

<b>Institution:</b> Lancaster University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26, Modern Languages and Linguistics		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Enhancing inclusive practices in language education: Specific learning difficulties and the learning of additional languages		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2008 to 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Judit Kormos Bimali Indrarathne	Professor Post-doctoral Research Fellow	January 2008 to present January 2017 to December 2017
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> August 2013 to December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Kormos and her team's research investigated how individuals with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) develop their second language skills and what instructional methods are effective in helping them to acquire a second language. They developed evidence-based language teacher education programmes from which over 60,000 teachers benefitted in terms of enhanced language teaching skills and knowledge and which has had an educational impact on approximately 500,000 language learners with SpLDs internationally. Based on the research, major international publishers of language teaching materials, global language testing organisations and teacher training institutions in Europe have introduced novel inclusive practices in language teaching and assessment of second language competence.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>In many contexts, being able to communicate in an additional language is just as essential as literacy or numeracy skills. Prior to Kormos and her team's work in this area, the language learning processes for students with additional needs had received limited attention. To ensure that learners with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs), who constitute approximately 10% of the student population, have access to education and the job market, and, in some cases, can perform regular daily activities, they need support in acquiring additional languages. The research programme investigated how students with SpLDs acquire additional languages and addresses this significant research gap and acute social and educational issue. Their work aims to develop effective institutional programmes, and has revealed how language learners with SpLDs acquire an additional language, what barriers the educational context presents to them and how these can be overcome. Their work primarily focussed on younger language learners (aged between 10 and 16 years) learning English as a foreign/second language in instructed classroom contexts, as they constitute the largest population of language learners today.</p> <p>The team's research was the first large-scale of its kind internationally and had the explicit aim of enhancing the inclusion of students with SpLDs in foreign language education [R1-R3]. The initial research was conducted between 2008 and 2010 in Hungary but has since been extended to other European contexts and has become international and cross-institutional. The research revealed the following insights:</p>		
<p>1. Students with SpLDs face disproportionate difficulties when learning a second language [R2, R3]. In a ground-breaking study, Kormos, Sarkadi and Csizér (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary) used a large-scale questionnaire to survey 1,182 school children aged between 13 and 14 with and without SpLDs. This was complemented with in-depth qualitative interviews of 20 language learners with SpLDs. They also investigated how teachers perceive the language learning challenges of students with SpLDs. The results highlighted that students with SpLDs face problems in developing accurate and fluent second language reading skills, and in</p>		

expanding their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. The project also concluded that learners with SpLDs often lose their motivation because of non-inclusive language teaching environments that do not take their specific needs into account [R1, R2].

2. Kormos, Csizér and Sarkadi conducted a multiple-site case study of 3 successful language teaching programmes for students with SpLDs in Hungary that provided evidence of the benefits of carefully structured language instruction that involves multiple sensory channels [R3].

3. As part of the project, the team also examined the access arrangements of international language testing organisations and interviewed 15 test-takers with SpLDs about their experiences during language exams. The study revealed inconsistencies in the way students with SpLDs are accommodated in language testing and highlighted candidates' challenges in accessing special exam arrangements offered by national and international language testing organisations.

4. In a series of studies Indrarathne and Kormos examined how lower working memory capacity and attention regulation abilities, both of which are characteristic of individuals with SpLDs affect learning of novel grammatical constructions in another language [R4, G1]. Using state of the art eye-tracking technology, they found that learners with less efficient cognitive processing skills benefit more from explicit teaching and need more practical opportunities to become successful language learners than those with higher levels of cognitive abilities.

5. Within the first phase of the *Dyslexia for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language* project between 2011 and 2013 [G2], Kormos and Nijakowska (University of Lodz, University of Warsaw) administered a large-scale survey to 500 language teachers in 15 European countries and established that approximately 80% of language teachers in Europe lacked appropriate knowledge about the nature of SpLDs (including dyslexia) and expertise in creating an inclusive language teaching environment.

6. In a series of projects in Slovenia and Hungary between (2017 and 2019), Kormos with Košak-Babuder, Ratajczak and Pižorn investigated the benefits of exam access arrangements, such as offering students with SpLDs the opportunity to listen to a text while reading [R5] and more recently the role of extended reading assessment time, in collaboration with the British Council [G3]. The results of their studies highlight the importance of accessible test design in ensuring that test-takers with SpLDs are not unfairly disadvantaged in second language assessment.

### 3. References to the research

[R1] Csizér, K., Kormos, J., and Sarkadi, Á. (2010). The dynamics of language learning motivation: Lessons from an interview study of dyslexic language learners. *Modern Language Journal*, 94, 470-484. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2010.01054.x> Peer-reviewed.

[R2] Kormos, J., Csizér, K., and Sarkadi, Á. (2010). The language learning experiences of students with dyslexia: Lessons from an interview study. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 2, 23-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501220802638306> Peer-reviewed.

[R3] Kormos, J. (2017). *The second language learning processes of students with specific learning difficulties*. London: Routledge. Held at HEI. Nominated for American Association of Applied Linguistics award in 2019. Peer-reviewed.

[R4] Indrarathne, B. and Kormos, J. (2018). The role of working memory in processing L2 input: Insights from eye-tracking. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 21(2), 355-374. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728917000098> Peer-reviewed.

[R5] Košak-Babuder, M., Kormos, J., Ratajczak, M., and Pižorn, K. (2019). The effect of read-aloud assistance on the text comprehension of dyslexic and non-dyslexic English language learners. *Language Testing*, 36(1), 51-75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532218756946> Peer-reviewed. Most frequently read article of the journal in 2020.

#### Peer-reviewed research grants:

[G1] Indrarathne (PI), Kormos (mentor), *Inclusion of learners with specific learning differences in teaching English as a foreign language: a teacher training project for Sri Lanka*, ESRC (GCRF) Postdoctoral Fellowships Scheme: (2017-2018), GBP96890; [R5]

[G2] Kormos (PI in UK), *Dyslexia for teachers of English as a foreign language: Phase 1*, European Commission – Comenius: (2011-2013) GBP224,134; [R4]

[G3] Kormos (PI), *Time-extension and the second language reading performance of children with different first language literacy profiles*, The British Council:(2018-2019) GBP13,809

#### **4. Details of the impact**

##### **Enhancing teachers' inclusive language teaching practices in Europe through the DysTEFL and ENGaGe projects**

Based on investigations into the nature of language learning difficulties in students with SpLDs, and the effectiveness of structured multi-sensory programs [R1-R3], Kormos continued to develop an innovative and evidence-based teacher-training course after she started employment with Lancaster University in 2008. This was done through collaborations with a team of Polish, Czech and Hungarian researchers and teacher educators in the European Commission-funded project *Dyslexia for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language* project (DysTEFL, between 2011 and 2016). The DysTEFL project achieved major impact in raising language teachers' awareness of inclusion and in equipping them with effective and up-to-date pedagogical tools to make language learning more accessible for students with SpLDs. Since the release of the DysTEFL project toolkits in 2013, approximately 200 language teachers from Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Greece and the UK have been trained face to face. 3,500 participants have undertaken the online self-study course, 20,000 people have downloaded the DysTEFL training booklets, and nearly 40,000 users have interacted with the self-study course materials. In feedback from post-course questionnaires all participating teachers reported that their confidence in applying inclusive language teaching practices had increased, and their pedagogical toolkits for working with language learners with SpLDs had been enriched [S1a]. In her post-course written feedback, one of the teachers said, *"It was an amazing and very insightful course; I have learnt a lot of useful things that I can use to my dyslexic pupils' advantage."* The project received a 'Success Story' award from the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, who acknowledged the impact and contribution of the project to policy-making in a number of European countries. The materials won the British Council's ELTon award in the 'Innovative Teacher Resources' category in 2015 [S1b]. The judges described the project as *"a much-needed course for teachers and one that addresses a gap in the market."*

The research insights describing specific characteristics of learners with SpLDs and the benefits of carefully structured multi-sensory teaching approaches [R1-R3, R5, R6] were also incorporated into an online teacher training module accompanying the digital English and German task bank during the ENGaGe project, and which targets young dyslexic language learners aged between 10 and 14 years. ENGaGe ran between 2017 and 2020 and was funded by the European Commission. The task bank includes a variety of innovative online tasks that provide a multi-sensory approach for language learners with SpLDs. The task bank and accompanying research-based teacher training module were developed in collaboration with teacher educators and software designers (Universities of Miskolc and Szeged and Navigate in Hungary, University of Warsaw, Poland, Masaryk University, Czech Republic). In 2019, 67 English- and German-language teachers from central Europe were trained in using this methodological toolkit. Since then, a further 500 users have accessed and completed tasks in this innovative online teacher education module. In the programme's follow-up survey, 86% of the teachers stated that they would apply the approaches introduced in the teacher training module in their teaching practices and 75% of the 67 teachers who tried out the task bank reported that it was useful in achieving their teaching aim and was engaging for learners with SpLDs. In their post-course evaluative survey, 80% of the 253 students described the task bank as motivating and useful [S2].

##### **Enabling teachers around the globe**

In 2015, Kormos developed the *Dyslexia and Foreign Language Learning MOOC* (via FutureLearn), which continues to attract large numbers of English and additional language teachers each year, dyslexic language learners and parents of children with SpLDs. Drawing on the team's research [R1,R3,R5,R6], the MOOC has communicated latest insights into the impact of SpLDs on language learning and effective teaching methods to 50,000 participants from over

100 countries (including India, Brazil, Uganda and Argentina). The course is now fully accredited in the UK and provides formal CPD for teachers (approximately 500 teachers annually in the UK). The MOOC has been incorporated as a core component of language teacher education programmes in Israel (Oranim College, 200 future teachers graduating each year) and Italy (University of Udine, 100 teachers each year) [S3]. A survey of MOOC participants conducted in 2017 by Kormos and Nijakowska [S4a] demonstrated that engagement with the research through the MOOC significantly and successfully increased language teachers' self-confidence in implementing inclusive language teaching practices and that teachers' attitudes to inclusion became significantly more positive. Feedback also demonstrated how uptake of the research has enhanced the language learning experiences and proficiency of students with SpLDs [S4b]. One of the 2018 MOOC participants stated *"the knowledge I have gained here has influenced me so deeply, that I already seem to subconsciously apply certain strategies to my teaching. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to take my teaching a step further and give students with SpLDs more opportunities to develop their skills and enjoy learning."*

### **Introducing inclusive language teaching practices in Sri Lanka**

Based on the research into the benefits of explicit language teaching and the importance of additional practice opportunities, Indrarathne disseminated research findings [R4] through a series of highly successful teacher training events across Sri Lanka in 2017 on behalf of the team. The teacher training materials were adapted from those of the DysTEFL project to meet the specific contextual needs in Sri Lanka. Indrarathne worked with 100 teacher educators and 192 language teachers to disseminate knowledge of the effects of SpLDs on second language learning and to help participants implement inclusive language teaching practices. In 2017, Kormos also delivered a workshop to 20 key teacher trainers, national exam developers, and members of the National Institute of Education on potential educational changes intended to foster inclusion in language teaching. A questionnaire and interview analysis showed that the teacher training programme increased teachers' knowledge of, and developed positive attitudes towards, SpLDs and verified their readiness to implement inclusive practices [S5a]. These events have highlighted the need for the implementation of inclusive language teaching practices at ministerial level, and subsequent government-level policy initiatives to acknowledge the needs of learners with disabilities in national exams and the design of language teaching materials in Sri Lanka. Alongside confirming these changes, the Assistant Commissioner of Examinations also reported that *"after the training, I used the assessment techniques discussed in the workshop in designing language tests which are used at national level in the country"*, with the potential to reach 200,000 of language students each year [S5b].

### **Raising awareness among educational influencers**

Drawing on her research into the effects of SpLDs on learning additional languages [R1-R3, R5, R6] Kormos has delivered teacher training workshops on teaching English to students with dyslexia between 2014 and 2019. In total, she has reached approximately 1,000 teachers and teacher trainers across Slovenia, Poland, Malta, Hungary, Italy, France, Spain, United Kingdom and Japan. These workshops and presentations served as a means of engagement to build connections between the research on language learners with SpLDs and primary- and secondary-school language teachers and in- and pre-service teacher educators at teacher training colleges and universities. The workshops and presentations provided access to expertise in inclusive teaching methods across a variety of contexts, thereby contributing to an expected improvement in language learning experiences and proficiency of students with SpLDs at the primary, secondary and tertiary education levels. The Associate Dean for Teacher Education at the University of Ljubljana stated that *"a close collaboration with Prof. Kormos has resulted in an increased awareness and enhanced knowledge of the needs of children with dyslexia in language learning among trainee teachers. A new generation of primary school language learners has already benefited and will continue to benefit from this enhanced awareness of inclusion"* [S6]. Kormos also worked with 30 teachers and 50 learners of various foreign languages in the Diplomatic Academy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office UK, whose head language teacher reported, *"The talk for staff and the workshop for teachers are important first step in helping us to factor in learning difficulties to our language training to ensure we are giving students the support they need to fulfil their potential"* [S7].

### **Enabling inclusive assessment practices**

The impact of our research on the beneficial role of special arrangements for students with SpLDs [R3, R6] also extends to the assessment of second language competence. This work has raised awareness of the need to create more inclusive language tests amongst major international language testing organisations. Kormos was invited to become expert consultant for Cambridge Assessment in 2018 (whose language tests cover approximately 30% of the market for language proficiency tests and are taken by 6million students worldwide). She was also invited to become an expert reviewer for Trinity College London in 2017 and Oxford University Press in 2016, on special arrangements for students with disabilities undertaking language proficiency tests. She developed a webinar for Cambridge Assessment on testing students with dyslexia in 2019, and the senior research and inclusion team had commenced integrating the research findings into their examination policies to ensure fair assessment opportunities and appropriate access arrangements for candidates with disabilities. However, plans were disrupted due to Covid-19, but are expected to start again in summer 2021.

### **Promoting inclusion in educational publishing; developing language teaching materials**

In 2018, a position paper and guidance based on the research was developed by Oxford University Press (OUP) and Cambridge University Press (CUP) for decision-makers in English language teaching [R1-3, R5, R6]. OUP said: *“Since its launch, the paper has been downloaded over 9,000 times by teachers, school managers, policy makers and ministries of education. Its recommendations have and continue to inform discussions with decision makers and curricula developers in various parts of the world”* [S8]. Both OUP and CUP, which are amongst the largest English language teaching publishing houses in the world, applied the evidence-informed recommendations to make language teaching coursebooks more inclusive, and to better meet the needs of language learners with SpLDs. In 2020, Kormos delivered 2 workshops for CUP’s course development team. *“The workshops gave us hands-on advice on how we can design and develop our language teaching coursebooks so that they become more accessible for students with a variety of needs. The coursebooks to which we will apply these principles and modifications are/will be used by millions of learners around the globe, including our key markets of Spain, Italy, Turkey, China, Mexico and Brazil”* [S9].

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- [S1a] Dystefl final project reports containing results on post-course teacher surveys and qualitative comments on impact on teachers (December 2013); [S1b] British Council’s ELTon award and testimonial from the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the EC on the impact of DysTEFL project on policy making and teacher education (2014)
- [S2] ENGaGE project analysis of questionnaire on impact on teacher knowledge and expertise and language learning engagement (2017)
- [S3] Statements from professors at the University of Udine (Italy) and Oranim College (Israel)
- [S4a] Evidence on MOOC impact published: Kormos, J., & Nijakowska, J. (2017). Inclusive practices in teaching students with dyslexia: Language teachers’ concerns, attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs on a MOOC. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 68, 30-41; [S4b] MOOC feedback analysis document on the impact on teacher expertise, self-confidence, attitudes and benefit for language learners with SpLDs (2015)
- [S5a] Impact on teacher awareness and expertise evidenced in Indrarathne, B. (2019). Accommodating learners with dyslexia in English language teaching in Sri Lanka: Teachers’ knowledge, attitudes, and challenges. *TESOL Quarterly*, 53(3), 630-654; [S5b] Impact on educational, policy, teacher education and national assessment in Sri Lanka from Assistant Commissioner of Examination (2020)
- [S6] Testimonial from the Associate Dean for Teacher Education, University of Ljubljana on the impact on teacher education, teacher expertise and inclusive language teaching (2020)
- [S7] Head of the Languages Team of the Diplomatic Academy of Foreign and Commonwealth Office on impact on language teaching and student achievement
- [S8] Testimonial on the impact on educational publishing and teacher education from a publisher of the Professional Development team of Oxford University Press (March, 2020)
- [S9] Testimonial on the impact of educational publishing from the Senior Research Manager of Cambridge University Press (April, 2020)