Assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia in English language teaching:

A case study of English Language Teachers' insights on the matter

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ABSTRACT

This essay focuses on what impact developmental dyslexia has on assessment and grading in the second language teaching of English in the Swedish educational system. The data presented in this essay are based on six semi-structured interviews with English language teachers of lower and upper secondary schools from the south-eastern parts of Sweden. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, and the collected data have been translated into English. The inquiries of the interviews focused on the teachers' awareness of dyslexia and its impact on learning and teaching, as well as how they worked with and their considerations made when assessing and grading dyslexic pupils. The interviews specifically enquired what particular challenges arose in the assessment and grading process, what provided aid, and what could be done to provide further relief during this process. The results show that the assessment and grading of dyslexic pupils is similar to the general practice. The teachers do, however, accommodate the dyslexic pupils' needs in the teaching and carefully consider their difficulties when assessing and grading. The teachers use, for example, spelling programs and such technical aids to help them, to some extent, disregard dyslexic difficulties while assessing. However, results show how the teachers are not able to transfer their awareness of dyslexia and its implications into the assessment and grading situation, suggesting that the teachers' own ability to assess dyslexic pupils is somewhat inadequate.

KEYWORDS: Assessment and Grading Aids, Assessment and Grading Challenges, Developmental Dyslexia, Dyslexic Pupils, Foreign Language Learning and Teaching, Second Language Learning and Teaching, Teacher Perceptions
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APPENDICES
1. INTRODUCTION

Assessing and grading are among the most difficult tasks a teacher could undertake (Lundahl 2010:484). It could be believed that countless teachers will be required to assess and grade pupils with some sort of learning disability during their teaching career, affecting the routine in which they ordinarily would assess and grade. According to Höien and Lundberg (1992:18), one of the most common disabilities in the western part of the world is developmental dyslexia (henceforth cited as dyslexia). About 5-10 % of the Swedish population has been diagnosed with a severe form of dyslexia which places about one dyslexic pupil in each class (Höien and Lundberg 1992:18). Teachers are responsible for helping dyslexic pupils in their strive to reach the educational goals in the English syllabi set by The National Agency for Education ([www] 2011a; [www] 2011b). The acceptable knowledge for different grades is defined in each syllabus as knowledge requirements (The National Agency for Education [www] 2011a:6). Reaching the knowledge requirements of the syllabus thusly becomes an important part of education for both pupils and teachers. Subsequently, this renders the process of assessing pupils’ knowledge important for the final appraisal of the requirements.

Moreover, taking into account dyslexic pupils' learning difficulties in regard of learning English as a second language an even greater issue emerges. According to Crombie (2000:113), previous studies on dyslexia and learning a foreign language have confirmed that dyslexic pupils often encounter considerable difficulties in foreign language learning as, for example, “weakness in phonological processing, poor working memory, poor auditory discrimination, confusion over syntax […] slow speed of information processing, difficulties in object naming” (Crombie 2000:114). These difficulties will most likely render pupils struggling with their language learning and in need of tools to overcome them. This could raise the issue on what help the pupils should be provided with, as well as who is responsible for providing it. Crombie (2000:121) states that dyslexic pupils’ learning is not solely a concern of the special needs staff but also a part of the language teacher's responsibility. In collaboration with the special needs staff, teachers are required to find the most effective solutions to resolve the major difficulties in dyslexic pupils’ language learning (Crombie 2000:121).

To be able to facilitate the needs of all pupils, teachers are necessitated to determine the pupils’ level of English as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, teachers are
required to appraise and facilitate the pupils' needs to receive an understanding of the pupils' individual learning aptitudes, as well as how they will be able to utilise that knowledge in the learning process (Crombie 2000:120). These appraisals should be, according to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010:7), a continuous process which provides pupils with individual support and endorses their progression; otherwise known as formative assessment (Crombie 2000:3,7). The ultimate summative assessment of the pupils' knowledge, grading, should essentially be based on the pupils' proficiency and ability demonstrated through the formative assessment (Lundahl 2010:484ff). The necessity for accommodating each pupil's individual needs consequently links teachers' appraisal method of pupils’ knowledge with the considerations of the complexity of dyslexic pupils' learning process.

This essay will treat the issue of the learning disability dyslexia in second language teaching of English in the Swedish educational system. This investigation will focus on the assessment of pupils with dyslexia and on how teachers of English in south-eastern Sweden approach assessing and grading these pupils. Dyslexic pupils might not be able to demonstrate their language skills in the same manner as other pupils due to their disability; therefore, the essay will investigate how the teachers work with assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, contemplating on their assessment processes and procedures. Two aspects of assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia will be considered. Firstly, the essay will consider whether the assessment of the dyslexic pupils diverges from the manner of assessment of other pupils (pupils without dyslexia), aiming to define a probable difference in the assessment process between dyslexic pupils and pupils without dyslexia. Secondly, the essay will consider what consequences the implications of dyslexia have on the assessment and grading process; what particular challenges the teachers face and what they consider could provide support when assessing and grading dyslexic pupils.

The research questions of this essay are:

- How do English teachers in the south-eastern parts of Sweden work with assessing and grading pupils in general compared to assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia?
- What particular challenges do English teachers in the south-eastern parts of Sweden face when assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia?
- What do English teachers in the south-eastern parts of Sweden consider could aid the process of assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia?
The essay is structured as follows: Chapter 2 describes the term dyslexia and what it implies, offers definitions and descriptions of assessment, and provides a brief presentation of official educational guidelines. Chapter 3 introduces the essay's own investigation, the method of collecting data through interviews, as well as presenting the participating teachers. Chapter 4 presents and discusses the result of the interviews in relation to research questions and theoretical frame. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the current study, as well as offering suggestions for further research.

2. BACKGROUND
The theoretical frame of this essay will define and offer a description of implications of dyslexia; defining the problem areas of dyslexia and its effects on the pupil's ability in reading and writing, regarding second language learning. It will also present definitions and descriptions of assessment, and discuss assessment forms relevant for the Swedish curriculum and English syllabi. Moreover, it will in brief present official guidelines from The National Agency for Education, and consider the paragraph in the Swedish Law for Education concerning grading pupils with disabilities.

2.1 Dyslexia

First and foremost, the term dyslexia is considered as *specific reading and writing difficulties* (Höien & Lundberg 1995:30; Lundström 2004:22) and is not to be mistaken for general reading and writing difficulties. General reading disability is a consequence of a below average or poor intelligence level, and where poor reading and comprehension skills are only among several indicators of the cognitive weakness (Aaron 1997:51f). Dyslexia is however not an intellectual deficiency. It is a specific disability (Höien & Lundberg 1999: 10; Interdys [www]) with neurobiological origin (Nijakowska 2010:33).

This section will define dyslexia, the problem areas of dyslexia, and its effects on the pupil's ability primarily in reading and writing, with regard to second language learning.

2.1.1 Definitions of dyslexia

Of importance when discussing dyslexia is to define what the term implies and to understand that dyslexia is not based on an intellectual deficiency; it is considered a specific disability (Höien & Lundberg 1999:10) caused by a neurobiological deficit (Nijakowska 2010:33).

It appears to be a difficult task to give a clear definition of dyslexia. According to Höien and Lundberg (1999:12f), the definition is most frequently made through an exclusion theory;
dyslexia only comprises reading difficulties where there is a clear discrepancy between literacy and level of intelligence (Höien & Lundberg 1999:12f; Fletcher et al. 2007:36). Höien and Lundberg (1999:21) define dyslexia as a constant disturbance of the coding of the written language caused by a weakness in the phonological system. Fletcher et al. (2007:104) express a similar definition but complement it to entail a deficiency in the fluency of word-decoding as well. However their definition is based on an inclusion theory, the definition of dyslexia is specific and obvious and therefore easy to recognize as opposed to the definition of Höien and Lundberg (1999). Fletcher et al. (2007:104) also acknowledge the definition to focus on the relationship between word recognition and spelling, and phonological processing.

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) defines dyslexia as a 'language-based learning disability' that consists of a group of symptoms which bestows a person with difficulties in certain language skills (Interdys [www]). This definition offers insight to the specific difficulties dyslexic persons have by characterising dyslexia as "...difficulties with accurate and / or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities." (Interdys [www]). Consequences of these difficulties particularly comprise problems in reading, such as comprehension and reading experience, which subsequently could lead to an inadequacy of contextual knowledge and a feeble vocabulary. IDA moreover describes that dyslexia might impede pupils' academic achievements in general teaching and that dyslexics with more severe forms of dyslexia are entitled extra support, teaching accommodations, or special education. With skilful teaching dyslexic pupils could be able to achieve basic reading and spelling proficiency, but to nonetheless later experience difficulties with more complex language skills such as grammar, comprehension of textbooks, and production of multifaceted and comprehensive writing (Interdys [www]). According to IDA, dyslexic pupils may also experience difficulties in spoken production, nor fully comprehend other speakers, as well as struggle with self-confidence issues as feeling less accomplished than their peers due to their dyslexic difficulties (Interdys [www]). The use of the term dyslexia will henceforth comprise specific reading and writing difficulties in accordance with IDA’s definition.

2.1.2 Dyslexia and learning implications

Dyslexic persons are not a homogenous group; there are individual variations of reading and spelling deficiencies for all dyslectics (Höien & Lundberg 1999: 26). The varying deficiencies create a pedagogical conundrums in the planning and accommodating of the individual needs of the pupils (Höien & Lundberg 1999:26), however, by defining the characteristics of dyslexia support could be provided in that endeavour.
Both Höien and Lundberg (1999:40) and Fletcher et al. (2007:85f) describe decoding difficulties (reading) as one of the main characteristics of dyslexia. The decoding helps a reader to recognize, express, and receive an understanding of the meaning of a word while reading, but a dyslexic person has deficiencies in this process (Höien & Lundberg 1999:40). According to Höien and Lundberg (1999:40), a weakness in the decoding of words prevents a good reading comprehension, thus indicating that dyslexic pupils are often poor readers. Fletcher et al. (2007: 86, 104) also mention the deficit in reading comprehension, depicting it as a consequence of a discrepancy in the fluency of word decoding. This process is dependent on the ability to fluently, automatically, and rapidly be able to decode and recognize single words (‘rapid naming’) (Fletcher et al. 2007:86). Another characteristic is a difficulty in encoding words (spelling) either in a context or seclusion (Fletcher et al. 2007:86). According to Fletcher et al. (2007:240), the need for phonological representations is necessary when spelling (spell according to how a letter/word sounds). However, most dyslexics lack the understanding of the correlation between the sounds and what is written (defined as phonological awareness); consequently delaying their ability to recognise words (Fletcher et al. 2007:88). Two sequential processes, which most dyslexic persons have a deficiency in (Fletcher et al. 2007:104), are also involved in generating word recognition. One is the process of 'rapid naming' (as previously mentioned), and the other is remembering sound-based information ('verbal and/or acoustic working memory') (Fletcher et al. 2007:89ff). Both decoding and encoding difficulties base themselves in the phonological processing, however, not all dyslexics have the same difficulties (Fletcher et al. 2007:86f). Even though dyslexic pupils have difficulties in spelling, they do not need to experience difficulties with word reading and vice versa.

Höien and Lundberg (1999:33) describe how research of so called phonological and orthographic strategies support a notion of how analysing the process of pupils' reading and writing will, a part from supply information on what difficulties the pupils have, provide valuable information of what the pupils are capable to accomplish. The result of the analysis will serve as a valuable starting point in the individualisation of the teaching of dyslexic pupils (Höien & Lundberg 1999:33). Moreover, to be able to understand the impact dyslexia

1 Dyslexia could be divided into several subtypes of dyslexia depending on what deficiencies a person has, which helps to define what difficulties this dyslexic person struggles with. Examples of subtypes are auditive dyslexia and visual dyslexia. For further read on such subtypes see page 28f in Höien and Lundberg (1999).

2 For further read on the research on phonological and orthographic strategies, see page 31f in Höien and Lundberg (1999).
might have on the Swedish dyslexic pupils in the second language teaching of English, further considerations need to be made to the impact dyslexia has on learning a second language.

2.1.3 Dyslexia in second language learning and teaching

A general assumption is that persons who learn their native language are able to learn a second or foreign language (Crombie 1997:27f). However, since dyslexic pupils might on occasion not learn their native language in all respects it still becomes important to consider the dyslexic pupils' needs, as well as how to meet them in second or foreign language teaching (Crombie 1997:27f). Crombie (2000:113f) points out that it has been confirmed, through previous studies on dyslexia and foreign language learning, that dyslexic pupils often encounter considerable difficulties in, for example, 'phonological processing' and 'sound discrimination'. They are also subjected to a slow working process in reading, writing and comprehension due to poor 'rapid naming' ability, poor 'working memory', and slow 'speed of information processing' (Crombie 2000:114). According to Crombie (1997:29), there is a misconception that dyslexic pupils have poor listening comprehension skills, this because that skill is actually considered good in first language learning. Whatever difficulties dyslexic foreign language learners have are based on decoding and phonological difficulties, and not due to a poor comprehension (Crombie 1997:29f: Sparks et al. cited in Nijakowska 2010:80). Crombie (1997:29) also states that even if dyslexics are regarded as poor readers and spellers by definition, it is not an established fact when it comes to learning a foreign language.

According to Nijakowska (2010:80), a research by Sparks et al. (cited in Nijakowska 2010:79f) demonstrates evidence suggesting that there is a parallel between a poor aptitude for learning a native language and being a poor learner of a foreign language. The difficulties in foreign language learning appeared to be caused by a phonological deficiency to "break down, put together and relate the sounds of the language to the appropriate letters or letter combinations" (Nijakowska 2010:80). That there is a relation between the learning aptitude between the first and second language is also shown in Crombie's published study from 1997. The study investigated the success of dyslexic persons learning to read, write and comprehend a foreign language, and how to most effectively ensure success in teaching a foreign language to dyslexic pupils (Crombie 1997). Crombie (1997:39) suggests that the degree of difficulties experienced in learning the native language could predict the difficulties that would arise in foreign language learning. The study also indicates that pupils who receive considerable help in their native language learning might be able to reach a reasonable level of reading and writing in another language (Crombie 1997:39f). However, these pupils will still experience
difficulties in the phonological processing in foreign language learning, thus the learning aptitude of the native language must be taken into consideration by teachers (Crombie 1997:39f). Crombie (1997:40f) concludes how several dyslexic pupils are not coping in their foreign language learning, which consequently requires teachers to receive guidance on how to help these pupils. For instance, she denotes that the use of solely an audio-lingual method would act disadvantageous for dyslexic pupils with phonological deficiencies since it restricts the visual and kinaesthetic senses.

Dyslexic pupils’ learning is the concern of the special needs staff, but also a part of language teacher's responsibility (Crombie 2000:121). Language teachers are in collaboration with the special needs staff required to find the most effective solutions to resolve the major difficulties in dyslexic pupils’ language learning (Crombie 2000:121). For example, by depriving dyslexic persons the opportunity to participate and learn what others learn, especially if this is of importance for their future, consequently means that their needs have failed to be met (Crombie 2000:29). This depicts a need for an inclusive approach to teaching dyslexic pupils; there is no need to have separate teaching for pupils who struggle with dyslexia, hence dyslexic pupils should be integrated in the regular teaching. Nijakowska (2010:145) also stresses how dyslexics with special education needs could benefit from receiving the teaching other pupils receive, but states that pupils with more severe dyslexia might still need an exclusive approach as well.

Nijakowska (2010:145ff) summarises several accommodations that ought to be made for dyslexic pupils, which are relevant in both first and second language learning. The most important issue is to increase the awareness of dyslexia among the ones who are to provide the educational environment; most likely concerning teachers, special education teachers and head teachers. The teacher and pupil should also have a recurrent discussion, allowing the pupil to provide feedback regarding the teaching and learning arrangements, which enables the teacher to accommodate the pupil's specific needs. Nijakowska (2010:147) further states that it is important to create a supporting and positive learning environment, offer supplementary time to process new information and to finish tasks, as well as provide assistance to maintain the pupils' focus (Nijakowska 2010:147). She also states that adaption of the teaching is necessary to improve dyslexic pupils' academic accomplishments. These teaching adjustments could range from working with other texts more suitable for the pupils’ capacity, be freed from reading aloud in class and record themselves instead, to use text-
editors and spelling programs to avoid difficulties with handwriting and spelling etcetera\(^3\) (Nijakowska 2010:147f).

In summary, dyslexia is defined as a specific disability (not an intellectual deficiency) which manifests as difficulties in the processes of decoding and encoding a language. Pupils with dyslexia gain from being included in the general teaching, but since all dyslexic persons have individual variations of reading and spelling deficiencies it requires individual accommodating of each pupil's needs. By analysing dyslexic pupils' learning aptitudes, teachers will acquire valuable information to individualise the teaching. The understanding of dyslexic pupils' learning difficulties in their native language will provide valuable information on what difficulties they most likely will struggle with in their learning of another language. As dyslexic pupils' learning needs to be appraised and supported, to ensure progression within the target language, their specific accomplishments also need to be compared and evaluated according to curricular goals and knowledge requirements. These two objectives could be reached through the assessment and grading process.

### 2.2 Assessment and grading

According to Burke (2002:87), teaching could be defined as a journey, and where the planned curriculum is the path on which pupils move and progress according to a pace set by their own incentives and aspirations. Black and Wiliam (2003:263) speak of assessment as a tool in which learning can be supported and measured, indicating how all pupils with their individual difficulties could receive support in the teaching, useful for both pupils without dyslexia as pupils with dyslexia. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010:3), assessment is a continuous process, which includes a wide range of methodological techniques. Of importance for educators in Sweden, the National Agency for Education (2011c:6 [www]) declares that since the assessment of pupils' achievements is closely linked to the actual teaching, it should be utilised in a conscious and systematic manner, well integrated in the teaching. This necessitates an understanding of what assessment is and how it is to be applied. This section will define and offer descriptions of terms of assessment, and discuss assessment forms relevant for the Swedish curriculum and English syllabi.

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\(^3\) For further information on educational accommodations see Nijakowska (2010:145ff)
2.2.1 Purpose of assessment

Assessment could assume several different forms and be made for different purposes. This section will define the terms concerning assessment that will be present throughout the essay. This essay will focus on formal assessment: assessment based on planned recurrent exercises and procedures which has the intent to collect samplings of pupils' performances and provide appraisals of pupils’ achievements (Brown & Abeywickrama 2010:7).

Assessment practices could have different purposes, where the main purposes could be divided into: assessment for learning; formative assessment, and assessment of learning; summative assessment (Lundahl 2012:485ff). Formative assessment entails what teachers and pupils can do to document the pupils' learning in order to use that as support in the continued learning; the process. Summative assessment entails some form of grading or “ranking” of pupils’ abilities or performance in regards to the teaching objectives; the end result (Lundahl 2012:485ff). When learning is revealed pupils attain confidence to their own ability and they become aware of how their language development is strengthened, which consequently forms a powerful incentive (Lundahl 2012:485ff). Formative and summative assessment should not be used as two divided types of assessment, but interact since the end result of a product (for example a grade) is an acknowledgement of a successful process (the assessment) (Lundahl 2012:487). The main focal point will henceforth be placed on formative assessment since it acts as a tool that serves learning and appraises knowledge. However, summative assessment will also be considered for its significance as a set evaluation of pupils' language proficiency.

2.2.2 Assessment ‘for’ and ‘of’ learning

The terms formative and summative have from their very beginning been descriptive of their assessment function, but not directly useful in the actual teaching (Black & Wiliam 2003:623f). Black and Wiliam (2003:623f) consider the need to develop new instruments and systems of assessment to be able to make the formative and summative assessment most advantageous as a tool for learning. However, Marshall (2004:112) discusses how there does not need to exist an exact assessment procedure for formative assessment. As long as teachers understand the main notions and effects of formative assessment, they are still able to use it in their teaching practice (Marshall 2004:112).

As previously stated by the National Agency for Education (2011c:6 [www]), Stull et al. (2011:30) express the need to integrate formative and summative assessment as part of the learning process, since it provides information for both pupils and teacher on what level a task
has been performed. From this information pupils receive feedback, which serves to identify their specific difficulties, and provide support in the continued learning. The feedback received by the teacher functions as a way of identifying the pupils' reception of classroom instructions, and indicates if changes in instructions are needed. It also serves to discriminate between group and individual difficulties, as well as implies necessary clarifications and corrections on either group or individual level (Stull et al. 2011:30). Heritage et al. (2009:24) describe how the accuracy of teacher's analysis and interpretation of the learner's ability, and the accuracy in suggested progressions, are crucial for how effective the formative assessment could be. Even though working with formative assessment is time consuming for both teachers and pupils (Stull et al. 2011:35), it could be regarded to have an essential role in the learning, and especially in the individualisation and strengthening of each pupil's learning. A formative assessment process could allow each pupil's needs to be accommodated on an individual basis and also, without the direct need of special treatment, meet most part of the dyslexic pupils' needs within the same context as the other pupils; in inclusive teaching.

Burke (2002:87), similarly to Stull et al. (2001), considers teachers as facilitators and guides throughout the learning. Teachers have the aim to maintain the pupils' development in an accurate and progressive direction towards the pupils’ own individual goals (Burke 2002:87). This role subsequently requires teachers to reflect upon how to balance the role of instructors, and all those involving tasks, with how to execute language appraisals in an adequate manner. Burke declares that the solution to this is simple; teachers should use planned formative assessment procedures (Burke 2000:87). By incorporating formative assessment into the course curriculum, the assessment could become a tool to demonstrate and encourage knowledge progression. Burke (2002:88ff) states that teachers need to form their own individual system on how to use planned formative assessment and offers examples of well-functioning principles. Firstly, there needs to be continuous compiling of information on the pupils' productions and accomplishments throughout a course, which enables the teacher to direct each pupil's progression, as well as collect concrete evidence of the pupils' proficiency. This requires a well-planned curriculum with specific methods for observing and compiling evidence. Secondly, the teacher provides feedback to each pupil throughout the course, amplifying the individual progression. Thirdly, the information received concerning the pupils provides indications on how to progress in the teaching, and offers possibilities to modify the planned curriculum during the course of a term. Fourthly, it is also important to include the pupils in the planning of parts of the course curriculum since it gives them "a
sense of responsibility for their own learning" (Burke 2000:88ff). As a conclusion of Burke’s principles; it is of significance to 'sign post' the learning by specifically pre-plan how and when to assess pupils' proficiency.

Stull et al. (2011:37) have shown evidence that using formative assessment technique brings positive effects to pupils' achievements, and that there are positive effects even with low teacher commitment. Moreover, Marshall (2004:101ff, 112) expresses that through simply possessing an understanding of the main principle of formative assessment, teachers are able to create positive effects in the teaching of the English language. She also reasons that since the English language is uncrystallised and constantly changing it is difficult to explain to the pupils what they are specifically supposed to improve. She however states that formative assessment allows progression within a changing language, even though it cannot be clearly stated how (Marshall 2004:112).

The aforementioned notions show how to use formative assessment as a tool for learning, however, even if it could be used to compile information that the assessment of learning could be based on, there are still other considerations to be made in the grading process, especially such regarding pupils with learning disabilities. Guskey and Jung (2009:53ff) discuss how the standard process of grading could negatively affect pupils with special needs that are integrated in the general classroom. To be able to dismiss any negative effects specific considerations could be made. Guskey and Jung (2009:53ff) have compiled a five step grading model on how to maintain grading pupils with learning disabilities positive. This inclusive grading model is mainly considered in relation to the American school system but could, with some adaption, be used in other school systems. The 5-step inclusion model considers if assessment should be executed according to a standardised grading system (with or without accommodations) or according to a modified standard. The possible changes in standard are based on if the pupils’ difficulties are so severe that modifications to the grading standard are needed to permit them to reach a passing grade. The model also considers how to assess the standard or modified grading system, as well as the need to explicitly report all the modifications made in the grading process of the pupils' progression (Guskey & Jung 2009:53ff).

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4 See figure 1 in Guskey and Jung (2009:57)
If reviewing this 5-step inclusive grading model with concern to the Swedish school system, further clarification of the Swedish curriculums for lower and upper secondary school, as well as the syllabi for English in the different school forms, is necessary.

2.2.3 Teaching documents and other teaching guidelines

This section will in brief present the Swedish Curriculum for lower and upper secondary school, the English language teaching syllabi (ELT) for the different school forms set by the National Agency for Education, as well as consider the paragraph in the Swedish Law for Education concerning grading pupils with disabilities.

The curriculum consists of three parts: (1) fundamental values and tasks of the school, (2) overall goals and guidelines for the education, and (3) syllabi with complementary knowledge requirements (National Agency for Education 2011a[www]; 2011b[www]). All the syllabi are also divided into three parts defining: (1) the reasons for teaching the subject, the syllabus' aim and long-term goals, (2) the overall content the teaching should cover, and (3) the requirements for the knowledge pupils should attain in the subject to receive a grade. The aim of the ELT syllabus explains how pupils are to develop and attain skills enabling them to, for example, 'understand and interpret', 'be articulate and communicative' 'make themselves understood and to understand others' in the form of written and spoken English (National Agency for Education 2011a [www]; 2011b [www]). The central content of the ELT syllabus consists of three main topics: communicative, receptive and productive and interactive (National Agency for Education 2011a [www]; 2011b[www]). The knowledge requirements set the levels for assessment and grading through defining three levels of how well a requirement is acquired. The assessment of the requirements should take the core content into consideration and not solely be based on the wording of the requirement (National Agency for Education 2011a [www]; 2011b[www]).

With further considerations to the assessment of the knowledge requirements, the Swedish School Law (2010:800) states, with concerns of grading pupils with disabilities in chapter 10, paragraph 21 for compulsory school, that:

"If there are special circumstances when awarding grades [...] individual elements of the knowledge requirements the pupil should have achieved by the end of grade 6 or 9 could be disregarded. Special circumstances include disability or other similar personal circumstances which are not of a temporary nature and which is a direct obstacle to the pupil being able to reach a certain knowledge requirement." (Grundskolan 2011:876) [my translation]
This paragraph defines that if pupils have such difficulties in their learning that they are not able to overcome them, they could be overlooked in the grading. It implicates that if pupils with dyslexia suffer from such problematic difficulties that they are not able to reach some of the knowledge requirements, considerations should be taken to this in the grading. The same is applied for uppers secondary school and stated in chapter 15, paragraph 26 of the Swedish School Law (2010:800).

In summary, formative assessment acts as a tool that serves learning and appraises knowledge. It allows individualisation of the teaching for all pupils, and allows pupils to progress from the level of proficiency they possess. To be able to use formative assessment to its utmost advantage, it is significant to plan and 'sign post' how, when and what to assess, as well as to what purpose. The function of the summative assessment, or grading, is of importance since it evaluates both pupils' language proficiency, as well as shows how well teachers have been able to reinforce the individual pupil's learning process. By integrating formative and summative assessment into the learning process, information is provided for both pupils and teachers on the level of performance reached, and the need of improvements and next steps in skills development and teaching. The framework, to which assessment in Sweden is set, is described in the educational curriculums and syllabi documents. The content of teaching is not set, but the main principles that the teaching must include are provided, as well as an obligatory standard for grading. The learning of dyslexic pupils needs to be appraised and supported, alongside the other pupils', and through making accommodations or modifications in the teaching and grading this could be accomplished, even if some special educations teaching still might be necessary. If using formative assessment principles in language teaching, all pupils' learning becomes individualised and opportunities to progress are offered. The consideration needed to be made in the end is what to grade or disregard, as well as how that is reported back to the pupils and notified within the mandatory and higher school forms.

As pointed out in the introduction, the main objective of this essay is to assemble and review how teachers perceive their work with assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, receiving an overview of this complex matter, and possibly attain greater understanding of how to work with assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia.
3. METHOD AND MATERIAL

The investigation of the essay is based upon empirical research, which consists of interviews held with English language teachers of lower and upper secondary schools. This chapter presents the method and material of the investigation: the consideration taken, execution of the interviews, the participants, and problems and limitations.

The empirical part consists of interviews held with English language teachers of lower and upper secondary school. The objective in the interviews was to receive a broad scope of descriptions of how to work with dyslexic pupils, as well as to collect the teachers’ experience of particular challenges and beneficial aids when assessing and grading dyslexic pupils, which possibly could provide indications on how the process could become easier. The intent was to conduct interviews with three to four English language teachers from each school form, ultimately collecting qualitative data from six to eight teachers.

The interviews were conducted through a semi-structured approach, with several open ended main questions and additional follow-up questions with the purpose to give the respondents opportunity to respond without restraint, according to their interpretations, opinions, and considerations (Patel & Davidson, 2003:75ff). In accordance with Patel and Davidson (2003:81), the interviews were designed to have the interviewee answer a number of main questions allowing an open response. The main questions were followed by several follow-up questions to maintain and secure the interviews' relevance (Patel & Davidson, 2003:84). The interview questions (see Appendix 1) were planned according to Patel and Davidson (2003:77ff) notions of structure and order, hence a "funnel technique" was used (starting with more open questions to become more specific). The teachers had been informed in advance of the purpose of the interview and the research questions the essay aimed to answer, but received the information once more at the time of the interview. The teachers had previously been asked permission to use audio recording equipment to record the interviews, and were asked permission once more before the interview started, which they all consented to. The teachers were also provided with an interview guide containing the main interview questions (see Appendix 2), which they read through before the start of the interview. The interviews were documented through written comments in an interview sheet (see Appendix 3) and supplemented with the audio recordings.

The interviews began with acquiring background information on each teacher (presented in table 1.) before continuing to the main inquiries of the interview. The interviews ended
with the possibility for the teachers to amend statements or supplement with comments on other things that they experienced as important for the subject matter. After ending the interviews, the teachers were also asked permission to be contacted once more if there later on arose needs for supplementary queries.

The interview questions were sectioned into three themes, and the enquiries were made in the following order: (1) the main implications of dyslexia on language learning and teaching, (2) assessing and grading pupils in general compared to assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, (3) teachers’ experience and thoughts of particular challenges and possible aids in assessing and grading dyslexic pupils. The themes derived from the research questions and background sections of "Dyslexia" and "Assessment and Grading". The first theme consisted of a set of questions inquiring the teachers' knowledge of dyslexia and the impact the disability could have on the dyslexic pupils' learning, as well as on the general teaching. This theme had the aim to see how the teachers' perceptions influenced the assessment and grading of dyslexic pupils. The second theme contained queries regarding the regular assessment and grading and queries regarding the assessment and grading of pupils with dyslexia. This theme aimed to compare how the assessment and grading principles were used for pupils without dyslexia versus for pupils with dyslexia. The queries of the third theme had the aim to highlight particular challenges that arose in assessing and grading dyslexic pupils, as well as what, at present, offered relief in that process. The theme also enquired the teacher's own thoughts and ideas for what could provide further aid when assessing and grading dyslexic pupils.

Contact was taken with eight English teachers from lower and upper secondary school to ask for their participation in interviews regarding assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia. Three of the teachers at lower secondary school and three teachers at upper secondary school were able to participate in an interview. The following table provides information on the six participating teachers:
Table 1. Interviewee information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher 1</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
<th>Teacher 4</th>
<th>Teacher 5</th>
<th>Teacher 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching school form:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper secondary</td>
<td>Upper secondary</td>
<td>Lower secondary</td>
<td>Lower secondary</td>
<td>Lower secondary</td>
<td>Upper secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching experience:</strong></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional subjects:</strong></td>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>German, Religion</td>
<td>Swedish, Religion</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviewed teachers were all trained English teachers for either lower or upper secondary school. However, they had different working experience, and were teaching different additional subjects. This diversity will most likely provide the end result with a wider array of interpretations, and give a plausibly authentic representation of the English teaching profession in the south-eastern parts of Sweden.

Each interview was conducted in the same manner, utilising the same interview guide and asking the same main questions. The teachers had previously been informed of the purpose of the interview, as well as the research questions the essay aimed to explore. The teachers were also asked in the first stages of contact if they had any experience with working and grading dyslexic pupils. This was necessary to establish that the teachers were able to contribute with genuine experiences of the subject matter. What could have acted limiting for the interviews were the skilfulness and experience of interviewing possessed by the interviewer. All interviews were carried out in the teachers' native language (Swedish), and the notes were thereafter translated into English. Considerations were taken in the processing and translating of the materials to ascertain the finished product to be as concordant as possible to the teachers intended meaning.

4. RESULT ANALYSIS

This section aims to answer the essay's three research questions: “How do English teachers in the south-eastern parts of Sweden work with assessing and grading pupils in general compared to assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia?” “What particular challenges do
English teachers in the south-eastern parts of Sweden face when assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia?”, and “What do English teachers in the south-eastern parts of Sweden consider could aid the process of assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia?”. The result analysis which follows is the outcome of the six conducted interviews presented in the chapter “Method and Material”. The six interviewed teachers are referred to as T-1 (Teacher 1), T-2 (Teacher 2), T-3 (Teacher 3) and so forth. Each of the topic headings represents the themes of the interviews, which were regarding the teachers' perspectives on: (1) dyslexia and its implications on language learning and teaching, (2) assessing and grading pupils in general and assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, (3) particular challenges and possible aids in assessing and grading dyslexic pupils. Each section will analyse and discuss the result in consideration to theories, suggestions, and information presented in previous chapters.

4.1 Dyslexia's implication on language learning and teaching

Dyslexic pupils are likely to experience difficulties with two of the main parts in the subject of English, reading and writing, and thus it becomes important that English language teachers are able to understand and support their struggling pupils. To be able to do this, at the best of their ability, it could be argued that teachers need to have an understanding of dyslexia and the impact it has on the pupils' learning. This section aims to presents and analyse the interviewed teachers' notions of dyslexia and the impact it has on learning and teaching.

Initially, in the attempt to define dyslexia the teachers struggled to provide a clear definition, however they all reached a consensus in that dyslexia could be defined as some sort of reading and writing difficulty. The vagueness of the definitions was not unforeseen, nor peculiar, since most researchers do not provide specifically correlative definitions (as seen by the different definitions provided by Höien and Lundberg (1999), Fletcher et al. (2003) and Interdys [www]). In the endeavour to define dyslexia further three teachers described some of the difficulties caused by dyslexia as: trouble in perceiving written letters (T-1), difficulty in decoding and recognizing words (T-4), and difficulty in comprehending longer texts (T-5). One teacher also considered the possibility that dyslexia did not have to surface as both reading and writing difficulties rather that one of them could appear by itself (T-6). These notions are somewhat corresponding to those in the definition of dyslexia specified by IDA (Interdys [www]). The teachers did not provide descriptions of the deficiencies that cause dyslexia, but were able to narrow down the main characteristics of dyslexia to reading and writing difficulties. When the teachers discussed the general effects of dyslexia on learning
they mentioned difficulties in obtaining written language (reading) and be able to convey oneself through written production (writing).

Considering the effects of dyslexia on learning a second/foreign language, three teachers (T-2, T-4, T-6) contemplated that they were the same as in the first language. Most of the teachers also agreed on that learning a foreign language could be more problematic than to learn one's native tongue, as in accordance to Sparks et al. (cited in Nijakowska 2010:79f) and Crombie (1997:39). The teachers described how the main issues appeared to be in writing, spelling and reading, and where, as T-4 stated, it would potentially even be more problematic to read and acquire vocabulary in a second/foreign language. The teachers' notions of the greatest difficulties were similar in the learning of English. Four teachers (I-1, T-3, T-5, and T-6) stated that the greatest difficulties were reading and writing difficulties. The teachers appeared to have a general understanding of the implications in both first and second/foreign language learning, but were not able to provide more detailed descriptions on what the specific deficits were. The teachers seemed to experience it easier to reflect on dyslexic difficulties concerning learning a language in general than learning a second/foreign language. They also experienced a main implication of dyslexia in second language learning to be spelling difficulties, which interestingly were, according to Crombie (1997:29), only suggestive and not established through research.

Dyslexic pupils struggle with individual variation of difficulties (Höien & Lundberg 1999:26; Fletcher et al. 2007:86f), which requires the need to obtain what each pupil's specific difficulties are. Nijakowska (2010:145ff) advocates, for example, a recurrent discussion between pupil and teacher, which could help facilitate the teacher’s strive to accommodate the pupil’s individual needs. Most of the teachers received information from the pupils themselves (T-1, T-2, T-5, and T-6), as described in example 1 and 2:

(1) "The pupils are very open with their dyslexia. It is good because it is sometimes difficult to know what are manifestations of dyslexia and what simply are difficulties in English." [my translation] (T-2)

(2) "The more the pupils produce the more insight you receive in their individual difficulties." [my translation] (T-1)

T-3 expressed a similar routine to T-1 in how to identify dyslexic difficulties (see example 2), and by bearing in mind typical dyslexic spelling mistakes, as well as emphasised the need to build a good relationship to the dyslexic pupils since this gave greater understanding of their individual learning process. Three teachers stated that information was moreover received
from other sources, as previous school stages (T-3), and from the Speech Pathologist who described the pupils' individual strengths and weaknesses (T-4 and T-5). Although some teachers receive external information, the teachers are most often inclined to turn to the pupils in question to attain information regarding their individually experienced difficulties, than only to focus on the external information received.

Adaption of the teaching is important help improve dyslexic pupils' accomplishments (Nijakowska 2010:147). When discussing how the teachers used the information on the dyslexic pupils' difficulties in the teaching, all the teachers described how they did not take the difficulties into considerations in the teaching plan. Instead, they adapted the teaching material and/or teaching context in some manner for the dyslexic pupils' benefit. For example, T-1 expressed that he/she adapted the reading comprehension tasks. T-2 considered the extent of time supplied, as did T-3 who also provided different options in demonstration of knowledge. T-5 described that he/she adapted the chosen material, but did not choose material based on the dyslexic pupils' specific difficulties. Other accommodations that were made ranged from reminders of what difficulties the pupils were still able to manage (as having structure, cohesion and fluency in a text) (T-1), providing adapted lengths and style of texts (T-2), individually modified test and exams (T-3), to have the pupils use different technical aids and build their confidence (T-5). The teachers described a wide range of accommodations that could be made directly toward the individual dyslexic pupils in the teaching. This allows the pupils to work and learn as the other pupils do, which is of importance when regarding whether the pupils' needs have been met (Crombie 1997:29).

In summary, the result shows how the teachers are able to provide a general definition of dyslexia, however they tend to define the main effects (reading and writing difficulties) on first and second language learning (which they perceive to be similar) rather than the underlying deficits. The teachers also gather specific information on dyslexic difficulties through contact with the dyslexic pupils, striving to acquire an understanding for each individual and their needs, and not solely rely on external information. Also, the result shows that the dyslexic pupils are accommodated on an individual basis in the teaching (in for example material and instructions), rather than through adaptation of the teaching plan.

4.2 Assembled assessment for progression becomes summative grading

To be able to allow all pupils to progress there is a need to understand their individual strengths and weaknesses from which this progression emanates. Formative assessment functions as a tool to procure pupils' learning aptitudes, as well as aid teacher efforts of
adapting the teaching and individualising each pupil's learning. Summative assessment measures and sums up the pupils' achievements, essentially comprising a grade. This section presents, compares, and analyses the teachers' reflections on assessing and grading pupils without and with dyslexia, the utilisation of assessment procedures, and the teachers' intent with the assessment and grading.

To receive an understanding for the teachers approach to assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, enquiries were made regarding their general approach to assessment and grading. Considering the general approach to assessment and grading, four of the teachers seemed to be working with formative assessment as a continuous and formative practice (T-1, T-2, T-4, and T-5). T-1 gave a detailed description of the assessment process as providing the pupils with feedback in the form of comments on their products. Thereafter, the teacher receives feedback from the pupils on the comments received, this to infer self-awareness of both strengths and difficulties, on which the pupils are to improve. The pupils' achievements are further compiled in matrices serving all knowledge requirements. T-2 expressed how the pupils' progression, through formative work, is a part of the regular teaching, and T-5 described how assessed products and associated assessment responses are assembled in a binder for each individual pupil.

Four teachers exhibited a general understanding of the use of formative assessment, which could be considered, according to Marshall (2004:101ff, 112), sufficient enough to regard this assessment method useful in the teaching practice. Even a general understanding of formative assessment has the ability to support learning (Marshall 2004:101ff, 112; Stull et al. 2011:37). However, the use of assessment and grading should be a part of teaching in a systematic and integrated manner (National Agency of Education 2011c:6 [www]; Stull et al. 2011:30), and 'signposted' throughout the course term (Burke (2002:87). This indicates that teachers might be necessitated to make considerations of how, when, and what to assess already in the stages of planning the course curriculum. The interviewed teachers did not express how the assessment and grading were a part of the considerations made when planning the course curriculum, but a few of them spoke about their recurrent use of assessment throughout the teaching. Two teachers, however, gave very short answers to how they worked with assessing the pupils' proficiency. T-3 simply answered that he/she assessed the level of English the pupils demonstrated. T-6 stated that he/she both assessed and graded the knowledge requirements the pupils reached, where the assessment was often done together with the pupil to check the concordance of the current situation with the pupils' own
aspirations. These two teachers did not seem to be familiar with formative assessment, or at least presented such an impression when explaining how they worked with assessment.

Although the main discussions divided assessment and grading as two separate processes, several of the teachers actually described them as intertwined and a part of the assessment process. In accordance with Lundahl (2012:487): T-1, T-4 and T-5 considered the grading only as a summative product of the previously composed impressions and acquired knowledge requirements in the formative teaching. T-4 stated that assessment and grading approximately were the same, but that the assessment focused on a few knowledge requirements whereas the grading considered them all. These three teachers (T-1, T-4, T-5) once more demonstrated some understanding for the usage of formative and summative assessment as a linked process, indicating that their experience of the general grading in theory was rather uncomplicated.

The interviewed teachers tended to consider the assessment of pupils with dyslexia as similar to how they had described assessment in general, suggestive of a uniform approach to assessment. Two teachers acknowledged that assessing and grading dyslexic pupils were, to a great extent, similar to assessment and grading in general (T-4, T-5). Most of the teachers expressed that various considerations were taken into account toward the dyslexic pupils in the general assessment. These considerations mostly involved disregarding specific dyslexic difficulties. Four teachers disregarded spelling difficulties in their assessment of dyslexic pupils (T-1, T-2, T-3, T-4) and instead focused on structure (T-1), comprehensibility (T-2) idiomaticity (T-3, T-4, T-5) and content (T-4). Comparing assessment of pupils with and pupils without dyslexia, the indications are that they are very much similar but that the teachers consider and downplay the dyslexic difficulties, arguably to equalise the assessment experience for all pupils.

When focusing solely on grading dyslexic pupils, five teachers expressed how considerations were made to the paragraph in the Swedish Law for Education concerning grading pupils with disabilities (Swedish School Law 2010:800) (T-1, T-3, T-4, T-5, T-6). In addition, four teachers explained that the considerations to the paragraph were made to be able to disregard single knowledge requirements (T-3, T-4, T-5, and T-6), in order to, as pointed out by T-4, make individualised considerations in the grading. Reviewing the paragraph concerning grading pupils with disabilities, it clearly infers that disregards of knowledge requirements should be done if pupils with dyslexia suffer from such problematic difficulties that they are not able to overcome them (Swedish School Law 2010:800).
Two of the teachers from upper secondary school displayed an alternate approach to the considerations made in the grading. T-1 described that the grading only was a summation of previous assessment, although he/she had on occasion made considerations to the paragraph when grading dyslexic pupils. T-2 depicted that considerations were already made in the assessment process and were not relevant to make while grading as well, but expressed that he/she, on the other hand, never had had to consider the paragraph concerning grading pupils with insurmountable difficulties. In general, it could be stated that about one pupil with severe dyslexia could be found in each class (Höien & Lundberg 1999:18). It therefore appears unlikely that a teacher has not taught a pupil with a more severe form of dyslexia, and subsequently has not had to disregard knowledge requirements for such a pupil. Although considerations and disregards were done by a few of the teachers in the assessment process, it could be argued that, in fact, teachers are also required to consider the paragraph concerning grading pupils with insurmountable difficulties while grading. This since it is only in the grading process disregards of knowledge requirements could be made.

In summary, the result shows how most of the teachers work with assessment as a continuous process throughout the teaching, and where the grading merely becomes a summation of previous assessments. Adjustments are not made to the assessment, however, considerations are made to the dyslexic difficulties when the teachers assess, showing how individual considerations are made to each pupil. The result also shows how the teachers are hesitant on how to utilise the paragraph concerning grading pupils with disabilities. This feasibly decreases the reliability of potential disregards of certain knowledge requirements.

4.3 Particular challenges and possible aids when assessing and grading

This section will present and analyse what the interviewed teachers have experienced as particular challenges when assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, what they consider to offer support in that endeavour, as well as their thoughts and ideas for what further aids could be provided when assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia.

When discussing particular challenges in assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, all teachers found it difficult to distinguish which problems, on one hand, were dyslexic difficulties (based on dyslexic deficits) and, on the other, based on other factors such as carelessness (T-1), motivation (T-3), "general" difficulties in English (T-4), and "laziness" (T-5). Although most of the teachers had shown some understanding of the actual implications dyslexia had on learning a language, as well as had provided examples of what difficulties
could arise from those, they nevertheless seemed not to be able to transfer this awareness into the assessment situation. It is most important for teachers to have an increased awareness of dyslexia to be able to accommodate the pupils' needs (Nijakowska 2010:145ff). Even though the interviewed teachers claim to use assessment as a tool for learning, previous indication of not being able to make use of their knowledge of dyslexia could suggest that the teachers' ability to assess dyslexic pupils is inadequate.

When the teachers considered what they perceived aided the assessing and grading of dyslexic pupils, the answers were relatively diverse. T-1 found great assistance from spelling programs since that almost eliminated the need to comment on spelling errors in written productions. T-2 considered the grading a simple ordeal since it only became a summation of all the previous assessments. T-3 stated that assessments of texts became simpler if the text was structured. T-4 experienced that nothing in assessment and grading could be considered easy, but emphasised that teachers should not doubt if the grades they set are correct since they most often tend to be concurrent with other teachers' conclusions. T-6 however tended not to make a distinction between pupils with or without dyslexia, but focused on each individual pupil's strength and weakness instead. None of the teachers provided the same answer to what could be considered helpful when assessing and grading dyslexic pupils. This was most likely dependent on the teachers based their considerations on personal experiences, and the responses therefore became different from each other.

When allowing the teachers to contemplate on what could be done to aid or provide further support in assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, the answers were very diverse. Four proposals with requests for possible aids were made by a third of the teachers. Two teachers proposed the need to receive supplementary training and skills development to become better equipped to assess and grade dyslexic pupils (T-1 and T-4). If regarding indications arisen throughout the essay, this proposal could be argued as a valid and crucial suggestion. For example, as previous results (see chapter 4.3) have shown, the teachers might feasibly lack the full capability to assess dyslexic pupils. Another proposal offered was the need to receive more tangible tips and advice (T-2), as well as tools or matrixes for assessing and grading dyslexic pupils (T-2 and T-6). A third proposal considered the need to have, and/or have access to, better technical equipment (T-3 and T-6), as well as be able to use other aids (T-6) in the teaching. It could be argued that this consideration could be based on a lack of accessibility of such aids and equipment. It could also be feasible that this is also an indication of the teachers' lack of being informed on what aids and technical equipment there
are available. The fourth proposal constituted a requirement of clearer directions, and/or regulations on what could be disregarded and what could not be disregarded when grading pupils with dyslexia (T-4 and T-6). It is clearly stated in the School Law (2010:800) that if a pupil has insurmountable difficulties in their learning due to a disability, the knowledge requirements affected by these difficulties could be overlooked in the grading. The proposal could arguably be an indication that the teachers’ difficulty to pinpoint what dyslexic difficulties are when assessing makes them self-doubting in the grading. This proposal could also be suggestive of how complex the process of assessing and grading dyslexic pupils is.

In summary, the result shows how the teachers experience the assessment and grading to be complex. The teachers are aware of the main implications dyslexia has on their dyslexic pupils learning. However, they are hesitant to their ability to discriminate dyslexic difficulties properly from other language related problems the dyslexic pupils might experience. The inability for the teacher to implement their awareness in the process of assessing and grading could be argued to open up for the assessment, and thus the grading, of dyslexic pupils to become arbitrary. The teachers’ experiences of specific aids were moreover different from each other, indicating that there are no specific aids that simplify the process of assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia. Moreover, the teachers did not offer mutual proposals for further possible aid when assessing and grading dyslexic pupils, however, all propositions suggests the same thing; the teachers need to develop an understanding and a certainty for dyslexia and its impact on the dyslexic pupils' learning, as well as the ramification it has on the teaching, assessment, and grading.

5. CONCLUSION

This essay has investigated how teachers of English work with and consider how to assess and grade pupils with dyslexia. Three aspects have been the main considerations: (1) assessing and grading pupils in general compared to assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, (2) particular challenges faced when assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia, and (3) possible aids in assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia. Moreover, attention has been devoted to what background knowledge the teachers possessed on the main focal areas of dyslexia, and assessment and grading.

In conclusion, it could be argued that teachers find dyslexia difficult to define and that it is easier to focus more on what difficulties it brings the learning. Even though considerations are made to what could hinder the learning there is not much consideration done to this in the
overall planned curriculum. Teachers tend not to use what they know about the difficulties pupils’ experience in the planning of the teaching, but rather work with adapting the teaching and material for the individual dyslexic pupils, as they seem to do for all other pupils as well. Teachers seem to be familiar with the main notion that dyslexic pupils struggle with reading and writing, and that adaption of teaching and material in concern of those are therefore required. To accommodate the pupils, adaptation of teaching and material are carried out by, for example, offering shorter texts to read and more time to produce texts. Most teachers emphasise that it is central to show understanding for dyslexic pupils’ difficulties, and that it is in discussions with the pupils that accommodations are decided. These accommodations are all made to individualise the pupils’ learning to allow them to progress.

The assessment acts as a part of the teaching for most teachers. It is a continuous process during the course of the terms and offers the pupils feedback on their strengths and weaknesses, where the feedback is supposed to create awareness in the pupils and reinforce their progression in the subject of English. The process of assessment also acts as the basis of grading for all pupils. Teachers' main considerations in the assessment and the grading are on what the pupils have achieved, both with and without accommodations, and teachers seem predominantly to consider the paragraphs in the Swedish School Law to be able to make exceptions in the grading if the pupils suffers from great insurmountable difficulties. The assessment process of dyslexic pupils does not seem to be without difficulties. Teachers find assessing and grading dyslexic pupils very difficult since the teachers themselves are sometimes experiencing an uncertainty on how to approach the issue. Several teachers do not, for example, even consider the spelling when assessing a dyslexic pupil's written work, and focus on the content and cohesion of the text instead. The insecurity in how to assess and grade could be somewhat diminished by receiving more information on what dyslexia is, and on how actually to work with and grade dyslexic pupils. Assessing and grading dyslexic pupils seem to be a guessing game, and there is much room for improvement. Crucial improvements that need to be made could be that teachers requires further insight into dyslexia since this understanding could help delineate how to accommodate the pupils, as well as simplify the process of grading.

This essay did expect to show results indicating a difference in the assessment process between dyslexic pupils and pupils without dyslexia. It was also expected that the teachers were to describe that the dyslexic pupils’ difficulties have an impact on their ability to learn as well as demonstrate language proficiency. It was further expected that the difficulties would
have an effect on the teachers’ process of assessing and grading. An unexpected result was that teachers might in reality struggle with the actual grading. This was surprising and calls to mind how teachers often stand alone in difficult situations, and how they are in dire need of recurring supplementary training, skills development, and other further assistance in this complex matter.

The contribution made through this essay's compilation of teachers' experiences, statements and opinions could serve as an introduction for further studies within the research area of assessing and grading dyslexic pupils in Sweden. Although this investigation targeted English language teachers, it could also provide general considerations in the teaching of most modern languages. There has been limited research done within this essay’s area of investigation, and therefore it has little support in previous research. This could impede the theoretical anchoring of the result; however the actual contribution of this essay is the compilation of teachers' experiences, statements and opinions on a rarely reviewed topic.

Further research is needed to receive a more complete scope of how to work with assessing and grading dyslexic pupils. A feasible next step could be to review this area of research to a greater extent, compiling greater amounts of information on how teachers manage the difficult task of assessing and grading dyslexic pupils. A compilation of greater extent will help to define what could be done to improve and aid this seemingly complex matter of assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia.
6. REFERENCES

Books


Journals


Teaching documents and guidelines


Web pages

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions

Assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia

Pre-questions (Background questions) regarding interviewee:

During which period did you conduct your teacher training?

How much/long experience do you have of English teaching?

Which other subjects are you teaching in/trained for?

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Interview questions:

1. How would you define dyslexia?
2. How would you describe the implications of dyslexia?
   i. What implications does it have on learning a second language?
3. What do you perceive to be the dyslexic pupils greatest difficulty in their learning of English?
   i. Could you give some general examples?
4. How do you find out what the dyslexic pupils specific difficulties are?
   i. How do you help the dyslexic pupils with these difficulties?
   ii. How do you work to meet the needs of pupils with dyslexia?
5. What information about the dyslexic pupils do you base your teaching on?
6. How do you work with assessing and grading?
7. How do you work with assessing and grading pupils with dyslexia?
   i. Which considerations do you take into account when assessing pupils with dyslexia?
   ii. Which considerations do you take into account when grading pupils with dyslexia?
9. What could be done to ease the assessment and grading of dyslexic pupils?
Appendix 2: Interview guide

Intervjufrågor
– Bedömning och betygsättning av elever med dyslexi

Förfrågor gällande intervjuperson:

Under vilken tid genomförde du dina lärarstudier?

Hur mycket/lång erfarenhet har du av engelskundervisning?

Vilka andra ämnen undervisar du i/är du utbildad för?

Intervjufrågor:

1. Hur skulle du definiera dyslexi?

2. Hur skulle du beskriva konsekvenserna av att ha dyslexi?
   i. Vilka konsekvenser har det på att lära sig ett andra språk?

3. Vad uppfattar du vara dyslektiska elevers största svårigheter i lärandet av engelska?

4. Hur får du insikt i de enskilda dyslektiska elevernas specifika svårigheter?
   i. Hur hjälper du de dyslektiska eleverna med dessa svårigheter?

5. Vad för information om de dyslektiska eleverna baserar du din undervisning på?

6. Hur arbetar du med att bedöma och betygsätta?

7. Hur arbetar du med att bedöma och betygsätta elever med dyslexi?
   i. Vilka överväganden gör du i din bedömning av elever med dyslexi?
   ii. Vilka överväganden gör du i din betygsättning av elever med dyslexi?

8. Vad uppfattar du vara svårt i att bedöma och betygsätta elever med dyslexi?
   i. Vad uppfattar du vara enkelt i att bedöma och betygsätta elever med dyslexi?

9. Vad kan göras för att underlätta bedömning och betygsättning av dyslektiska elever?
# Interview Sheet Number _____

**Interview Person (nr):** __________________

**Date of Interview:** __________________

**Interview Starts:** __________________

**Interview Ends:** __________________

**Time of the Interview (duration):** _____________ mins.

### Short Introduction to Interviewee's Teaching Experience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Under vilken tid genomförde du dina lärarstudier?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hur mycket/lång erfarenhet har du av engelskundervisning?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vilka andra ämnen undervisar du i/är du utbildad för?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Interview Questions: Answers:

1. **Hur skulle du definiera dyslexi?**

2. **Hur skulle du beskriva konsekvenserna av att ha dyslexi?**
   
   i. **Vilka konsekvenser har det på att lära sig ett andra språk?**
3. Vad uppfattar du vara dyslektiska elevers största svårigheter i lärandet av engelska?
   i. Kan du ge några generella exempel?

4. Hur får du insikt i de enskilda dyslektiska elevernas specifika svårigheter?
   i. Hur hjälper du de dyslektiska eleverna med dessa svårigheter?
   ii. Hur arbetar du för att möta de dyslektiska elevernas behov?

5. Vad för information om de dyslektiska eleverna baserar du din undervisning på?

6. Hur arbetar du med att bedöma och betygsätta?

7. Hur arbetar du med att bedöma och betygsätta elever med dyslexi?
   i. Vilka arbetssätt använder du vid bedömningen av elever med dyslexi?
   ii. Vilka överväganden gör du i din bedömning av elever med dyslexi?
   iii. Vilka arbetssätt använder du vid betygsättning av elever med dyslexi?
   iv. Vilka överväganden gör du i din betygsättning av elever med dyslexi?
   v. Vilket beaktande tar du till PYS-paragrafen?
8. Vad uppfattar du vara svårt i att bedöma och betygsätta elever med dyslexi?
   i. Hur får du veta de dyslektiska elevernas språkfärdighet?
   ii. Hur arbetar du runt dessa svårigheter?

9. Vad kan göras för att underlätta bedömning och betygsättning av dyslektiska elever?