my C-essay. It is a case study of how one school works with dyslexia in regards to the English language. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of this I will conduct interviews with dyslexia text Analysts, special needs teachers, English teachers in the school and the head teacher. The work project is carried out under the supervision of John Airey and any questions regarding the validity of this ethical agreement or the research work undertaken should be directed to him at xxx.

Agreement

I consent to participation in this study. I understand that participation in this interview is voluntary and I have the right to interrupt the interview and leave whenever I wish, in which case all material will be deleted and not used in the study. I consent to the interview being recorded. When the essay is finished, all recorded interviews will be deleted. My identity will not be revealed in the essay. It is only the author of this essay who will listen to these interviews and the material will only be used for research purposes. Depending on the results, there is a possibility that the anonymous transcripts of this interview may be shared with other researchers.

Once complete, the essay will be published electronically in DIVA, and I will be able to read a copy. I understand that I may be contacted after the interview is finished if there is a need to complement the interview, or if there is something that is unclear with what was said during the interview. I may withdraw my participation at any time by contacting the interviewer using the information below.

I accept these terms and I want to participate in this investigation.
If you have any questions regarding this study, or wish to withdraw participation, feel free to contact me via mail or phone.

Mail: xxx
Mobile: xxx
Appendix B; Interview with dyslexia Analyst

Interview questions with dyslexia Analyst. Interview will be recorded

Start the interview with my ethical consent form, to be read and signed (one copy for the interviewee and one for me).

Talk about the background of the interviewee, when they studied to be a teacher, how long they have been teaching, which subject(s) they teach; situations in which they meet/have met students with dyslexia.

Then proceed with questions.

1. What is dyslexia to you?

2. How do you diagnose dyslexia?

3. How does LOGOS work? Is it widely used?

4. How would the logos test have differed if the student had reading and writing difficulties and not dyslexia?

5. What would you say the difference is if a student receives a diagnosis?

6. The student that has reading and writing difficulties, is there a difference there receiving or not a dyslexia diagnosis?

7. How would you say that reading and writing difficulties and dyslexia are different?

8. Do students with dyslexia, in your opinion, benefit or not from having a computer in class?

9. Would you then say that a teaching were students do not print but use computers could be problematic if it prevents an interaction with the text?

10. Is there anything you would like to add?
Appendix C; Interview with English Teachers

Interview questions with English teacher A and B. Interview will be recorded

Start the interview with my ethical consent form, to be read and signed (one copy for the interviewee and one for me).

Talk about the background of the interviewee, when they studied to be a teacher, how long they have been teaching, which subject(s) they teach; situations in which they meet/have met students with dyslexia.

Then proceed with questions.

1. What is dyslexia to you?

2. Are any of your students diagnosed with reading and writing difficulties in general and dyslexia in particular?

3. Have you been given advice from the special needs teacher on how to make provisions suitable for students with dyslexia?
   a. If yes
      i. What advice were you given?
      ii. Did it increase your understanding of provisions targeted to fit students with dyslexia and if so in what way?
      iii. What, if any, concrete actions have you taken as a result of that meeting?
   b. If no
      i. Would you like to discuss this with the special needs teacher?
      ii. Do you feel you have good or good enough understanding of how to provide for students with dyslexia?
      iii. What, if any, concrete actions would you like special needs teachers to support you with?

4. How do you plan a lesson to make it suit all students, reading and writing difficulties and dyslexia included?

5. Do you feel that you have adequate support from the special needs department and knowledge of how to plan lessons that student with dyslexia can benefit from?

6. Do you feel that you have adequate support from the administration to plan lessons that students with dyslexia can benefit from?

7. Do students with dyslexia, in your opinion, benefit or not from having a computer in class?

8. On a scale 1-10, how highly do you feel this issue is a high priority in your school.
9. In what way, if any, is there a consensus in the school, from principal, SNE and teachers on how to work with students with dyslexia?

10. Does this, in your opinion, follow the school’s values and/or the local authority’s values?

11. Does this, in your opinion, coincide with the regulations regarding disability and provisions?

12. Is there anything you would like to add?
Appendix D; Interview with Special Needs Teacher

Interview questions with special needs teacher. Interview will be recorded.

Start the interview with my ethical consent form, to be read and signed (one copy for the interviewee and one for me).

Talk about the background of the interviewee, when they studied, how long they have been teaching, which subject(s) they teach; situations in which they meet/have met students with dyslexia.

Then proceed with questions.

1. What is dyslexia to you?

2. There is a big debate whether reading and writing difficulties or dyslexia is the right term. Where do you stand on this issue?

3. How many students do you work with diagnosed with reading and writing difficulties in general and dyslexia in particular?

4. What are the most important factors, according to you, for a student with dyslexia to succeed in school?

5. During a normal work day, how do you work to meet these students’ needs?

6. When a student diagnosed with dyslexia starts at your school, what do the procedures look like?

7. How do those procedures differ for a student who is already at the school when diagnosed?

8. What support do students with this diagnosis receive at your school?

9. In your role as special needs teacher do you give advice to the school and individual teachers on how to make learning situations more adapted to students with dyslexia?
   a. If yes
      i. What kind of advice do you give to the school at for example APT (workplace meetings)?
      ii. What kind of advice do you give individual teachers?
   b. If no
      i. What kind of advice would you like to the school?
      ii. What advice would you like to give individual teachers?

10. In your opinion, do the teachers have enough knowledge to plan lessons that benefit students with dyslexia?
11. Do students with dyslexia, in your opinion, benefit from having a computer in class?

12. Do you feel that you have adequate support from the teachers to make and carry out provisions?

13. Do you feel that you have adequate support from the administration to make and carry out provisions?

14. On a scale 1-10, how highly do you feel this issue is prioritised at your school.

15. In what way, if any, is there a consensus in the school, from principal, SNE and teachers on how to work with students with dyslexia?

16. Does this, in your opinion, follow the school’s values and/or the local authority’s values?

17. Does this, in your opinion, coincide with the regulations regarding disability and provisions?

18. Is there anything you would like to add?
Appendix E; Interview with Head Teacher

Interview questions with head teacher. Interview will be recorded

Start the interview with my ethical consent form, to be read and signed (one copy for the interviewee and one for me).

Talk about the background of the interviewee, when they studied, how long they have been in their current position and what they did before that; situations in which they meet/have met students with dyslexia.

Then proceed with questions.

1. What is dyslexia to you?

2. In your role as head teacher, what is your responsibility in terms of special needs education and provisions?

3. How many students are diagnosed with reading and writing difficulties in general and dyslexia in particular?

4. How does the hand over from high school to upper secondary school work?

5. How does the hand over work within your school?

6. How does the school ensure that teachers have enough knowledge about dyslexia?

7. Do you feel that you have adequate support from the teachers and special needs education to make and carry out provisions?

8. Do you feel that you have adequate support from the administration to make and carry out provisions?

9. On a scale 1-10, how highly do you feel this issue is a prioritised at your school.

10. In what way, if any, is there a consensus in the school, from principal, SNE and teachers on how to work with students with dyslexia?

11. Does this, in your opinion, follow the school’s values and/or the local authority’s values?

12. Does this, in your opinion, coincide with the regulations regarding disability and provisions?

13. Is there anything you would like to add?
Appendix F; Quotes used (before translation)

1. “Ja! Vi har faktiskt ett misstänkt fall […] och ett till! […] det finns minst tre studenter i den gruppen.” (English teacher A).
2. “Skulle vi ha komplettd information från mentorn.” (English teacher A).
3. “Denna [information mentor till lärare] fungerar inte alltid 100%” (Head teacher).
4. ”Men har du inte förstått att jag har dyslexi?” (English teacher B).
5. “Det fungerade inte så bra förra året” (Head teacher).
6. ”Om det finns studenter med dyslexi så borde det ha upptäckts i låg- eller högstadiet …[annars] … måste det betyda att eleven har levt med dessa problem under hela deras skoltid och […] eftersom vi inte har någon överlämning på dessa problem så antar vi att den låga kvaliteten på deras texter är på grund av slarv eller någon slags lägre talang” (English teacher B).
7. “Användas för i princip vilken text som helt på datorn [och läser] texter studenten har skrivit” (Special needs teacher).
8. “Måste vara väldigt motiverade för att acceptera det, det händer inte automatiskt” (English teacher B).
9. ”Svårigheter med att läsa det skriva ordet och att skriva bokstäver. [Han] läser hackigt och ändrar ordningen på bokstäverna eller så laser han dem inte alls” (English teacher A).
11. ”Det kan saknas ord eller bokstäver eller stora svårigheter med stavning” (English teacher B).
12. ”Det är mycket om läs- och skrivsvårigheter” (Head teacher).
13. ”Svårigheterna kan vara större i visa ämnen [och att det] varierar från individ till individ” (Head teacher).
14. ”Om du hade en mindre allvarlig sjukdom som du inte visste om men kunde leva med, skulle du vilja veta ett du var sjuk?” (Head teacher).
15. ”Tenderar att kalla det läs- och skrivsvårigheter” (Special needs teacher).
16. ”För att verkligen kallas dyslexi […] är det ett problem med avkodningen specifikt” (Special needs teacher).
17. ”Jag har inte engagerat mig med att gå in på detaljer, för mig räcker det att veta att en student har med läs-och skrivsvårigheter” (Special needs teacher).
18. ”Jag vet att dyslexi, för visa, är ett tungt ord” (Special needs teacher).
19. ”En fyra kanske […] det är väldigt frånvarande i, för mig” (English teacher A).
20. ”Jag är så kritisk till överlämningsprocessen och kritisk till pappersarbete […] jag tycker inte att det är en prioriterad fråga” (English teacher B).
21. ”Det kanske inte är den högsta prioritet […] det är 7–8” (Special needs teacher).
22. ”Jag tycker att det har förbättrats, […] men jag skulle säga 7” (Head teacher).
24. ”Det är vår uppgift att göra anpassningar” (English teacher A).
25. ”Det låter som en kliché […] jag skyller på otillräcklig tid […] det är en brist på kunskap också” (English teacher A).
27. ”Mycket tid spenderas på betyg och bedömningar” (English teacher B).
28. ”Jag har inte bett om det [stöd], men jag känner inte riktigt att jag ska behöva be om det hela tiden heller. Jag tycker kanske att det borde komma från specialpedagogen, och att man måste kanske mötas någonstans, vi måste kanske mötas halvvägs” (English teacher A).
29. ”Man kan inte bara prata med specialpedagogen utan hon behöver ges ett dokument […] ibland vill man att specialpedagogen bara är med i klassrummet eller pratar med eleven, men det är bestämt att de måste ha någon slags rapport eller dokumentation innan de handlar” (English teacher B).
30. ”Jag tror att vi vill ha och behöver mer stöd […] i klassrummet innan, under och efter lektionen” (English teacher B).