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1. INTRODUCTION

Because the progress and development of the whole society is dependent on well-educated residents, schools have to cater to all needs of pupils who come from various backgrounds and have different interests, learning styles and needs. Unfortunately, among these children there are many intellectually capable pupils who have no possibility to show their knowledge and intelligence. Instead they are often labelled as stupid and even uneducable.

To put it right, these pupils are not uneducable, but suffer from rather common problem – they have specific learning difficulty/ies (SpLD). Because these children very often encounter many problems in their native language, it comes as no surprise that pupils with SpLD often perform poorly as far as all foreign language skills are concerned.

However modern foreign languages instruction forms an integral and compulsory part of education system in the Czech Republic. At our primary schools it is stated that pupils start compulsory foreign language learning during their 4th grade. This includes listening, responding, speaking and writing which involves learning about and using the language.

These children who are having problems to learn their native tongue properly are experiencing, while learning English, great difficulties. It is up to the teacher and parents to help to a child to overcome these problems.

As there are various ways teachers or learners choose to teach or learn language it is good to remember that the aim of most language learners' endeavour remains the same: to achieve the communicative ability in the particular foreign language and so, in other words, to be able to transmit their ideas and opinions to other people with a satisfying result.

Said in another words, the basic principle is that the language is taught for the sake of communication and not for the language itself. The language is here seen as a medium of communication. For a pupil it is clear that all communication has some

social purpose. Therefore learning makes a sense which is very important for any pupil with SpLD.

The theoretical section of this thesis constitutes a study of issues collected from a number of books and Internet pages.

Firstly, it is directed towards the description of problems with terminology used in this thesis. Secondly, the symptoms of SpLD which influence a foreign language learning and teaching are described here. Thirdly, main teaching principles which go together with individualization and differentiation in English language teaching and learning processes are depicted. And finally, the description of possible readjustment of teaching and learning materials is included here.

The practical section emanates from the theoretical part. It is conducted as a qualitative research. It is a case study based on empirical research which lasted from October 2003 till May 2004. The aim of the research was to explore how and to what extent the ordinary materials used for language teaching and learning should be readjusted and modified to meet the needs of pupils who have SpLD. The case study was partly based on differentiation of teaching and learning materials and activities within one particular class, and mostly on a small group teaching where the modified and readjusted materials were tested and used for teaching of two dyslexics pupils – brothers, who came from the already mentioned class.

2. PROBLEMS WITH TERMINOLOGY

To begin with, it would be essential to mention some of the terminological problems that one can come across when trying to explore more about specific learning difficulties (SpLD). Neither in Czech nor in English specialized literature it is possible to find the same terms for the particular difficulties. In the Czech literature there can be found terms such as *vývojové poruchy učení*, *specifické poruchy učení* or even *specifické vyvojové poruchy*, which are comprehensive to more specialized terms such as *dyslexie*, *vyvojová dyslexie*, *dysortografie* and *dyskalkulie*. However as Matejcek (1974, 25) illustrates it is also the foreign terminology which sustains the same problem.

While Pokorna (1997, 54) suggests that in English professional terminology we can most often encounter the term Learning disabilities which can be often interchanged for the term Dyslexia which has here broader meaning than its equivalent in Czech. Furthermore it is not unusual for one particular author to use more than one term to describe the same situation. However as Pokorna continues the situation is impossible to be solved by a mere unification of the terminology because the fundamental problem is based on the comprehension of separate terms.

Esser (1987, as quoted in Pokorna 1997, 54), for example, draws the attention to the use of the term learning disability which is sometimes used for the deficit in reading and another time in the sense of every problematic school performance in the course of normal intelligence. Zelinkova (2003, 11) further remarks that the term learning disability is mainly used in American literature, while in Great Britain prevails the appellation specific learning difficulties.

As the terminology in this thesis is of a key importance it would be unavoidable to opt for one specific group of terms. In this case it would be reasonable to use the British term specific learning difficulties (SpLD) for its ability to incorporate other subordinate concepts of difficulties in learning such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dysortography, dyscalculia and others that may indirectly influence the foreign language acquisition. Nevertheless, in later part of this thesis it would also be the term dyslexia most referred to. The reason for this decision is revealed in the

following chapter where some most known specific learning difficulties are being more closely explained.

2.1 Characteristics of specific learning difficulties

To many teachers and experts, SpLD appear to be rather elusive condition. Many of them are still arguing over the origin, nature and symptoms, since SpLD have many faces.

SpLD manifest themselves by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of writing, reading, listening, speaking, reflecting and mathematical abilities. According to Ott (2000) through the past years there has been an increase in the amount of research conducted and the emerging data are far from conclusive. Some possible causes of SpLD have been identified, but not fully confirmed.

There also exist some theories concerning the etiology of SpLD, but the factors probably responsible for some of them include, according to Ott (2000), genetic, environmental and neurological factors (such as brain's anatomical differences, the size of hemispheres, brain's impairment, deformation and others), improper development in the prenatal period, hearing problems due to ear infections in early childhood, disorders in perception and motor functions. Later she adds that there is also higher possibility for SpLD when other members of the family have signs of dyslexia and even a presumption exists that male sex is being more affected.

2. 2. Definition

The above mentioned problems with the terminology are very much reflected into the definition of specific learning difficulties (SpLD) this is supported by Pokorna (1997, 62) who tries to compare individual definitions and comes to the conclusion that at the beginning it were only the symptoms of dyslexia and later also disorder in writing and reading together with troubles in math which were included during the past twenty years. Therefore it is not very surprising to find many definitions which to some extent describe SpLD rather differently, depending on a year and

country. However, there are certain crucial factors on which, according to Child Development Institute, most of the definitions agree:

Interestingly, there is no clear and widely accepted definition of “learning disabilities.” Because of the multidisciplinary nature of the field, there is ongoing debate on the issue of definition, and there are currently at least 12 definitions that appear in the professional literature. These disparate definitions do agree on certain factors:

- The learning disabled have difficulties with academic achievements and progress. Discrepancies exist between the person’s potential for learning and what he actually learns.
- The learning disabled show an uneven pattern of development [language development, physical development, academic development and/or perceptual development].
- Learning problems are not due to environmental disadvantage.
- Learning problems are not due to mental retardation or emotional disturbance.
(Child Development Institute, 2005)

To conclude, The Code of Practice (as quoted in Thomson and Watkins 2000, 32) shortly defines that a child has special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

However when looking more closely at the problems of children diagnosed with SpLD, it seems that most of the attention has been so far paid to children with reading disability than to those with any other learning problems. Reading problems sometimes seem to be emphasized just for the reason of being more prominent or easily recognized aspect of SpLD.

In regard to reading disability, there is a number of terms used and it seems optimal in this piece of work to use the word dyslexia which characterizes best the above mentioned problems.

Prior (2000, p.4) sees dyslexia as medically oriented term which simply means abnormal reading. Then she continues further and quotes the definition promulgated by the World Federation of Neurology:

A disorder manifested by difficulty in learning to read despite conventional instructions, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity. It is dependent on fundamental cognitive disabilities which are frequently of constitutional origin.

However, it is again very important to remind that in some English specialized literature the word dyslexia has wider meaning which might be rather explicit from the following lines. On the other hand the Czech authors are more or less unanimous and use the term dyslexia only for disorders in reading.

At this point, following the above mentioned, it would probably be better to characterize the symptoms which SpLD pupils have, rather than to try to describe individual terms that are included in the Czech terminology such as *dyslexie*, *dysgrafie*, *dysortografie*, *dyskalkulie* and many others.

3. SpLD SYMPTOMS AND THE IMPACT ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

There are many associated features of symptoms, which firstly parents and then teachers can observe, and which provide the clues to the diagnosis of SpLD.

Children with SpLD, they all display features that all, to some extent, differ. However there is one rather common problem that all pupils with SpLD somehow encounter: They usually all have problems with the written language and a difficulty with recognizing and interpreting what is perceived.

Symptoms of SpLD are closely related to the following areas: hearing, speaking, vision, reading, spelling, writing, balance and movement and also memory. However most commonly, this disfunction is characterized by problems with single word decoding (Ott 1997; Thomson and Watkins 2000).

However it is not the aim of this thesis to describe all of the symptoms, therefore only those which to the most extent influence the English language teaching and learning will be more closely defined.

3.1. Directional Confusion

According to Hornsby (1996), directional confusion may take a number of forms, beginning from being uncertain of which is left or right to being unable to read a map accurately. Later she continues that:

A child should know his left and right by the age of five, and be able to distinguish someone else's by the age of seven. Directional confusion affects other concepts such as up and down, top and bottom, compass directions, keeping one's place when playing games, being able to copy the gym teacher's movements when he is facing you, and so on. As many as eight out of ten severely dyslexic children have directional confusion. The percentage is lower for those with a mild condition

Directional confusion is also often the reason for reversing of letters and whole words. Therefore it has a great impact on English language learning while reading. This combined with teacher's orders in English, such as 'sit up' – 'sit down', causes great problems for dyslexics and puts them under physical pressure while trying to concentrate and learn.

For teachers of English the warning signs that a pupil has a problem with directions can be indicated by the following symptoms:

- The child may reverse letters like *b* and *d*, or *p* and *q*, either when reading or writing. At this point even the short and simple words may be learned with a difficulty.
- The pupil may also invert letters, reading or writing *u* as *n*, *m* as *w*, *d* as *q*, *b* as *p*, *f* as *t*.
- He or she may read or write words like *no* for *on*, *rat* for *tar*, *won* for *now*, *saw* for *was*.
(Audiblox.com Magazine)

3.2. Sequencing Difficulties

Nearly everything in our lives is sequenced, and learning a foreign language is no exception to this. Although able to just cope on a survival level, dyslexics are often forced with sequence. According to Thomson and Watkins (2000, 6), these problems may influence saying of the months and of the days of the week in order, and also learning of the alphabet which, if nothing else, greatly constrains the use of dictionaries.

Furthermore, as many pupils with SpLD have trouble with sequencing, it is nearly impossible to expect these children to learn or repeat even the simplest nursery rhymes, and during the lesson these children are often unable to take part in role plays and dialogs that are included to practice a language.

It is often also the listening exercise that may become a very stressful matter. Philomena Ott (1997, p.29) also suggests that with sequential difficulties the child may show signs of poor auditory discrimination. She adds that the pupil may hear

the sound but be unable to identify what he hears, just as the colour blind person can see the colour but is unable to recognize the colours.

Later Ott continues that beside listening and remembering lines, it is also their ability to read and spell correctly which is affected. After all, every word consists of letters in a specific sequence. By simply changing the sequence of the letters in *name*, it can become *mean* or *amen*.

In English it is also the word order in the sentence which is very important for the meaning and the inability to follow the rules makes the learning of English for SpLD pupils even more complicated.

The following examples given by Thomson and Watkins (2000, 6) are a few of the SpLD symptoms that may indicate sequencing difficulties and that can have some impact on English language acquisition.

- When reading, the child with SpLD may put letters in the wrong order, reading *felt* as *left*, *act* as *cat*, *reserve* as *reverse*, *expect* as *excerpt* which may also have influence on learning of a new vocabulary
- Also the letters and syllables put in the wrong order are rather common for bad sequencing, spelling *time* as 'tiem', *child* as 'chidl'.
- reading *animal* as 'aminal', *hospital* as 'hopsital', *enemy* as 'emeny'.
- In the sentence the pupil may put words in the wrong order, reading *are there* for *there are* which may in some cases change the message put accross.
- Also omitting of the letters is rather common for SpLD child. He may omit letters, reading or writing *cat* for *cart*, *wet* for *went*, *sing* for *string*.

3.3. Difficulties with little or commonly used words

It is rather common that poor readers get stuck on difficult words, but what may come as a surprise is that many of them do seem to make things worse by making mistakes on simple or common words they should be able to manage — like *if*, *to*, *and*. Philomena Ott (1997, p.41) suggests that dyslexics may not be able to remember frequently-used words and they may say ‘*amimals*’ for animals, ‘*pagetti*’ for spaghetti or ‘*contiments*’ for consonants.

Parents so often say about dyslexic children, “It’s not the big words, it’s the little words that cause the trouble” says Hilary Broomfield in her book *Overcoming Dyslexia* (2001). She also adds that the little function words are difficult to store for meaning, and that their patterns are not so distinctive.

The following examples as given by Broomfield may be taken as indications of problems with the little words:

- Misreads little words, such as *a* for *and*, *the* for *a*, *from* for *for*, *then* for *there*, *were* for *with*.
- Omits or reads twice little words like *the*, *and*, *but*, *in*.
- Adds little words which do not appear in the text.

It is important to note that this is extremely common, and not a sign that a child is particularly careless or lazy. Morgan (1986) adds that the big words are not actually more difficult to remember once they’ve been seen, on the other hand, the common little words can be a great source of torture for children with SpLD. *Aeroplane* is not much like other words and is fairly easy to recognize, but telling the difference between *if* and *of* needs much closer inspection.

Later he continues further and adds that when a difficult word is spotted coming up in a sentence, there is a natural tendency to look ahead to it and pay less attention to the smaller words leading up to it — increasing the risk of ‘careless’ mistakes.

And finally, getting the small ‘linking words’ in a sentence right (like *to*, *and*, *so*) relies very much on knowing the meaning of the whole sentence.

As an illustration of how a child’s reading can suffer if he or she hasn’t grasped the meaning of the sentence as a whole, Morgan shows at the following sentence with a word missing:

‘His mother put his dinner down — the kitchen table.’ Knowing the meaning of the sentence, you know that the missing word must be *on*. But a child who has spent perhaps half a minute struggling to get to that point in the sentence after getting stuck on *mother* and *dinner* (and noticing *kitchen* coming up as the next unknown) quite literally won’t have a clue what should go in the gap. If the word *on* is there instead of the gap, he may well confuse it with *no* if he has difficulties recognizing the order of letters, because he doesn’t have the meaning at his fingertips to guide him as a good reader does. This is like the learner driver who expends so much concentration on just making the car go that he has no idea where he is in town.

3.4. Difficulties with reading

Reading involves memory processes, the interaction of different decoding methods and purpose. If any of these factors is lacking, success will be limited, increasing the reader’s reluctance to continue. (Raimond 2002, 21)

According to Philomena Ott (1997, 51) literacy is necessary for survival in daily life – whether is to read road signs, to shop in a supermarket, to know how to work the video or to read directions on the medicine bottle. In all advanced cultures the ability to read is vital for communication and employment (Ott, 1997, 51).

Reading is also the basic skill for the acquisition of the foreign language. As Zelinkova (2003, 162) suggests pupils with SpLD may again experience problems with *b-d-p*, *m-w* and many others. In reading there may be also obvious problems with rearrangement of letters *the-the*. As Zelinkova (2003, p.510) continues, the situation in the foreign language learning is rather complicated by pupil’s inability to use the advantage of presumption in reading of a particular text, which consequently leads to slowness, double reading and word mutilation. As Zelinkova

adds this problem is even more complicated by the use of unusual style of font such as italics.

When working with children with SpLD it is also rather important to omit reading of so called “*snakes*” and texts put into the “*bubbles*” which became rather favourite activity in many English textbooks, and which are hard to read due to difficulties in moving eyes from left to right.

Even when working with normally written text, it is not unusual for a teacher, while working with pupils who have SpLD, to come across a very strange reading or spelling.

Bizarre reading or spelling is a severe form of dyslexia. The pupil guesses wildly at words regardless of whether they make sense or not. Hornsby (1996,) uses the following example to illustrate how some dyslexics guess wildly at words:

“Now the children were discussing their new play. ‘We need a brave person for the mountain rescue,’ explained the boy,” was read as “How the children were designing their new play. ‘We need a brave man of the mount chishimse,’ ixslating the boy.”

Also Miles and Miles (1983,) point out that a pupil spells and reads bizarrely they mention examples such as: *substance* spelled ‘*sepedns*’, *last* spelled ‘*lenaka*’, *about* spelled ‘*chehat*’, *may* spelled ‘*mook*’, *did* spelled ‘*don*’, or *to* spelled ‘*anianiwe*’. Later they add that these words bear little, if any, relation to the sounds in the words.

Other problems with reading may be obvious from the following signs which are abbreviated below:

- Makes up a story, based on the illustrations, which bears no relation to the text.
- Reads very slowly and hesitantly.
- Loses orientation on a line or page while reading, missing lines or reading previously-read lines again.
- Reads aloud hesitantly, word by word, monotonously.

- Tries to sound the letters of the word, but is then unable to say the correct word. For example, sounds the letters ‘c-a-t’ but then says *cold*.
- Mispronounces words, or puts stress on the wrong syllables.
- Reads only in the present tense although the text is in the past.
- Foreshortens words, for example ‘portion’ for *proportion*.
- Substitutes another word of similar meaning, for example *dog* for *pup*.
- Omits prefixes, omits suffixes or adds suffixes.
- Reads with poor comprehension, due to spending so much energy trying to read the words.
- Remembers little of what he reads.
- Spells words as they sound, for example ‘rite’ for *right*.
- Cannot write or match the appropriate letter when given the sound.
- Often ignores punctuation. He may omit full stops or commas and fail to see the need for capital letters.
- Poor at copying from the board.
- Has trouble attaching names to things and people.

(Miles nad Miles 1983; Thomson and Watkins 2000; Ott 1997; Zelinkova 2003)

3.5. Difficulties with writing

Some pupils with SpLD may suffer from poor handwriting skills. The word *dysgraphia* is often used to describe a difficulty in this area. Dysgraphia according to Zelinkova (2003, 42) is a disorder in writing, which affects legibility and layout. The child writes very slowly and brokenly. The difficulties tend to cumulate which brings about the result of absolutely illegible handwriting. It is also very important to bear in mind that even copying of printed text is not quite so easy. The reason for this lies in the fact that a child with SpLD is unable to perceive the text correctly, and because the pupil is often copying something which is unfamiliar,

there is usually rather little possibility to use a content as a tool to recognize the word.

Later in her book Zelinkova (2003, p.163) tries to specify more closely the problem with writing for pupils with SpLD while learning a foreign language. She suggests that while writing, the pupil usually makes similar mistakes as in the Czech language: letter reversion (*from-form*), they may omit letters (*mothe –moth*) and even whole words and in English they often tend to write phonetically.

In dictation it is important to remember that these pupils distinguish with difficulty speech sounds and their order in the words. Some of the words even seem to be for this pupil identical. In more serious cases the child is unable to hear the difference between the words such as *older – oldest*. (Zelinkova, 2003, p.162)

There is little possibility that difficulty can improve with practice and age, because as Philomena Ott (1997, p.83) suggests: “Some pupils make some improvements to their handwriting as a result of intensive practice and tuition, but when this ends, there is a regression because the skill has not become instinctive.”

In general, for all the teachers, the symptoms that the pupil may experience difficulties with handwriting can be as follow.

- Generally illegible writing.
- Letter inconsistencies.
- Mixture of upper/lower case letters or print/cursive letters.
- Irregular letter sizes and shapes.
- Unfinished letters.

(Thomson and Watkins 2000; Ott 1997)

In her book *Learning Disabilities: Theories, Diagnosis, and Teaching Strategies*, Janet Lerner states that some of the underlying shortcomings that interfere with handwriting performance are (1.) poor motor skills, (2.) faulty visual perception of

letters and words, and (3.) difficulty in retaining visual impressions. The student's problem may also be in cross-modal transfer from visual to motor modalities.

3.6. Difficulties with speaking

Not surprisingly, pupils with learning difficulties beside reading and writing also experience many problems with speaking while learning a foreign language. What more, Hamilton Farley (1985, as quoted in Ott 1997, 36) suggests that faulty speech patterns are first indicators of reading and spelling difficulties as the child matures. Here it is important to remember that proficiency in spoken language is the foundation to further success in acquiring and using all other language skills. According to Ott (1997, 37), 'most researchers agree that language development is the most significant underlying feature in the identification of dyslexia and has to be examined carefully'.

However 'it would be wrong to suggest that all children with reading and spelling problems have a speech and language disorder' (Bishop as quoted in Ott, 1997, 37).

Zelinkova (2003, 163) adds 'the acquisition of a foreign language is obstructed by insufficient development of all parts of speech' (my translation). Later she continues that these difficulties are more obvious for upper grades. Here the pupils have problems with instructions which are carried out in English and are unable to process information, which results into the attention deficits during lessons. Pupils are losing the interest and, therefore, they tend to achieve worse results.

It is also very important to remember that in case they mastered some vocabulary, it takes them very long to recollect a Czech equivalent for a particular word and it is nearly impossible for a dyslexic pupil to participate in any role play, game or conversation (Zelinkova 2003, 164).

3.7. Other difficulties which have some impact on English language acquisition

- Motor skills – According to Ott (1997, p. 30), fine motor skills are those associated primarily with the fingers and hands. Therefore some of the pupils with SpLD are unable to write neither texts or words at the speed which is required. The worse is the pressure the worse are results (Zelinkova 2003, 164).
- Memory – as Zelinkova (2003, 170) suggests the child with SpLD is unable to work on several tasks simultaneously and recollect findings from various areas. Owing to difficulties with long-term memory, a pupil with SpLD is forced to learn again and again, because according to Raymond (2002, 70), the child may have difficulty with remembering common sequences – the alphabet, days of the week, months of the year. “Sometimes it is even rather difficult for these children to tell whether it is morning or evening or they may neither be able to remember their own address nor the date of their birthday nor their telephone number” (Ott, 1997, p.29).
- Attention – pupil’s ability to pay attention is rather limited as he is often distracted. As Zelinkova (2003, 165) claims: ‘the attention is also negatively influenced by the deficits in knowledge because it is very difficult for a pupil to pay attention while he understands nearly nothing’.

To conclude, any teacher of a language may sometimes feel low-spirited, because it is not unusual that he or she has to repeat everything over and over again, and although the pupils seems to master the subject one lesson, the next one it is necessary to start from the beginning.

A pupil with SpLD appears to discover again and again already known words and expressions. The whole process is therefore rather time consuming and stressful not only for the pupil, but for the teacher as well.

Consequently, the approach towards the English is marked by repetitious failures lowered motivation and mounting differences between best and worst pupils. Therefore it is good to think carefully about the teaching techniques to help pupils with SpLD to overcome their fears and difficulties while learning a foreign language.

4. TEACHING AND LEARNING PRINCIPLES

It is very important for a teacher to remember that every pupil has different abilities and therefore, it is essential to be very sensitive and take into consideration individual differences in the profiles of specific learning difficulties. On the other hand, no matter how carefully the teacher plans his or her lesson in order to help to the dyslexics pupils with English, he or she has to have in mind that in the room there are sitting other children with no such problems, but who need teacher's full attention just as well. Therefore the whole thing may seem impossible to be mastered by one single person in mere forty-five minutes.

However it is good for a teacher to be at least aware of some teaching techniques and strategies that can be, to some extent, accommodated to the needs of children with SpLD. Evidence suggests that the teacher needs more than a single approach and the techniques derived from it, to be able to teach English to dyslexics pupils. These pupils need a multiplicity of skills which are integrated to help them to learn a language, therefore the teacher needs to know, and have at his or her disposal, all the different methods (Ott 1997, 65).

Ott (1997,64) also advocates that the underlying principle of teaching dyslexic children, and one of the main differences between it and remedial teaching, is that multi-sensory method of teaching is used.

4.1. Multi-sensory teaching and learning

One of the most effective teaching technique which works with SpLD pupils seems to be a multi-sensory teaching and learning. Simply said, a multi-sensory teaching approach means helping a child to learn through more than one of the senses.

Essentially, the term multi-sensory means that a combination of the three main channels of input and output is being used. These are, according to Thomson and Watkins (2000, 62), visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. All of which, when being

interrelated, are utilized in multi-sensory teaching and learning. The general idea is to train all these modalities and to strengthen the links between each of them.

Augur (as quoted in Ott 1997, 64), says that it is 'learning by the simultaneous use of the eyes, ears, speech organs, fingers and muscles'.

Sheffield (as quoted in Ott 1997, p.64) described it as 'an aid to a flagging memory for words', the student learns to articulate sounds and words as he writes them. When he is learning a new bit o language he hears the teacher's voice first saying a sound, a word, a sentence. Then he hears his own voice repeat it. He concentrates on what his mouth is doing. He moves his own hand and then sees what he has written then he reads it.

There are other areas of memory - such as those of smell, touch and colour perception – which can and should be incorporated into the learning process. The memory is a living integration of many parts. For example, it is possible to use the sensation of touch to write words in sand or salt. By also singing out the word as it is created, a multi-sensory input is produced which will help fix the word in the memory.

(Raymond 2002, 76)

Raymond later adds that many teachers use multi-sensory learning techniques, and educational psychologists will often recommend these for dyslexic children.

Raymond (2002, 76) suggests that the theory is that by bombarding as many senses as possible with the same information, the almighty weight and variety of material presented is sure to be registered somehow, somewhere. The trick is to provide an assortment of activities that use different senses, but not to overload the working memory by giving too much at one time.

Later Raymond continues that this tried and tested technique has been used quite successfully for a long time. Its big success lies in the fact that that a pupil is not limited to auditory or visual experience but can use other areas of the brain in order to establish memories of words and phrases that are not otherwise easy to remember.

To put it simple, Zelinkova (1997, 167) claims that the pupil should have as much opportunities to speak as possible and he or she should repeat words in accordance with real situation. He or she should also listen to their own pronunciation and compare it with the teacher's pronunciation. The repeated words should be seen written or printed with coloured parts. Whenever possible the pupils represent the content of the words by movement (Zelinkova 2003, p.167). The more senses are included the better results can be expected in English language learning.

Thomson and Watkins (2000, 63) advocate that the major advantage of the multi-sensory concept is that it promotes in the children an appreciation of phoneme sequence, relating them to printed letter sequences and synthesising them to form words.

However learning through as many senses as possible would bring no visible results, while working with dyslexics children, without repetition, or so called overlearning.

4.2. Overlearning

When working with pupils who have SpLD, a teacher should remember that a gradual progress is the main principle of successful teaching here. There is no reason why a learner with SpLD should be taught different items and structures than the rest of the classroom, however teachers should bear in mind that while working with SpLD pupils, more time should be spent on revising materials which the pupils already know rather than introducing something new to them.

Thomson and Watkins (2000, 63) claim that if teacher integrates the principle of overlearning, it is an aid to the dyslexics child, because without it, dyslexic children just do not 'anchor' information in memory system. They further add that unless some time is spent each lesson going over material already taught, 'memory fade' occurs.

The result of this is that something apparently fully understood and internalized at the end of yesterday's lesson is retrieved as a confused and often jumbled mess. This comes as a surprise to non-specialist teachers, who see the child as bright and articulate. It therefore follows that the principle of

overlearning is a fundamental tenet. Repetition, recapping and reinforcement of already 'learned' material is vital, and allows the dyslexic to master a point properly before new information is taught.

(Thomson and Watkins 2000, 63)

To conclude, according to Thomson and Watkins, implicit in the idea of overlearning is an awareness that any new material will need to be presented in a clear, concise manner, and that it will need to be presented frequently in a number of different ways. It is also essential to point out that the daily repetition and overlearning is one of the basic conditions for pupils with SpLD to be successful in English language learning.

Finally, it seems essential to remind that no matter which of the many principles are followed, the learning should be made enjoyable and meaningful experience.

4.3. The development of the English language skills and subskills

According to Harmer (1992, 16), literate people who use a language have a number of different abilities: 'They will be able to speak on the telephone, write letters, listen to the radio or read books'. In other words they possess the four basic language skills of speaking, writing, listening and reading. However when children with SpLD are concerned the acquisition of the above mentioned skills will be influenced by their difficulty.

Ott (1997) advocates that for a pupil with SpLD it means that in order to become, at least to some extent proficient in a language, synthetic/analytic approach is required. It means that the skill to break down larger units into their smaller components and to arrange smaller bits into bigger units is practiced.

'Moreover the instructions in phonics, lexicology, morphology and grammar should be explicit, direct, carefully structured, systematic and multi-sensory.'
(Nijakowska 2001, 4)

In the following lines, where the skills and some relevant subskills are going to be more closely described, the above mentioned approach will be more closely looked at.

4.3.1. Reading

In English speaking countries, there are four main approaches that may be used to teach reading, however it is essential for an informed teacher to remember that teaching reading successfully, demands a mixture of strategies.

Ott (1997, 51) says that each of the approaches used to teach reading has a role to play in the teaching of the dyslexic pupil. She also adds that the vast majority of pupils learn to read whatever the method used, but 20 per cent of pupils fail to learn effective reading when not given extra help.

Teachers of English as a foreign language should think about this substantiality all the time, and they should not expect a pupil with SpLd to read fluently in English while it is impossible in the Czech language. Instead, they should think of the pupil's strengths or weaknesses, and whether they are auditory or visual, and then take into account which method would suit best to this particular pupil.

Zelinkova (2003, p.171) advocates that in learning and teaching of foreign languages there are usually used two of the techniques.

One of them is one which can be found among the more traditional approaches is *look and say*.

'*Look and say*' requires the ability to learn and recognize whole words by their visual appearance. As Broomfield (1997, p.31) says this is usually achieved through the use of a graded series of reading scheme books with carefully controlled and gradually increased vocabulary. It may also involve the use of flash cards, reading games and activities aimed at increasing sight vocabulary. Ott (1997, 51) ads that this method involves 'the pupil being taught by being shown

whole words or even whole phrases.’ The idea here is that repeated visual inspections help the children to memorize and read the word.

The disadvantage of the method is that it ignores the fact that different individuals can learn in different ways and it assumes that a pupil can recognize words for automatic recall (Ott 1997, 51).

According to Zelinkova more appropriate method for Czech pupils is the *phonic method*. In this method the process is similar to that in the Czech language. (Zelinkova, 2003, p.171). *Phonic* approaches to the reading are based on on knowledge of letter sounds. With this method the pupil is taught the relationship between the letter names and the sounds of the letters. The pupil learns to sound out each letter in the word. Broumfield (1997, p.32) adds that ‘once individual sounds are learned the child is encouraged to blend sounds together and attack unfamiliar words independently.’ This is useful mainly for deciphering unfamiliar words.

However Smith cited in Ott (1997, p.53) argues that ‘phonics teaching can lead to too deliberate decoding and as a result the meaning of the text will be lost.’

As a very helpful tool how to improve the reading skills is so called *paired reading*.

According to Vahid, Harwood and Brown (1998, 85) it is a way of encouraging and improving reading by getting a stronger reader to pair up with the weak reader and spend time together sharing the reading.

Philomena Ott (1997, p.203), who also sees paired reading as a good option, further suggests that any dyslexic reader should be allowed and encouraged to highlight and underline the key words and to number the facts to be memorized.

4.3.2. Vocabulary and spelling

To start with it is important to point out that the learning of new words in isolation is highly inappropriate. The best way how to learn is to use the principles of native method, however this is not always in our school conditions possible. So therefore, it would be at least essential to follow some of the suggestion of Zelinkova and Michalova which are listed below, but which are to some extent in disagreement.

According to Zelinkova (2003, 169) while acquiring new vocabulary it is an advantage to learn it on the base of concrete situation and use visual aids. The goal of this method is to learn a new word without the need to translate it into the native language. One of the best way for pupils with SpLD how to learn new expressions in English, is to follow the principles of multi-sensory approach. To help the children to learn, it is quite helpful to include pantomime, gesticulation, rhythmic, and songs accompanied by body movements.

Michalova (2001, 64) recommends everyday learning. Later, in contrary to what Zelinkova says, Michalova encourages the translations of the words when she advocates ‘pupils should always learn the English equivalent for the Czech word – and for the English word what it means in Czech’ (my translation, Michalova 2001, p.65). With Zelinkova she agrees at the point that for better memorization it is important to try to learn new words in phrases or short sentences and whenever possible to memorize them in thematic units.

To remember spelling of new words Vahid, Harwood and Brown (1998, 68) advocate that the use of board games and card games can be very beneficial. They can be either made by teacher, or there are a number of really commercial ones that are equally effective.

4.3.3. Grammar

Pupils with SpLD often experience great difficulties with grammar in native language, so therefore it comes as no surprise that it is sometimes very difficult for them to master it in English. The point here is, when a teacher of English language comes across a pupil with more severe form of dyslexia, it would be advisable to put more stress on the communicative side of a language rather than on error-free grammar. As Zelinkova (2003, p.171) advocates 'it is convenient to reduce grammar for the benefit of speaking and communication.' (my translation)

Thomson and Watkins (2000, 173) claim that the teaching of grammar to dyslexic children is a vexed question. Their own view is that the teaching of formal grammatical system is too great load on the child.

4.3.4. Writing

Writing, mainly handwriting is at most schools regarded as a very important skill. It is considered to be a sign of education and culture and the foreign language learning is no exception to it. However, on the other hand, the advent of telephone, typewriters, word processors and fax machines is changing the situation. The skill is becoming less and less important and it with all probability brings a relief to many people with SpLD. However, as it has been mentioned above, at Czech schools it is still much required even for pupils with learning disabilities.

According to Zelinkova (2003, p.173) 'creative writing, copying, and dictations are different activities and therefore pupils with dyslexia achieve different results while accomplishing them' (my translation). Consequently, she adds that copying, easy as it seems is not the easiest one, because without reading and understanding the word or sentence it is mere retracing of shapes, which is made complicated by difficulties with eye perception and ability to pay attention. When a foreign language is concerned if a child does not understand, it makes no sense to copy the texts from the blackboard or textbooks.

5. EVALUATION AND CLASSIFICATION

To start with it is rather important not to interchange the two terms – evaluation and classification. Classification is one of the forms of evaluation which transfers evaluation into quantifying degree, which allows easier comparison of the achievement (Zelinkova 2003, 215).

Although in many cases of pupils with SpLD it is recommended not to classify, it does not mean limitation of evaluation. Above all, these pupils should be evaluated as much as possible. At many of the Czech school it is the verbal evaluation which is most often used. The interpretation of this kind of evaluation is that it is supposed to measure particular components of achievements in that way that the negative does not prevail the positive (for more information about the verbal evaluation see Zelinkova 2003. 215-219).

We all benefit and thrive on praise and acknowledgement; dyslexics are no exception to this rule. Therefore Thomson and Watkins (2000, 47) advocate that it is important to distinguish between observed and measured success. According to them, the first refers to the actual effort that the child has made and is not so concerned with the outcome. Measured success is, on the other hand, the actual measure of degree of excellence of a piece of work. Thomson and Watkins continue that for the dyslexics, progress through these two stages will follow, and equal weight must be given to both.

According to Slavík (1999, 140), the evaluation and classification of a pupil with SpLD may dramatically influence his or her future development. Every time the pupil with SpLD is evaluated, it may have impact on his or her motivation , furthermore, it can also influence his or her self-respect and therefore, not surprisingly, the interrelationship of the social precincts towards the pupil. It may also strongly influence pupil's future working or educational path.

To start with, it would be sensible to remind that tests and exams are not often a positive and rewarding experience for pupils with SpLD. Whenever possible it

would be a plus to make testing and examination a positive experience with rewarding outcomes.

These students don't need to be reminded in front of a classroom of their peers that they struggle to perform at their best in these sorts of situations and that the score on their test sheet is not a true indicator of their ability. It is frustrating, depressing and demeaning for them.

(Karen Fehring)

In fact as Thomson and Watkins (2000, 48) point out that for many dyslexics marking is the despoiling of their best efforts and confirms their worst fears. Also for the teacher it can be a tedious and unrewarding task.

To overcome these problems, Thomson and Watkins see the marking as a joint process when both teacher and child are together and can work their way through the piece of work. They suggest that points can be made via the spoken word, and misunderstanding can be minimized. Later Thomson and Watkins add that there is nothing to be gained from full marking of a piece of work, i.e. correcting every spelling and punctuation mark. The red pen should be, for the same reason, altogether banned as it brings about a negative experience.

However the above mentioned is crucial for pupils who are interested to learn something. As Zelinkova (2003, p.175) advocates, there is a problem with children who know virtually nothing. According to her opinion, 'the only way how to teach a language is markedly reduced individual educational plan, and the classification which is based on those areas which are compassable and recommended for the initial phases of education' (my translation, Zelinkova 2003, p.175).

She also advocates to follow the rules listed below:

- Assess positively when pupil masters *realie* of the foreign language in the mother tongue.
- When pupil manages to write a word phonetically, it is possible to regard this word as the correct one.

- Reading, which is half known by heart by a pupil, can be assessed positively.
- Teacher should give tasks which are manageable and which lead towards the automatization.

(Zelinkova 2003, p.175)

On the other hand, as Zelinkova continues ‘there exist some cases where the energy which was invested does not agree with the results and the level of knowledge of some pupils is so limited that it does not correspond with the requirements of curriculum.’

With evaluation is very closely connected differentiation, because in order to test and evaluate pupils with SpLD, to differentiate teaching and learning is necessary.

6. DIFFERENTIATION IN ELT

Dyslexic children are individuals. What makes their individuality slightly different from that of their peers is that the dyslexics child is usually aware of their singularity from an earlier age. As they begin their schooling – integrating with their peers, learning towards the independence – they soon discover that they are, in some way ‘different’. This feeling of difference can stay with them for many years, molding their attitudes, personality and integration with the outside world (Raymond, 2002, 83).

Thomson and Watkins (2000,6) claim that the incidence of dyslexia (at a conservative estimate some 4% of the population) means that in a class of 25 there are likely to be 2 dyslexic children, and in a large comprehensive school of 1500 around 60 dyslexic children. Many of those children with SpLD are being integrated in heterogeneous classrooms, therefore differentiation is most necessary here to create a proper environment for every pupil to learn properly.

Carol Ann Tomlinson (2000) describes differentiation as follows:

Differentiation is simply attending to the learning needs of a particular student or small group of students rather than the more typical pattern of teaching the class as though all individuals in it were basically alike. The goal of a differentiated classroom is maximum student growth and individual success. Personal success is measured, at least in part, on individual growth from the learner’s starting point – whatever that might be. Put another way, success and personal growth are positively correlated.

According to Stover (2004) the integration within a heterogeneous classroom serves better, because it is necessary to consider that once a child is given a label and tracked into homogenous classroom, he or she tends to remain stuck on that track. Thomson and Watkins (2000, 47) support this by claiming that the expectations of teachers are unrealistically low because they perceive the dyslexic child as having a profound difficulty which they will never satisfactorily overcome.

On the other hand, Stover (2004) argues that a heterogeneous classroom can offer a number of great benefits, i.e. that the pupils are exposed to a variety of types of

people, thus adding to their social experience. There are loud and clear differences between children, therefore a teacher will be more likely to acknowledge these differences, unlike in a homogenous classroom where the assumption exists that all pupils will benefit from one solitary method of teaching.

In a heterogeneous classroom, dyslexics will, according to Thomson and Watkins (2000, 47), given proper help have a number of positive advantages over their non-dyslexic peers. The main one will be the ability to work hard which is result of having to put in two or three more times the effort for the same result. Thomson and Watkins (2000,47) add that this fact is often overlooked by teachers, and indeed, there must be nothing more depressing and confidence sapping for dyslexics than to receive a piece of work which makes little acknowledgement of factual content, but is sharply critical of spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. Later they continue ‘if the dyslexic is given support together with increasing high expectations as they progress, then the future can be very bright.’ However to fulfill this there is not only a need to differentiate, but also to individualize as well.

Individualization is closely connected with differentiation and became the essential constituent in ELT. As Skalkova (1999, 212) suggests, the principal of individualization means that the work is adjusted to each learner, with the adjustments being based upon the knowledge of each learner’s potential. She however adds that it definitely does not mean that all learners work upon the same task individually. She further adds that individualization is closely connected to differentiation, where differentiation is to create such learning situations that it enables each learner to find optimal conditions for his or her learning.

There is no doubt that the learning which is differentiated can be used in classroom to work successfully with pupils who have different abilities or even SpLD. The point is that the pupils are offered learning tasks which are appropriate to their learning needs. The pupils with SpLD would probably appreciate the teacher who

at least tries to make differentiated teaching an inseparable part of every English lesson.

7. MATERIALS AND TEACHING AIDS FOR PUPILS WITH SpLD

How the materials used for teaching language skills and subskills should be accommodated to the needs of pupils with SpLD is already mentioned in the chapter 4. Therefore In the following lines there is more information about factual appearance of these materials, what is essential to include and what should be omitted.

According to Vahid, Harwood and Brown (1999, 13) it is advisable for a teacher of English to prepare differentiated materials for use in class. They claim that it is helpful to identify and present key words at the top of worksheet, on the board, on a poster or underlined in text. Later they add that it is good to familiarize with the wide range of differentiated activities which could include Close work, sequencing, ranking, circling, highlighting, underlining, true/false statements and many more.

In English language lessons the help of visual aids, educational toys and technology in teaching a dyslexic learner cannot also be underestimated. Many of them are available on the market and both, the pupils and the teacher would probably appreciate their use (Nijakowska, 2001).

However all too often overall decisions about content of the lessons are not made by teachers, but, in the case of our schools, by curriculum. Therefore as Harmer (1991, 256) suggests, many institutions present the syllabus in terms of the main textbook to be used, which means that by certain date teachers are expected to have covered a certain number of units in the book.

Should a teacher be given a choice when a course book is concerned, they should consider whether a book is well structured and clear. Also a schematic layout should be provided for pupils to know what to expect from a particular unit. When looking for the appropriate textbook, the teacher should also pay the attention to the size of font, because for SpLD pupils pay that the bigger font is, the better they perform while reading. When the content is considered, it should not be overloaded with lexical items and difficult grammatical structures. And most importantly, the textbook should be used together with a workbook with many exercises for practice and revision. (Thomson and Watkins 2000; Ott 1997)

However there is little possibility that the choice of a textbook used at a particular school would be dependent on a choice of one particular teacher, therefore it is important to think very carefully about the extra materials, the use of which seems to be limited, in order to compensate for some exercises in the textbook which are not very appropriate for pupils who have dyslexia.

Insufficiencies of the textbooks can be to some extent compensated by a careful choice and preparation of supplementary materials such as handouts and exercises. At this point it would be useful to follow some of the recommendations which can be found on the BDA (British Dyslexia Association) pages.

- Avoid a white background. (White paper causes "visual glare. The BDA have observed a preference for cream or pale blue.)
- Avoid small fonts (12 point min. recommended by the BDA)
- Avoid "fancy" fonts. (Arial is the preferred choice. The use of bold type can be helpful.)
- Keep the layout of materials uncluttered.
- Make use of boxed text, especially with a coloured background.
- Include colour-coded sections.
- Avoid too many lines of a dense text.
- Include illustrations to add interest and to break up the text to ensure instructions and symbols are used consistently.

Although the above mentioned recommendations should be kept in mind and followed while preparing materials for pupils with SpLD, it is essential for a teacher to make some further arrangements.

7.1. Readjustment of materials and aids for teaching and learning of relevant language skills and subskills

7.1.1. Reading and vocabulary teaching

Gabor advocates that reading in English must be a pleasant experience regardless of the age and ability of the child. For reading he suggests the following strategies:

- Always have the child read with a purpose.
- Discuss vocabulary *before* reading, as this will aid prediction and understanding.
- Dyslexic children benefit from cloze exercises as they are useful to develop predictive skills.
- Have the child dictate his own stories to you. It will provide the student with relevant and motivating reading material that can be further exploited.

Firstly when working with a new text it is advisable to prepare dyslexics pupils for reading in the form that new and difficult words should be introduced in advance. According to Thomson and Watkins (2000, 106), it means that these words are shown to children before the text is actually read. As the tool for memorizing here they suggest the use of multi-sensory learning together with flashcards and tape recording of new words (at this point it seems reasonable to remind that the pupils with dyslexia should not be overloaded with irrelevant vocabulary).

When new vocabulary and difficult words are introduced, for practicing reading skills Thomson and Watkins (2000, 117) give the following suggestions:

1. Child listens to teacher read the story
2. Child listens to teacher and follows text as well
3. Child listens to teacher and reads out the text at the same time, as a kind of paired reading (for more information see chapter 4.3.1.)
4. Child reads on its own

For practicing of new vocabulary it is also generally recommended to use not only already mentioned games, but also ‘cloze’ procedures.

A cloze procedure involves a text where words and phrases are omitted, e.g. every seventh word may be left out, with a gap or other indications of how many letters are in the word (Thomson and Watkins 2000; Ott 2000) .

1.1.2. Listening

As it has been already mentioned (see chapter 3) many children with SpLD may have problems to process incoming auditory information efficiently in their native language.

Although Zelinkova (2003) thinks listening in a foreign language to be an immense task for children with SpLD and therefore she does not pay much attention to this, Gabor on the other hand tries to give at least some ideas of which materials and aids can be useful and how the practice of listening skills can be dealt in a foreign language with:

- If possible, explain important things in the child’s first language.

- Try to use a small tape recorder to record new vocabulary, stories, homework instruction so the child can listen to it as many times as necessary.
- Using visuals and pictures along with the listening task will aid the child's understanding.

7.1.3 Writing and grammar

As it has been previously mentioned (see chapter 3) when writing is concerned, pupils with SpLD may experience most difficulties with word order, grammar and with learning how to spell English word. It is therefore advisable, as it has been already mentioned, to introduce them a systematic program where one rule at a time is focused at.

For remembering the word order which is for many Czech pupils rather tricky, the words on the cards which are for practice putted together to practice the formation of sentences and phrases may be helpful.

As BDA (British Dyslexia Association) recommends, when teaching new grammar to pupils with SpLD it is advisable to use plenty of examples. Also color-coding of grammatical devices will help to pupils to remember things: for example orange for male, purple for female, green for plural. Different colours can be also used for different parts of speech such as verbs, nouns, pronouns and others.

As very helpful for learning spelling of words has proved multi-sensory learning (Ott 1997; Thomson and Watkins 2000, Raymond 1996).

Also many teaching aids can be used here such as rubber, wooden or plastic letters from which the words can be formatted and therefore practiced.

The following practical section emanates from the theoretical part. It is conducted as a qualitative research. It is a case study based on empirical research which lasted from October 2003 till May 2004. The aim of the research was to explore how the ordinary materials used for language teaching and learning should be readjusted and modified to meet the needs of pupils who have SpLD. The case study was partly based on differentiation of teaching and learning materials and activities within one particular class, and mostly on a small group teaching where the modified and readjusted materials were tested and used for teaching of two dyslexics pupils – brothers, who came from the already mentioned class.

8. PRACTICAL SECTION – CASE STUDY

8.1. Background

For many pupils with SpLD it is often very difficult to master their own native language so it comes as no surprise that it is usually much harder for them to learn a second. However to study at least one foreign language is a compulsory and integral part of educational system in the Czech Republic, although there may be some exceptions made when there exist really serious reasons. However, difficult to learn a foreign language as it may be, having SpLD is not under normal circumstances the case for the exclusion. It is therefore up to the teacher to help these pupils to deal with this demanding situation.

Because the process of teaching and learning is mainly based on the use of various materials, such as textbooks, flashcards, posters and many others, it is just the modification and accommodation of materials where the help may start.

To teach the foreign language to pupils with SpLD successfully, requires many modifications of the materials which are ordinarily used within the lesson. These modifications are closely related, in heterogeneous classes, to differentiated teaching principles, all of which goes together with particular teaching methods and techniques.

This case study is designed to reveal, at least to some extent, how the ordinary materials used for language teaching and learning can be modified and accommodated to meet the needs of pupils with SpLD. Much of the attention is paid to the modification and differentiation of the materials and aids used for teaching relevant language skills and subskills such as new vocabulary, reading, speaking, writing. . The materials for testing and revision are also included.

With regard to my rather limited experience as a teacher, the small group teaching appeared to be most appropriate for trying the accommodated and modified materials in practice. Additionally it were also differentiated materials used within ordinary lesson which were shortly and with limits tried and tested in this research.

8.2. Methodology of the research

When the time factor and my nearly non-existent experience in teaching was taken into consideration, the best way how to carry out this empirical study appeared to be in the form of a small group teaching outside the usual timetable. Additionally, because the aim of this study is the development of materials that would be used within a normal heterogeneous classroom teaching, the limited use of modified and differentiated materials for SpLD pupils in ordinary classroom is also partly included here.

To begin with, there were more sources which were relevant to this research, which was based not only on the empirical study but also on the interviews and observations which were carried out in order to obtain some extra and background information.

Firstly, it was important to reveal the situation about materials used for teaching English at the school. Secondly, whether these materials are modified to the needs of pupils with SpLD, and whether, if ever, the teaching materials are, at least to some extent, differentiated to meet the needs of these children.

To obtain the relevant information as soon as possible, the deputy head teacher who is also specialized on remedial teaching of pupils with SpLD, was interviewed. She was asked whether the school employs any policy when children with SpLD are concerned. After her positive answer there were given further questions about the remedial teaching of pupils with dyslexia, individual lesson plans, extra teaching and learning materials or the modifications that teachers are obliged to do. She was also asked, whether it would be possible to carry out a research which would help to the teachers of English to employ some new strategies and modifications of the ordinary materials, which are used in a foreign language teaching, to help teachers and pupils to overcome problems with SpLD.

Following her advice, also the teacher who works for many years with children who have SpLD, and whose main subject to teach is the Czech language, was observed during her lessons for the period of one month. Afterwards, she was also several

times interviewed about her teaching strategies and techniques and to what extent is the modification of the teaching and learning materials for pupils with SpLD possible within her lessons of the Czech language.

Unfortunately, it was rather impossible to obtain any useful information, except some modified individual lesson plans, from the teachers of English.

To carry out the empirical study in the form of small group or one-to-one teaching in order to try the modified materials in practice, it was important to find the appropriate pupil, which would fulfill, at least to some extent, the requirements of the aim of this thesis. He or she had to have SpLD but to be at the same time of normal or above intelligence, study English as the foreign language and, most importantly, to be keen to improve his or her English, which would have, of course, required extra time and effort devoted.

Furthermore it had to be a pupil from the class where I taught English, in order not only to try some of the modified materials outside obligatory English lesson in the form of small group teaching, but to accommodate and differentiate them in a group of his or her peers, within normal English lessons as well.

When the pupils (finally two pupils, the reason for this will become obvious later) were chosen, to obtain some more information about the pupils' history and background, the deputy head teacher was interviewed once again,

The informal interview was also carried out with the students chosen, about their attitude towards English how do they feel about the textbook and materials which had been so far used for teaching and learning, and about the problems which they experience while using them in order to learn English. To get the overall picture, they were also observed during the lessons of English.

When I had been given the permission by their mother and the head teacher of the school, we started small group teaching, once a week for the period of time from October 2003 till May 2004. During our extra English lessons were the modified materials tested in practice and the observed results analyzed.

9. SCHOOL AND THE CLASS SELECTED

The selection of the school, where the research was carried out, was of an easy choice. It came naturally to me to choose the school, where I used to teach and work as the assistant during the clinical year.

My selection of the school proved to be the right one, after it was uncovered that the school pays much attention to the reeducation of pupils with SpLD; furthermore, many pupils there, who had been diagnosed with dyslexia were supposed to be approached differently by teachers of foreign languages. However it was, based on my subjective receptions, complicated by the fact that these teachers usually missed the proper education in foreign language teaching and they were often rather confused and helpless. Therefore the idea of the research quite conformed to the deputy head teacher who supposed that some of the ideas and tips would have been handed to other teachers of English as well.

In the class, where the two pupils with SpLD were selected for the purpose of this research, there were altogether 28 pupils; 16 of them had chosen English as the foreign language, the rest of the class - German. It was the ninth grade, therefore the pupils were going through their final year, some of them with prospect of entry exams towards the end of the school year. Most of the children who were aiming at some kind of secondary school, expected that English or other foreign language will become a necessity there.

9.1. The selected pupils with SpLD

Both of the pupils selected, were boys, Mark and Paul. They were brothers and attended the same class which is mentioned above. Although they in their appearance resembled twins, Mark, who was nearly sixteen, was one year older than Paul. As both brothers had been diagnosed with dyslexia early in the course of their preschool education, their mother followed the suggestion of the psychologist and in

order to get both brothers into the same class, she postponed the registration of Mark at the primary school.

Both brothers were reported by both, the deputy head teacher and their teacher of the Czech language that they used to have severe visual perception and auditory discrimination problems which were partly overcome by special educational exercises; however, some problems with single word decoding, phonological processing, inconsistent and incoherent spelling, skipping lines or words together with high distractibility while reading, still persist.

Therefore it was not very surprising that both brothers, based on my subjective reception, hated reading aloud in class, because their less informed peers used to laugh at them for the mistakes they made. That could probably be also one of the reasons why the two brothers felt excluded from the collective of their classmates.

When their school results were concerned, the boys were above the average. They achieved very good results in many subjects, for example, in math, science and many others. They were said, by the deputy head teacher, to be of the highly above intelligence and dutiful students, however very disruptive behaviour towards their classmates in the past, was also mentioned. Furthermore they were described as introverts with only few friends.

9.2. Conditions for teaching English

Nowadays it is not easy for headmasters to find approbated teachers of English. The school where I spent my clinical year was no exception to this. English, and also German, was there taught by teachers who were not only approbated for this subject, but who mostly lacked any university education at all. Unfortunately at the school still prevails the situation when every single year, children get a new teacher of English, which seems to complicate the process of the acquisition of the relevant language skills and sub-skills. Furthermore, the former teacher of English who used

to teach the class, with the two brothers chosen for this study, was not at the time of research any more present at the school. Therefore it was rather complicated to obtain any relevant information about the history of the English language teaching in that particular class

9.2.1. The class selected

As it has been mentioned before, in the group which had chosen English as the foreign language, there were 16 pupils aged 14 to 15, some of them aiming towards the studies at some kind of secondary school. They were mostly aware of the fact that they would need English in the course of their future studies.

However, when they were at the beginning of the school year tested for their language knowledge, they mostly did very poorly. In addition, their vocabulary was rather limited and they knew almost nothing about grammar and sentence structure so at the first sight, there was virtually nothing to build on and continue. Therefore the headmaster had to be asked for the permission and when it was given, special arrangements had to be made.

9.2.2. The arrangements for the whole group

It was obvious that if the pupils are to continue successfully in their future studies of the language, there is a need for a complete revision. Finally, it was decided that to keep up with the curriculum, pupils should continue with their former textbook – *Cambridge English for Schools 3*, which had been used the previous year and not at all finished then, and additionally, some extra materials for a complete revision had to be made and copied for them. As the main resource of these additional handouts was chosen *New Headway – Elementary* which appeared to me to be just the right choice for the revision, and preparation for their future studies, not only for its choice of topics and vocabulary, but also, for the possibility to practice and revise on the internet - www.oup.com/elt/headway .

Based on my subjective reception, this kind of on-line practice proved not only to be very interesting new way of learning English for the pupils, but also it was very helpful for Mark and Paul who had SpLD.

9.2.3. The arrangements for the selected pupils with SpLD

As it has been already mentioned Mark and Paul were brothers and very keen to improve their English. Because their plans for the future included the studies at the secondary school which was specialized in computer technology, English language was of a very high importance for them.

The research which was carried out with them had two main parts which were very much related: one, was based on small group teaching, and focused on development of modified teaching materials for particular language skills and sub-skills; and the second, which focused on partially differentiated language teaching via differentiated materials for pupils with SpLD within a heterogeneous group of their classmates.

Nevertheless, because of the time factor and already mentioned lack of teaching experience at my side, the use of differentiated teaching materials within the class was not possible all the time, and therefore it could not be exploited to its full potential in this study. For this reason it will be only shortly described in the following lines and more space will be later devoted to the development of materials which were more successfully and more often used and tested with Mark and Paul outside the timetable in their spare time.

10. DIFFERENTIATED MATERIALS AND AIDS USED WITHIN A HETEROGENOUS CLASS

Some basic principles of the differentiation has been already described in the theoretical part of this thesis, therefore they will not be listed here. Instead the attention is going to be paid to the examples of how can teaching be differentiated in the form of modified materials for pupils with SpLD within a heterogeneous group of pupils

To start with, it was necessary to make some educational adjustment in order to facilitate learning and create successful class environment. This also included some changes in the classroom arrangement such as placing both dyslexics brothers close to the blackboard, allotting more time for testing and also lowering the educational requirements altogether.

Nancy Bosch (2001) claims that differentiation is not about more classwork or homework, it is about taking a regular curriculum topic and exploring it in greater depth and complexity. Following this, Mark an Paul were not given any extra more or less work or homework, but the following elements of differentiated teaching and learning through modified materials, described by Convery and Coile (1999, 6-10) were used.

- ✓ Working with spoken or written materials at different levels of difficulty, yet working on the same subject, or topic. This meant that the pupils had to cover the same ground while at the same time there was matched different level of complexity to the pupils with SpLD.
- ✓ Working on the same text, but the tasks that were asked to be fullfilled were graded in difficulty and matched to differentiating needs and abilities of SpLD pupils.
- ✓ Differentiation through the amount of additional support offered to learners: In this case the pupils with SpLD were not given any extra help in the form of extra teacher or assistant, but they were usually given extra help in form of

a support card, where for example, difficult words were listed or grammatical rules written in form of a table. Also the room, where the teaching took place was equipped with posters which were on regular basis varied.

- ✓ Differentiation by time. Although the pupils with SpLD were most of the time provided with extra copied materials in order not to lose time by writing or copying from the board, they often needed some extra time to finish the tasks. After careful consideration, Mark and Paul split and matched to the faster workers and consequently more of the group work was employed. Also the range of extra activities was prepared for faster pupils, in order not to put the slower ones into distress.
- ✓ Varying the way in which new material were presented: It seemed to represent the new materials in many different ways a very good option not only for dyslexic pupils, but also, the children with no SpLD seemed to benefit just as well. Whenever possible when presenting any new materials, some of the basic principles for multi-sensory teaching and learning were used, therefore new material was often presented in the form of posters, listening exercises, real objects, symbols and others.

Additionally, some of the materials used for revision together with testing were accommodated to the needs of SpLD pupils; however, this is going to be described in the part which is focused on the small group teaching, because it was just there where these modifications were firstly tried and only after that put into practice within the whole group.

10.1. Output 1

What was the output like for the two pupils with dyslexia and the whole group?

First of all, it has to be said that everyone in the group seemed to benefit from the differentiation which has been introduced into the teaching and learning processes.

The differentiated materials were not only of a good use to the pupils with dyslexia but also the weaker pupils with worse results did better while using them. Their potential success in foreign language learning had one positive side effect – there was obviously limited off task behaviour.

However it has to be said that the preparation of these differentiated materials was rather time consuming mainly when these were differentiated in difficulty while the topic sustained the same for all pupils. Notwithstanding, good results were observed here. Almost everyone in the class seemed to experience feelings of success.

Nearly the same could be observed when the tasks to be fulfilled were graded in difficulty. Suddenly everyone appeared to be busy and sometimes it happened that all pupils managed to finish simultaneously .

In overall, the pupils with SpLD got a chance to become more independent and were less distressed by the tasks set and the time factor. They became more self-assured, with every task which has been successfully carried out. Probably because of the changes in seating order, their relationship with their classmates seemed to improve.

They also seemed to me to prefer working in pairs rather than in a large group or by themselves. Sometimes they even appeared, while working in pairs, as if they considered the other pupil to be their teacher.

On the other hand, it has to be admitted, that although the teaching there was, to some extent differentiated and some of the materials modified to suit the needs of SpLD pupils it was impossible to accommodate and modify everything that was used there, not only because of the time factor, and the lack of experience in teaching English to pupils with SpLD at my side, but also because there were other pupils who needed my full attention and devotion just as well.

Therefore the main aim of this case study, which is based on the modification of the teaching and learning materials for pupils with SpLD, could be only fulfilled via small group teaching.

11. SMALL GROUP TEACHING AND LEARNING

As it has been already mentioned the teaching which was based on modified and accommodated materials, was not included within the timetable and had to be carried out in the boys' spare-time, for one hour, once a week, for a period of eight months.

Great emphasis was put on the development of modified materials which made the English language acquisition easier for them. Through these modifications we were also concentrated on the development of some relevant language skills and sub-skills.

11.1. Teaching principles used

In this case study based on small group teaching it was kept in mind all the time through that a gradual progress is the most important key to successful teaching of the pupils with SpLD. It was taken into the consideration that while working with these students, certainly more time should be spent on revising materials which are already familiar to pupils (for more information see the chapter 4.2).

The environment for teaching during our sessions was as much positive and encouraging as possible, because this is, according to Ott (2000), one of the conditions under which dyslexic learners experience the feelings of success, satisfaction and self value.

Together with the above mentioned, the tasks included various techniques for teaching spelling, grammar and vocabulary together with repetitive activities. Whenever possible, these activities were attempted to be interesting and designed in such a way that the pupils were able to complete them successfully.

Although there exist many strategies, teaching techniques and approaches which can be incorporated into the teaching process and be helpful for pupils with SpLD in

overcoming their problems with learning, it was mainly the multi-sensory approach and principles of over-learning which were often and also successfully incorporated (for more information see the chapter 4.1).

11.2. Materials which had to be accommodated and modified

As it has been already mentioned in the theoretical section, the teaching of English language is very often based on the textbook. Because in the class which the boys attended the two books were used simultaneously, one for revision, and the other to keep up with the overall plan for the whole school, both of them were taken as the fundamental source of materials which had to be modified and accommodated to the needs of pupils with SpLD.

When choosing a suitable course book for SpLD pupils, it should be kept in mind that the book should be clear and well structured, the originally used *Cambridge English for Schools* (for sample pages see appendix 1A) did not fulfilled these fundamental requirements.

Even though the schematic layout was provided here, it was designed in such a way that even for pupils who had no SpLD it was impossible to obtain the information about what to expect from a particular unit. Moreover, the size of the font was often very small. Also the content of the book was overloaded with new and often rather unusual lexical items and grammatical structures. Furthermore, there was no extra and regular section devoted to the new words and grammar, not mentioning the possibility to practice it.

To conclude the whole book appeared to be rather inconsistent and often difficult even for pupils who experienced no SpLD.

On the other hand, the *Headway Elementary* (for sample pages see appendix 1B) which was used for the revision, appeared to be much more suitable not only for the choice of vocabulary, but also there was at least the section with new words included which

together with plenty of exercises which appeared, at least to some extent, more suitable for pupils with SpLD.

However, on the other hand, the size of the font together with the occasional use of cursive writing did not help to the learning process of pupils with SpLD

The grammar was here mostly presented in the form of tables and plenty of examples and exercises were available here, however, the need to accommodate and modify the materials in this textbook seemed to me to be also necessary.

Samples of modified materials that have been successfully utilized and tested in the course of a small group teaching and which proved to be to some extent useful, are presented below.

12. SAMPLES OF MODIFIED MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

12.1. The activity usually used for teaching reading and new vocabulary

In this activity the suggestions already mentioned in the theoretical part by Zelinkova and Michalova are followed. They claim that it is good for SpLD pupils to learn new vocabulary in context rather than in form of isolated units; therefore new words were whenever possible presented in phrases or in text .

The text for reading was usually rewritten and printed on the yellow sheet of paper (as recommended by BDA organization, see chapter 4.3). Because this organization recommends as most appropriate font *Arial* it was used for majority of texts which had to be read by both brothers.

As described in the theoretical section, following the advice of Thomson and Watkins, the difficult and new words from the text were chosen beforehand and written on the top of the sheet. Before we started reading, these words were translated and then repeated several times to practice the pronunciation. They were also written on the cards and whenever possible presented in the form of a picture. Those cards with written words were shown to both brothers, who had to repeat them after the teacher several times, until their pronunciation seemed to be at least satisfactory. While repeating and reading these words on the cards aloud, the boys had to at the same time trace them in the air.

Afterwards they were asked to read the text for themselves and highlight the already practiced new vocabulary together with words which were unfamiliar to them in the text. The unfamiliar words were explained, written on the board, traced in the air and repeated for several times after the teacher.

The silent reading and the practice of vocabulary was followed by pair reading with the teacher (me). It was kept on a slow pace and clearly articulated. Afterward the

brothers were asked to read again together or individually, but this time without my help. When they had problems to read some word, the word was pronounced for them.

Then the silent reading followed and for checking the comprehension they had to answer usually simple T/F questions.

Example of the adapted text:

Tale horrible dirty untidy rude tell lies bored yuk

The tale of horribly good Bertha

'Once upon a time, a long time ago there was a little girl called Bertha. She was always well behaved and worked hard at school to please her parents and teachers. She was never late, never dirty or untidy, never rude, and she never told lies.'

The children on the train began to look bored. 'Was she pretty?' asked the smaller girl.

'No,' no said the young man. 'She wasn't pretty at all. She was just horribly good. Bertha was so good that she won three gold medals.'

(the text adapted from New Headway, for the original version see the appendix 3B.)

The T/F questions:

The children liked the story.	T / F
Bertha was pretty.	T / F
Bertha had medals.	T / F

Observation

Although the yellow paper is very much recommended by BDA organization because the white paper causes the visual glare, the boys claimed that they did not find this kind of background very helpful; however, based on my subjective reception, no matter what the boys claimed I observed better results in reading when the yellow background for better contrast was used.

On the other hand, they really appreciated when they had to learn and recognize whole words by their visual appearance, when they were shown the flashcards and highlighted them in the text. On the other hand, although they liked flashcards and pictures of new words, they were very critical of tracing in the air, because they found this activity to be very childish and of no use.

What they seemed to really enjoy was a pair reading. Here they seemed to lose their worries and having in mind that they would be given help any time when needed, made their reading more fluent and confident. Also to answer T/F questions they reported as quite easy task.

They also said that the introducing of new vocabulary before reading makes this activity much easier as they do not tend to stuck on difficult words.

12.2. Activities used for learning and testing new and difficult vocabulary

12.2.1. Multi-sensory teaching and learning of words

A new word which had been already introduced in the text or phrase was written on a big piece of paper, showed to the pupils and pronounced. The learners had to finger trace the word in the air and pronounce it. Sometimes they were given container with sand and they had to write the word with their finger into it. After the

lesson they were given, for a homework, a list of words which were practiced in the lesson and which they were supposed to learn by heart. This list was usually supplied with a tape where the new words were recorded .

In the list they had firstly to trace the word and listen to its pronunciation recorded on a tape, then to read it aloud by themselves and finally to write it.

Example of the wordlist given:

1.	celebrate	/ˈselɪbrət/	slavit
2.	round	/raʊnd/	kulatý
3.	wide	/waɪd/	široký

Observation

While Mark reported that he finds tracing in the air and sand, although it is childish, quite helpful for remembering spelling of new or difficult words, Paul said: ‘These activities are for small children and a complete waste of time’.

On the other hand, they were both quite satisfied with the word list which was supplied with the tape. They said that they listened to those words nearly every day. I also observed improvement with the pronunciation and also, to some extent, with spelling of words and that their vocabulary substantially widened in the course of the year.

12.2.2. Practicing and testing of vocabulary – cloze exercise

Following the advice of Thomson and Watkins (2000) who see close exercises as a very good way how to practice spelling of English words, these exercises were chosen as a good tool for testing and practicing of new words. To prevent the overall problems with comprehension of the context, the text which was already used for new words learning and reading was rewritten, but this time the words which were previously learned were left out and filled in by Mark and Paul in the following manner:

- a) the words that had to be filled in, were written in the brackets, in Czech, within the text and they had to be translated into English

example:

The(**pohádka**) of(**příšerně**) good Bertha

'Once upon a time, a long time ago there was a little girl called Bertha. She was always well behaved and worked hard at school to please her parents and teachers. She was never late, never(**špinavá**) or(**nepořádná**), never(**nezdvořilá**), and she never(**lhala**).'

The children on the train began to look(**znuděně**) 'Was she pretty?' asked the smaller girl.

b) there was given list of missing words in the Czech language (these words were listed as they followed in the text) and the hints in the text were given in the form of initial letter

example:

pohádka příšerně špinavý nepořádný obhroublý

The t..... of h..... good Bertha

'Once upon a time, a long time ago there was a little girl called Bertha. She was always well behaved and worked hard at school to please her parents and teachers. She was never late, never d..... or u....., never r....., and she never told lies.'

c) there was given list of missing words in the Czech language (listed as they followed in the text), and in the text there was shown how many letters were in that particular word which had to be translated and filled in.

Example:

pohádka příšerně špinavý nepořádný obhroublý

The _ _ _ _ of _ _ _ _ _ good Bertha

'Once upon a time, a long time ago there was a little girl called Bertha. She was always well behaved and worked hard at school to please her parents and teachers. She was never late, never _ _ _ _ or _ _ _ _ never _ _ _ _ and she never told lies.'

Observation

It has to be said that these cloze exercise were quite preferred and liked by both brothers. But only under the condition that they were already familiar to the boys from the preceding lesson.

Probably because no clues were given there, they seemed to have many problems when dealing with the first type of cloze exercise. They often made many spelling mistakes and some words were omitted altogether. On the other hand, better results were observed when they were given the initial letter as in the second type of exercise or when there was shown how many letters in the left out word should be, as can be seen in the third type. However what the boys liked best was the combination of the second and third type. Here they made almost no mistakes and based on my observation they mastered these exercise with confidence and pleasure.

12.3. Activities used for teaching grammar and word order

12.3.1. Activity 1

The following activity was designed to practice reflexive pronouns. The brothers were given set of cards, each card contained one part of speech. Personal pronouns were written in blue, verbs in green, reflective pronouns in red. The pupils task here was to form as much sentences, containing reflective pronoun, as possible with utilization of all cards given.

Example:

I He We You myself himself yourselves
excused liked hated saw ourselves

I hated myself He excused himself We liked ourselves

Observation

Both brothers found the use of different colours quite useful. It helped them to build up sentences, because the exercises for practice were often designed in such way that all colours used, had to appear in each sentence. The colour distinction was also used for practicing of nearly all grammar structures that were revised, however it has to be admitted that due to inconsistent use (which was caused by my lack of experience) of one particular colour a particular part of speech or grammar device, it was sometimes source of confusion for both brothers. Notwithstanding, although a little confused, the boys most of the time seemed to enjoy this kind of practice. It has to be pointed out that at the moment I realized my mistake I tried my best to be more consistent and these exercises, therefore, became more useful for both boys in the learning process.

12.3.2 Activity 2.

To practice word order, a sentence or phrase was written on a strip of paper. It was cut into smaller pieces, mixed and afterwards, the task was to put sentence together again. The cut sentences were kept in a box and used repeatedly for revision.

Observation

Accomplishment of this activity differed from sentence to sentence. When the sentences were kept short and simple it was not difficult to restore them back, on the other hand, when they were long it was a cause of difficulties and rather time consuming for both of the boys. However the phrases which had to be learnt by heart were thanks to this frequent practice easily memorized.

12.4. Output 2

Although the small group teaching took place only once a week for a period of 8 months, quite good results could be observed. Mark and Paul became more relaxed even in the course of normal English lessons. They reported that their attitude towards English became more positive and they also said that they were less stressed about their future language studies at a secondary school.

Their vocabulary considerably widened and they also became more proficient in reading in English. However it has to be said that although they mastered reading of quite long and difficult words, they still had difficulties with little and commonly used ones (as described in chapter 3.3).

On the other hand it has to be admitted that their spelling of words, according to my observation, improved only very little, and while handwriting they did many spelling mistakes, furthermore, based on my own perception, there was no chance for me to change the situation.

Notwithstanding it was said to me by their mother that at the secondary school they would be allowed to use for writing computers and spellcheckers.

When the tested modified exercises were concerned, what seemed to me to be most successful were the exercises used for learning new vocabulary. Positive change could be also observed when the white paper was changed for yellow (as recommended by BDA). The boys also reported that reading had become less demanding when the font was changed to *Arial*.

What both boys found particularly useful were new and difficult words recorded on the tape which was at boys' full disposal whenever needed. On the other hand they were not very keen to use multi-sensory techniques such as tracing in the air or sand.

When newly learned vocabulary was tested and revised in close exercises, good results could be observed when the text was familiar to Mark and Paul from the preceding lesson. On the other hand, when this testing was tried on an unfamiliar text, the boys used to get stuck on reading and comprehension of the context.

They were quite happy to use different colours for learning word order and grammar. It has to be point out here that the colours were also used for grammar presentation in the form of posters which were used in the whole class as well.

The box with the cut sentences was finally used there as extra activity for fasters pupils.

Far all activities described applies that there probably would be no such good results observed if the principles of overlearning were not incorporated (for more information see chapter 4.2). To go further, the more was overlearning used, the better results could be observed.

Finally it has to be said that in overall Mark and Paul did much better when using the accommodated materials than when working with their original textbook.

13. CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to discover how and to what extent can be made the language learning easier for pupils with SpLD via the use of modified and accommodated materials for language teaching and learning. Before the actual research could be conducted it was necessary to do the bibliography survey. It was important to obtain as many information as possible about the impact of SpLD on foreign language learning, what areas are most difficult for acquisition and what can be done to eliminate these problems.

The reason for choosing the problem of unsuitable materials for my thesis is because, according to the materials available, there has not been a similar study conducted before at our elementary schools. Also after attending a class oriented at problems of dyslexia, I became curious about the problems of children with dyslexia while they learn English. I wanted to find out whether it is possible to accommodate already used materials without spending on preparation ones lifetime.

As it has been already mentioned before, the kind of the textbook used for the whole grade, was not, based on my own perception, very appropriate for pupils with SpLD.

Therefore it was necessary to follow the recommendations of authorities which are specialized on SpLD, and to develop materials that would be in accordance with them. Finally these modified and accommodated materials had to be tested in practice and analyzed to what extent they are actually useful and helpful.

When these materials were tried and tested in practice, all of them proved to be to some extent useful. However with some of them there were better results observed than with others.

Very good results were observed, in spite what the boys reported, when the recommendations of BDA (British Dyslexia Association) were followed. These included, among others, the use of a yellow background for various activities and

the use of the font *Arial* for texts which were focused on reading and learning of new vocabulary.

For learning, especially of new vocabulary and grammar, were integrated principles of overlearning. In accordance with Thomson and Watkins (2000, 63), unless some time was spent each lesson going over materials already taught, 'memory fade' occurred.

Additionally, their statement that any new material needs to be presented frequently and in a number of ways was confirmed. The best results could be observed when, for example new vocabulary was presented in text and also in the form of posters, flashcards or exercises used for revision.

For the revision of new vocabulary were mostly used close exercises, which were also recommended by Thomson and Watkins (for more information see chapter 4.3.2) and which proved to be quite effective tool for testing and revision.

The suggestions of Gabor (for more see chapter 7.1.3) were also followed, and the vocabulary, before being actually taught, had been discussed in advance. Following the advice of Michalova (for more see chapter 4.3.2), the Czech translations of words were usually given.

Following the advice of Zelinkova (for more see chapter 4.3.2), Ott and Thomson and Watkins, the principles of multi-sensory techniques were employed.

In spite that multi-sensory activities are recommended by many authorities, Mark and Paul did not think these activities to be very helpful.

This was probably caused their personal perception, because they thought these activities to be just for small children. Based on my own observation, these were, in spite what the boys said, very useful and helpful in learning and teaching processes.

However they should probably be employed with regard to a particular age group. Based on my own observation it is not probably a very good idea to make for example teenagers to trace with their fingers in sand. Instead an assortment of

other activities that use different senses had to be provided. Such as listening, repetition and writing on a paper or blackboard.

The results of the study have shown that it is possible to obtain some positive results even with just little effort. Although extra time for preparation is a must, there is no need for a teacher to rewrite the whole textbook. Even as little as colourful large poster presenting new grammar structures can make difference.

Also many of the accommodated activities can be used within a heterogeneous group, because they may be useful for weaker pupils who have no dyslexia but who due to their lower intelligence may experience problems with learning as well.

Unfortunately, because of the time factor it was impossible for everything which was recommended in the theoretical part to be tried and tested in practice. No attention was for example paid to the phonic approach the problem of which would probably be rather interesting topic for different and selfcontained thesis and research.

Finally, it can be said that the findings of this study should provide readers with some insight into the problem of modification and accommodation of the ordinary materials used for language teaching and learning to meet the needs of pupils with dyslexia. It will hopefully help also to the teachers to realize that it takes only some extra effort to make learning of a foreign language easier and more pleasurable for many children with SpLD.

Resumé

Výuka jazyků se stala nezbytnou součástí moderního způsobu života, ale ne každý má pro osvojování cizího jazyka dobré předpoklady či nadání. Z tohoto důvodu by dnešní základní školy měly vycházet vstříc různorodým vzdělávacím potřebám všech žáků.

Naneštěstí, mezi těmito žáky je možné nalézt mnoho takových, kteří i přes průměrnou a vyšší inteligenci, dosahují na poli jazykového osvojování podprůměrných výsledků. Tito žáci se mnohdy mohou jevit jako líní s laxním postojem k výuce.

Opak je ale často pravdou, tito žáci investují do učení mnohem více energie nežli jejich spolužáci, ale často dosahují pouze nepatrných výsledků.

Z tohoto důvodu bývají tito, jinak inteligentní, žáci diagnostikováni jako mající specifické poruchy učení.

S pojmem SPU – specifické poruchy učení – se setkáváme stále častěji. Vzhledem k problémům s terminologií a s různorodostí formulací definice SPU je pravděpodobně vhodnější seznámit čtenáře s faktory, ve kterých se tyto definice shodují. SPU se projevuje v rozdílnosti mezi žakovým potenciálem pro učení a mezi tím, co se doopravdy naučí. Žáci s SPU mají neobvyklý rámec rozvoje, problémy s učением nejsou způsobeny okolnostmi, ve kterých se takto postižený nachází, a nejsou způsobeny mentální retardací nebo emočními problémy.

Výuku cizích jazyků pravděpodobně nejvíce ovlivňuje jedna ze specifických poruch učení – dyslexie.

Dyslexie se projevuje problémy v osvojování a používání psaní, čtení, poslechu, mluvení, reagování a matematických dovednostech.

Navzdory tomu, že se mnohé výzkumy pokoušely zjistit a identifikovat její možné příčiny, dodnes nebylo dosaženo na tomto poli uspokojivých výsledků.

Ačkoliv studium alespoň jednoho cizího jazyka je povinné na většině základních škol od 4. třídy, pro mnoho dětí, které mají problémy se zvládnutím mateřského jazyka, je výuka cizího jazyka maximálně stresující záležitostí. Zůstává tedy na učitelích a škole, aby bylo těmto dětem vycházeno maximálně vstřícně.

Vzhledem k tomu, že ne všechna cvičení v učebnici a pomůcky užívané pro výuku jsou vhodné pro děti s SPU, mohou být první vstřícné kroky provedeny formou úpravy a přizpůsobení některých učebních materiálů.

První, teoretická, část této práce vychází z poznatků jednotlivých českých i zahraničních autorů, kteří se zabývají problematikou SPU. Kromě knižních zdrojů byly využity též četné internetové zdroje, kterých je vzhledem k aktuálnosti tématu k dispozici nepřeberné množství.

První část této práce je zaměřena na popis hlavních problémů, které mají žáci s SPU při výuce anglického jazyka. Jsou zde popsány jejich problémy, které mohou mít během hodin anglického jazyka.

Dále se práce zabývá popisem symptomů SPU a jejich dopadem na výuku anglického jazyka. Následuje popis hlavních principů vyučování a zároveň s návrhy, jakým způsobem podpořit rozvoj nejdůležitějších jazykových dovedností u žáků s SPU.

Teoretická část je zakončena popisem diferenciovaného vyučování s ohledem na žáky s SPU a popisem úpravy a přizpůsobení materiálů pro výuku jazykových dovedností žáků s SPU.

Druhá, praktická, část vychází ve své podstatě z části teoretické. Jedná se o případovou studii založenou na empirickém výzkumu, který trval od září 2003 do května 2004. Cílem daného výzkumu bylo zjistit, jakým způsobem by se měly

běžně užívané materiály pro výuku anglického jazyka přizpůsobit potřebám žáků s SPU. Případová studie byla z menší části založena na diferenciaci výukových materiálů v jedné konkrétní třídě, ale také, a to hlavně, na výuce dvou žáků s SPU, kteří pocházeli z této třídy. V případě těchto žáků byly použity a otestovány předem připravené, upravené a přizpůsobené materiály.

Zmínění žáci byli bratři, navštěvující stejnou třídu – devátý ročník, kteří splňovali hlavní podmínky tohoto výzkumu, což znamená že: jako cizí jazyk studovali angličtinu, oba byli diagnostikováni s dyslexií již v raném dětství, měli vyšší nebo průměrnou inteligenci, byli žáky ve třídě, v níž jsem působila jako učitelka anglického jazyka a především měli zájem pracovat na svých jazykových dovednostech v AJ i za cenu svého volného času.

Výzkum upravených materiálů s těmito žáky probíhal jednou týdně po dobu osmi měsíců. Během této doby bylo zjištěno jaké úpravy, založené na poznacích uvedených v teoretické části, jsou nejvhodnější pro výuku jednotlivých jazykových dovedností.

Tyto upravené materiály byly především zaměřeny na zlepšení čtecích dovedností a rozšíření slovní zásoby chlapců, která byla před zahájením výzkumu značně omezena. Dále byl kladen důraz na zjištění, jakým způsobem by měly být upraveny materiály pro výuku gramatiky a slovosledu.

Velké zlepšení čtecích dovedností bylo zaznamenáno v okamžiku, kdy jsme na základě doporučení Britské dyslektické asociace začali používat žluté pozadí pro čtecí aktivity namísto bílého. Velkou pomocí také bylo, když žáci byli předem seznámeni s novou slovní zásobou, která byla různými způsoby procvičována v průběhu celé hodiny. Ačkoliv oba chlapci přistupovali s negativními pocity k začlenění multisenzorních technik pro výuku nových slov, bylo pozorováno, že osvojení nové a problematické slovní zásoby na jejich základě probíhalo rychleji a dosahovalo trvalejších výsledků.

Pro výuku gramatiky se osvědčilo použití různých barev pro jednotlivé slovní druhy a větné členy. Toto barevné rozlišení se ukázalo jako užitečné nejen při úpravě jednotlivých učebních aktivit, ale také při prezentaci nových gramatických jevů ve formě plakátů při výuce nejen těchto dvou žáků, ale také celé třídy.

Také mnohé poznatky spojené s výukou slovní zásoby mohly být použity pro výuku slabších žáků, kteří nebyli diagnostikováni s SPU.

Hlavní pohnutkou k výběru tohoto tématu bylo mé seznámení s touto problematikou v rámci volitelného předmětu, který mě tématem problematiky žáků s SPU zaujal natolik, že jsem se rozhodla získat hlubší poznatky. Doufala jsem také, že zjištění, jakým způsobem mohou být materiály pro výuku upraveny, budu schopna pomoci těmto dětem ve své další praxi.

Dále doufám, že výsledky mého šetření poskytnou jakémukoliv čtenáři této práce možnost nahlédnout do problematiky žáků s SPU a mnohý učitel získá alespoň malou představu o tom, které kroky mohou být učiněny, aby se velmi složitý proces osvojování cizího jazyka, stal pro tyto děti příjemnou činností, která přináší své výsledky.

Tato studie ukázala, že i malé změny v přístupu učitele a několik minut navíc věnovaných přípravě učebních materiálů, mohou vnést velké ulehčení do života těchto dětí.

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Appendix

Appendix 1A -Sample pages from Cambridge English for Schools

Appendix 1B - Sample pages from New Headway Elementary

Appendix 1C - The original Text from New Headway Elementary