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Dyslexia awareness among English language teachers in Türkiye

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Abstract

It is estimated that 10% of the world's population are dyslexic, and the ratio of dyslexia may be up to 20% in some countries. Considering this rate and the challenges that many dyslexic learners face when learning a foreign language in the classroom, it is crucial for language teachers to be aware of such challenges. Through an online questionnaire, this study seeks to understand whether English language teachers in Türkiye are well prepared to meet the particular educational needs of dyslexic language learners by implementing effective inclusive teaching methods. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Findings indicate that many English language teachers are not prepared enough to teach students with dyslexia. To overcome the difficulties experienced, teacher education programmes may be enhanced with additional activities and strategies to prepare novice teachers, while the teachers in the field are supported with more in-service teacher training education such as seminars, webinars and workshops given by experts to increase their awareness of the needs of dyslexic language learners.

KEYWORDS
dyslexia, dyslexic learners, English language teachers, language teaching, Türkiye

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1 | INTRODUCTION

When we examine the name dyslexia, the Greek words for dyslexia are *dys*, which means difficulty or malfunction, and *lexis*, which means language. Simply put, dyslexia is a sort of linguistic difficulty. Due to its dimensionality, which allows symptoms to range from moderate to severe, and the fact that it represents an underlying notion that is not readily apparent, dyslexia is difficult to explain (Fletcher et al., 2007) and it is challenging to identify children with dyslexia (Snowling et al., 2020). The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) (2002) defines dyslexia as a particular learning problem with neurological roots that affects up to one in five children. In some educational settings, learning disability or special learning disability are used in place of the sometimes controversial term dyslexia (Grünke & Cavendish, 2016). Poor spelling and decoding skills, as well as difficulty with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, are all symptoms of dyslexia. These issues are often brought on by a phonological impairment in language, which is frequently unanticipated in light of other cognitive skills. Problems with reading comprehension and a lack of reading experience, which might hamper the development of vocabulary and background information, are possible secondary effects. It is quite unlikely that two dyslexic people would experience the same set of symptoms, and research has even shown that a dyslexic person's symptoms may change from day to day. In terms of language development, it is considered that dyslexic readers with relative impairment in their first language (L1) are likely to experience a similar range of difficulty in their second language (L2). Given the long-debated transfer effect from L1 to L2 in the literature (Cummins, 1983; James, 1980), people with dyslexia can anticipate difficulty learning a second language. The importance of giving special education students equitable and appropriate chances to acquire a second or foreign language cannot be overstated.

Due to dyslexia being one of the most prevalent types of learning difficulties, there have been numerous studies conducted to investigate the challenges associated with dyslexia. However, most empirical evidence regarding the academic outcomes of students with dyslexia is primarily derived from English-speaking countries (Tops et al., 2023). Although dyslexia is one of the most prevalent types of learning difficulties, research that focuses on dyslexia is low in Türkiye (Balcı, 2017) compared to research that comes from countries in North America or Europe, including the emergence of the concept of dyslexia (McBride et al., 2022), which can be seen as an obstacle to exploring the challenges dyslexic individuals face and possible remediation for them in a global sense. To add a modest contribution to this issue, we thought that an investigation of language teachers' perspectives would enlighten the discussion and bring perspective to the problems given how little research has been done from language teachers' perspectives in Türkiye and relatively outside Türkiye in relation to dyslexia. In light of this thought, this study aims to gain a better understanding of the awareness and preparedness of English language teachers in Türkiye in relation to dyslexia and dyslexic learners.

2 | DYSLEXIA AND LANGUAGE TEACHING

In a foreign language education context, dyslexic learners' learning difficulties may make it challenging for them to develop their language skills. In this regard, although dyslexic learners require extra support for their studies (Zawadka et al., 2021), they are part of mainstream education and exposed to foreign language education like their peers. The elements of language learning are intricate and more challenging for dyslexic learners. Consequently, students who are dyslexic are prone to experiencing numerous issues when learning foreign languages (Schneider & Crombie, 2012; Tsakalidou, 2022). Dyslexic language learners additionally run the danger of losing interest in learning foreign languages (Kormos & Cziser, 2010), developing symptoms of foreign language anxiety (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991), and having low self-esteem due to their frequent sense of failure (Crombie, 1999; Stevani & Tarigan, 2022).

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Despite the fact that dyslexia is a prevalent learning difficulty, few language teachers appear to be aware of it (Fišer & Kałdonek-Crnjaković, 2022; Hayes, 2000; Lahiouel, 2019). Teachers can have serious misconceptions regarding dyslexia and little knowledge of the condition (Peltier et al., 2022; Wadlington & Wadlington, 2005). Some teachers may even have a negative attitude towards the word 'dyslexic', which could lead them to have lower expectations for these children and treat them differently than other pupils (those without learning disabilities). Individuals with dyslexia are seldom consulted regarding their perspectives and emotions concerning the assistance they have received in an educational setting and they are usually overlooked (Johan Øgaard et al., 2022). Even accomplished and confident dyslexic learners suffer from unjust treatment, prejudice, neglect, and humiliation at school, according to Edwards' (1994) study.

3 | INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY FOR DYSLEXIC LEARNERS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Inclusive teaching starts with the very firm belief that not every learner is the same. Recognizing and addressing students' various learning needs and characteristics, expanding chances for active learning and involvement by changing the learning environment with more focus on the student, and ensuring their equal access to high-quality education are all elements of inclusive teaching (Forlin, 2013; Loreman et al., 2010; Molbaek, 2018; Schwab et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2013). The same as their counterparts without dyslexia, dyslexic foreign language learners should benefit from such a supportive and inspiring learning environment.

Two underlying factors make up the construct of perceived language teacher preparedness to include dyslexics in their classes: (1) understanding of dyslexia and self-efficacy in implementing inclusive instructional strategies with dyslexic learners; and (2) attitude towards inclusion (Nijakowska et al., 2020). Teachers are better equipped to meet the requirements of learners when they are aware of the nature and symptoms of dyslexia (Williams & Lynch, 2010). Their attitudes are important, but their understanding of dyslexia is more crucial (Al-Fadley et al., 2018; Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2010).

It should be noted that over the past ten years, a wider variety of publications have been made about theoretical and practical aspects of dyslexia and learning a foreign language; however, each topic needs to be examined thoroughly. This is especially true for teacher training for inclusive education. Despite the obvious need for research on how language teachers meet the needs of dyslexic language learners, teachers' awareness of dyslexia is one of the neglected issues in English language teaching (ELT). Although there are a growing number of studies on dyslexic foreign language learners in the reviewed literature (Crombie, 1999; Ganschow & Sparks, 2000; Mohamadzadeh et al., 2020; Rabia & Salfety, 2021), very little research has taken place into understanding English language teachers' awareness and preparedness to cater to the needs of dyslexic learners. Among the limited number of studies on teachers, it has been noted that there is one longitudinal study that specifically addressed dyslexia and teacher preparation in an international context. Following the online training, participants' attitudes and beliefs were shown to be much more optimistic, according to this longitudinal study (Kormos & Nijakowska, 2017). In another study, Nijakowska et al. (2018) explored how demographic factors affected English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers' perceptions of their readiness to incorporate dyslexic learners in regular classes in Greece, Cyprus, and Poland. The results showed that Greek educators think they are more ready for inclusion than their Polish and Cypriot counterparts, while pre-service educators think they are more ready than in-service educators. The DysTEFL-Needs Analysis Questionnaire developed by Nijakowska et al. (2018) is notable for its meticulous data collection and rigorous questionnaire design. In another study, Nijakowska (2019) emphasized that foreign language instructors must possess a variety of skills and pertinent knowledge that may not have been covered in their teacher training programmes in order to successfully utilize inclusive teaching approaches. In her study, Reraki (2022) investigated how inclusive practices (dyslexia-friendly) affected both dyslexic and non-dyslexic students in EFL lessons in primary

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education in Greece. Findings pointed to the need for inclusive improvements in language pedagogy and proposed that evidence-based interventions can enhance the field of inclusion for language learners with dyslexia. Tribushinina et al. (2022) sought to figure out if explicit spelling training, based on a direct comparison of L1 Dutch and L2 English spelling, assists dyslexic EFL students in developing their spelling abilities. According to their research, even a brief intervention based on the explicit teaching of spelling principles and cross-linguistic comparisons can help students with dyslexia strengthen their spelling abilities in a foreign language. Indrarathne (2019) also looked at the difficulties instructors can have while implementing inclusive practices in their settings. The teacher training programme was able to alter teachers' unfavourable attitudes towards dyslexia, enhance their knowledge of dyslexia and inclusion strategies and increase their preparedness to use inclusive classroom management practices, according to questionnaire and interview data.

As for the national side, in Türkiye, research investigating the problem of dyslexia has been limited (Özkardeş, 2013), and research on dyslexia studies typically concentrates on Turkish students' primary and special education and mostly focuses on the views and experiences of students who have literacy problems in their mother tongue (Balcı, 2017) or the problems dyslexic learners faced in an EFL context (Coskun & Mitrani, 2020). There is also a recent study, an MA thesis by Dönüş (2022), who conducted a comprehensive evaluation of previous research on dyslexia and language teaching. As for teachers' preparedness, the majority of the available research in Türkiye measures the primary school teachers' understanding of dyslexia (Akçay, 2014; Altun et al., 2011; Altuntaş, 2010; Doğan, 2013; Yurdakal, 2014). Research on language teachers' awareness of dyslexia is missing in the reviewed literature. In the study of Ertaş (2022), teachers' awareness regarding students with learning difficulties is investigated. The study included 174 teachers from both state and private schools, and the results revealed that teachers' awareness regarding students with learning difficulties as well as strategies to cope with such difficulties are inadequate to support these students. In addition, it was stated that there was a positive, low-level significant relationship between teachers' knowledge levels and self-efficacy. In another study that investigated homeroom teachers' efficacy regarding learning difficulties by Çoğaltay and Çetin (2020), it was revealed that teachers' knowledge of learning difficulties is inadequate, what they already know about learning difficulties is incomplete and they are not competent enough to guide students with learning difficulties. In the study of Kodan (2020), homeroom teachers' knowledge regarding reading difficulties students encounter is examined. The results revealed that teachers' knowledge of reading difficulty is inadequate, and they attribute the causes of this problem to families. Teachers also stated in this study that they do not evaluate their students' developmental processes. In the study of Ketenoğlu-Kayabaşı (2019), it is stated that teachers had sufficient knowledge about reading difficulty but failed to facilitate this knowledge in practice. Despite the variety in the research related to dyslexia with homeroom teachers, research on language teachers' awareness of dyslexia is missing in the reviewed literature.

Considering the education individuals with dyslexia receive through teachers, to the best of our knowledge, there is not any study that looks at the awareness and preparedness of English language teachers in relation to dyslexia in Türkiye and in the reviewed literature, there is very little research that examines language teachers' preparedness in relation to dyslexia in the international context. Yet, every child's access to a balanced curriculum includes foreign language learning (Essex & MacAskill, 2020). To fill the void in the literature and identify the best and most flexible solutions to reach these learners via teachers, this study finds it vital to develop the necessary roadmap by conducting more research to explore ways to help these learners overcome the challenges they face by exploring the views of language teachers. Hence, to explore teachers' understanding of dyslexia and examine the awareness and preparedness of English language teachers in Türkiye, the research questions of this study are formed as follows:

1. To what extent are EFL teachers in Türkiye aware of dyslexia?
2. Are English teachers in Türkiye prepared for teaching dyslexic learners? If so, how?

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4 | METHODOLOGY

4.1 | Data collection tools

The relationship between dyslexia and language teaching has not received much attention in Türkiye, as the literature review above indicates. Therefore, at the time of this study, the DysTEFL-Needs Analysis Questionnaire used in Nijakowska et al.'s (Nijakowska et al., 2018) study was a recent and detailed scale that has also been shown to be valid and reliable in their research. Using the DysTEFL-Needs Analysis Questionnaire developed by Nijakowska et al. (2018), an online descriptive survey-type study was carried out to look into the understanding of dyslexia among English language teachers in Türkiye. Survey-type studies aim to describe the subject or the person in question in their own conditions as they appear (Karasar, 2010, p. 77). In this study, the questionnaire is made up of four parts. In the first part, part A, there are items regarding background information about teachers, such as what grade they are teaching, their teaching experience and their degree. In part B, there are 24 items (6-point Likert scale) which investigate accommodating the learning needs of EFL learners with dyslexia—TEPID (Teacher of English Preparedness to Include Dyslexics Scale). The items in this part of the scale relate to EFL teachers' beliefs about how prepared they are to include dyslexic students learning English in mainstream classrooms. There were items such as checking how much English teachers were familiar with the learning needs and difficulties of dyslexic language learners and how well they could meet their needs. The third part of the scale, part C, consists of four questions about teachers' prior dyslexia education, inclusive classroom methods, and future professional development requirements. The questions on the ideal training structure, content/topics, tasks, and activities allowed participants to choose from a variety of options. In the last section of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to add their further comments if they had any. In Nijakowska et al.'s study, the DysTEFL-Needs Analysis Scale's reliability for individual statements ranged from 0.80 to 0.93, which reveals a high level of internal consistency (Dörnyei, 2010, 94).

4.2 | Data analysis

The collected data were analysed employing descriptive analysis using the statistical programme for social sciences (SPSS version 22.0), which tries to define and explain the determined subject directly. The interpretation of the data collected in the descriptive analysis approach can be presented through predetermined themes or the questions and dimensions used in the data acquisition process. This analysis process is carried out in four stages: 'creating a framework for descriptive analysis, processing the data according to the thematic framework, defining the findings and interpreting the findings' (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, 239–240). These steps were taken into account in the descriptive analysis process of this study.

4.3 | Participants

Participants in the study are 180 English language teachers in Türkiye. For the purpose of this study, we use the term 'English language teachers' to describe teachers who work for the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Türkiye in state or private schools. Purposive and convenience sampling were used in the selection of the participants. English language teachers were given a scale to fill out, asking them about their knowledge of dyslexia, whether they are ready to cater to the needs of dyslexic students and what they need for future teacher training. Demographic information about the teachers gathered from part A of the scale is given in Table 1.

Apart from collecting demographic data, the participants were questioned about whether or not they had dyslexic learners in their classes. Participants' experience of teaching classes where there are no dyslexic learners has the highest percentage with 75% ($n = 135$). Some participants provided more than one response: the number of participants

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TABLE 1 Demographic information about the teachers.

Variables	*N*	Percentage
Gender		
Male	43	23.9
Female	137	76.1
Age		
45+	30	16.7
36–44	76	42.2
26–35	69	38.3
25–	5	2.8
Completed level of education		
BA	115	63.8
MA	55	30.6
PhD	10	5.6
Type of school teachers work at		
Private	53	29.4
State	127	70.6
Level of schools teachers work at[a]		
High school	92	51.1
Secondary school	74	41.1
Primary school	41	22.7
Kindergarten	10	5.5
Public education centre	4	2.2
One to one tuition	13	7.2

[a]Given that MoNE teachers in Türkiye may be working at many school levels concurrently, some participants provided more than one answer.

who have taught classes where there are some dyslexic learners is 33.9% ($n=61$), one-to-one sessions for students with dyslexia are 5% ($n=9$), classes with students who are exempted from assessment are 2.8% ($n=5$) and special classes for students with dyslexia are 1.7% ($n=3$). Although the number of participants in private schools is lower than that in state schools, a higher proportion of teachers in private schools have recognized the existence of dyslexic learners in their classrooms. This may be linked to the smaller class sizes in private schools in Türkiye, affording teachers more time to identify individual student characteristics and address their potential needs. It should be reminded that there may also be students who may not be diagnosed with dyslexia due to the families' considering dyslexia and other special needs as stigmatizing their children and resisting to get their children examined. Some other reasons might be children not showing any obvious signs of dyslexia, therefore continuing their life unnoticed and parents' and teachers' not being aware of the symptoms of dyslexia as well as being ignorant.

5 | FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, English language teachers' preparedness to include students with dyslexia will be discussed. To make the B section of the questionnaire easier to read, the 24 questions will be presented in three separate tables. In Table 2, their beliefs about the learning needs of EFL learners with dyslexia can be found.

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Based on the findings shown in Table 2, it is intriguing to discover that 8.9% ($n=16$) of the teachers do not believe English language teachers should have high expectations for their learners with dyslexia, which may be interpreted that these teachers are not aware of the capabilities of dyslexic learners and their potential. In the reviewed literature, Snowling (2012) states that 'a good starting point for developing an intervention is understanding the causes of a disorder' (p. 12). As a result, it is crucial that teachers know both the causes of dyslexia and the evidence-based interventions that have been shown to be helpful for dyslexic language learners to help them realize their potential. If teachers are equipped with this knowledge, they will be able to assist their students efficiently. Another notable finding is that a high percentage (59.4%) of participants expressed a strong belief in the importance of collaboration between language teachers and parents/families of dyslexic learners. Given the complexities of supporting dyslexic students, this strong endorsement of collaboration aligns with a growing body of research highlighting the effectiveness of family-school partnerships in dyslexia education (Ross, 2019; Yildiz et al., 2012).

In Table 3, English language teachers' familiarity with the learning needs of EFL learners with dyslexia can be seen.

It is interesting to note in the findings that more than 70% ($n=129$) of the teachers believe that dyslexic learners benefit from attending regular classes in mainstream education, but only 16.7% ($n=30$) of them are familiar with the difficulties learners with dyslexia experience in foreign language learning and 14.4% ($n=26$) of them are not familiar with their needs at all. The findings also indicate that the number of teachers who do not know what to do if they think that one of their students is dyslexic is relatively high with 8.9% ($n=16$). Yet the number of teachers who are not familiar with the accommodations that dyslexic learners are entitled to in taking foreign language proficiency exams is also moderate with 13.9% ($n=25$). It should be highlighted that teachers who are unaware of dyslexia frequently fail to implement research-based teaching methods, which has a negative impact on pupils' academic performance and attendance at school (Seidenberg, 2013).

Also, the number of teachers who are not familiar with the local educational legislation/policy concerning learners with dyslexia is moderate with 15% ($n=27$). This number is more significant, especially when the number of teachers who believe that learners should be in mainstream education is considered. This may also be interpreted as teachers' not being aware of the rights of dyslexic learners. This is in line with the research in the field suggesting that many teachers possess misconceptions about dyslexia (Mather et al., 2020; Washburn et al., 2014).

The ability of English language teachers to meet the needs of dyslexic EFL students is shown in Table 4.

The findings in Table 4 suggest that English language teachers were least confident in their ability to provide differentiated instruction to cater for the individual needs of dyslexic learners. Also, the participants expressed challenges when it comes to adapting tasks/assignments for the individual learning needs of dyslexic learners. In this regard, English language teachers may need more training and support in differentiated instruction for dyslexic language learners. Despite the unequal distribution of participants between private schools and state schools, teachers in private schools seem to exhibit confidence in their capacity to address the needs of dyslexic language learners.

5.1 | Professional training needs on EFL and dyslexia

Professional training requirements were the subject of four queries (6-point Likert scale) on dyslexia and EFL. The first part of this section discusses prior education and outlines the need for additional teacher education. The final three inquiries centred on the structure and content of the course (they were all allowed for the selection of multiple answers). The given responses for the first part of this section can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5 demonstrates that 75% of the in-service teachers claimed they did not learn about EFL and dyslexia in courses provided by colleges, universities, and teacher preparation programmes (39.4% of teachers

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TABLE 2 English language teachers' beliefs about the learning needs of EFL learners with dyslexia.

Statements	Definitely not true of me	Mostly not true of me	Somewhat not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Mostly true of me	Definitely true of me	*M*	SD
I believe foreign language learners with dyslexia benefit from attending regular classes in mainstream education.	4.4% (*n* = 8)	6.7% (*n* = 12)	17.2% (*n* = 31)	33.9% (*n* = 61)	21.7% (*n* = 39)	16.1% (*n* = 29)	4.1	1.30
I believe foreign language learners with dyslexia need adjustments in the mainstream language classroom.	1.7% (*n* = 3)	2.2% (*n* = 4)	8.8% (*n* = 16)	16.1% (n = 29)	30.6% (*n* = 55)	40.6% (*n* = 73)	4.93	1.17
I believe teacher behaviour in a language classroom influences dyslexic learners' self-esteem.	0.6% (*n* = 1)	–	7.2% (*n* = 13)	14.4% (*n* = 26)	25% (*n* = 45)	52.8% (*n* = 95)	5.21	1.004
I believe foreign language teachers should have high expectations for their learners with dyslexia.	8.9% (*n* = 16)	18.3% (*n* = 33)	25.6% (*n* = 46)	22.2% (*n* = 40)	13.3% (*n* = 24)	11.7% (*n* = 21)	3.47	1.45
I believe developing self-determination in foreign language learners with dyslexia is important.	0.6% (*n* = 1)	4.4% (*n* = 8)	8.3% (*n* = 15)	21.7% (*n* = 39)	29.4% (*n* = 53)	35.6% (*n* = 64)	4.81	1.16
I believe foreign language teachers should differentiate their approach to learners.	1.1% (*n* = 2)	1.7% (*n* = 3)	5.6% (*n* = 10)	18.8% (*n* = 34)	27.8% (*n* = 50)	45% (*n* = 81)	5.05	1.09
I believe it is important for foreign language teachers to collaborate with parents and families of their dyslexic learners.	0.6% (*n* = 1)	2.2% (*n* = 4)	6.7% (*n* = 12)	12.2% (*n* = 22)	18.8% (*n* = 34)	59.4% (*n* = 107)	5.25	1.10
I believe collaborative teamwork with a range of educational professionals is important for teachers of foreign language learners with dyslexia.	1.1% (*n* = 2)	3.9% (*n* = 7)	8.9% (*n* = 16)	13.9% (*n* = 25)	26.7% (*n* = 48)	45.5% (*n* = 82)	4.97	1.21

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TABLE 3 Familiarity with the learning needs of EFL learners with dyslexia.

Statements	Definitely not true of me	Mostly not true of me	Somewhat not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Mostly true of me	Definitely true of me	*M*	SD
I am familiar with the difficulties learners with dyslexia experience in foreign language learning.	14.4% (*n* = 26)	20.6% (*n* = 37)	12.8% (*n* = 23)	18.8% (n = 34)	16.7% (*n* = 30)	16.7% (*n* = 30)	3.52	1.69
I am familiar with the signs of dyslexia.	9.4% (*n* = 17)	10.6% (*n* = 19)	20.5% (*n* = 37)	21.7% (*n* = 39)	25% (*n* = 45)	12.8% (*n* = 23)	3.80	1.48
I am familiar with the principles of multisensory teaching and learning.	3.9% (*n* = 7)	12.2% (*n* = 22)	17.7% (*n* = 32)	22.8% (*n* = 41)	26.7% (*n* = 48)	16.7% (*n* = 30)	4.06	1.39
I am familiar with the nature of dyslexia.	8.3% (*n* = 15)	13.9% (*n* = 25)	18.3% (*n* = 33)	27.2% (*n* = 49)	20.6% (*n* = 37)	11.7% (*n* = 21)	3.72	1.44
I know what to do if I think that one of my students is dyslexic.	8.9% (*n* = 16)	15.6% (*n* = 28)	20.5% (*n* = 37)	25.6% (*n* = 46)	20% (*n* = 36)	9.4% (*n* = 17)	3.60	1.43
I am familiar with other learning difficulties often associated with dyslexia.	10% (*n* = 18)	19.4% (*n* = 35)	21.7% (*n* = 39)	26.1% (*n* = 47)	16.1% (*n* = 29)	6.7% (*n* = 12)	3.38	1.39
I am familiar with the accommodations that learners with dyslexia are entitled to in taking foreign language proficiency exams.	13.9% (*n* = 25)	13.9% (*n* = 25)	21.1% (*n* = 38)	23.9% (*n* = 43)	17.2% (*n* = 31)	10% (*n* = 18)	3.46	1.52
I am familiar with the local educational legislation/policy concerning learners with dyslexia.	15% (*n* = 27)	22.8% (*n* = 41)	18.8% (*n* = 34)	23.9% (*n* = 43)	13.9% (*n* = 25)	5.6% (*n* = 10)	3.15	1.45

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TABLE 4 The ability of English language teachers to cater to the learning needs of EFL learners with dyslexia.

Statements	Definitely not true of me	Mostly not true of me	Somewhat not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Mostly true of me	Definitely true of me	*M*	SD
I can give feedback to learners with dyslexia in such a way that it boosts their self-esteem.	7.2% (*n* = 13)	15.6% (*n* = 28)	17.2% (*n* = 31)	26.1% (*n* = 47)	20.6% (*n* = 37)	13.3% (*n* = 24)	3.77	1.46
I can provide differentiated instruction to cater for the individual needs of learners with dyslexia.	5.6% (*n* = 10)	17.2% (*n* = 31)	22.8% (*n* = 41)	29.4% (*n* = 53)	13.9% (*n* = 25)	11.1% (*n* = 20)	3.62	1.36
I can modify the way teaching materials are presented to accommodate individual learning needs of learners with dyslexia.	7.22% (*n* = 13)	15% (*n* = 27)	17.22% (*n* = 31)	30% (*n* = 54)	19.44% (*n* = 35)	11.11% (*n* = 20)	3.72	1.41
I can personalize assessment techniques to evaluate my dyslexic language learners' progress.	6.7% (*n* = 12)	15.6% (*n* = 28)	18.8% (*n* = 34)	27.8% (*n* = 50)	22.8% (*n* = 41)	8.3% (*n* = 15)	3.69	1.37
I can help foreign language learners with dyslexia to develop effective learning strategies.	5.6% (*n* = 10)	11.7% (*n* = 21)	23.9% (*n* = 43)	28.3% (*n* = 51)	21.1% (*n* = 38)	9.4% (*n* = 17)	3.76	1.32
I can foster autonomy in foreign language learners with dyslexia.	4.4% (*n* = 8)	12.2% (*n* = 22)	20% (*n* = 36)	33.9% (*n* = 61)	20.6% (*n* = 37)	8.9% (*n* = 16)	3.80	1.27
I can manage the classroom environment to cater for individual learning needs of learners with dyslexia.	6.1% (*n* = 11)	13.3% (*n* = 24)	18.9% (*n* = 34)	31.7% (*n* = 57)	18.9% (*n* = 34)	11.1% (*n* = 20)	3.77	1.36
I can differentiate tasks/assignments to cater for individual learning needs of learners with dyslexia.	8.3% (*n* = 15)	16.7% (*n* = 30)	17.2% (*n* = 31)	25% (*n* = 45)	23.3% (*n* = 42)	9.4% (*n* = 17)	3.66	1.44

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TABLE 5 Professional training needs of English language teachers on EFL and dyslexia.

	Statements	Definitely not true of me	Mostly not true of me	Somewhat not true of me	Somewhat true of me	Mostly true of me	Definitely true of me	*M*	SD
C1.1	I learned about how to teach English to learners with dyslexia in my courses at college/university/teacher training institutions.	39.4% (*n* = 71)	20% (*n* = 36)	15.5% (*n* = 28)	10.6% (*n* = 19)	8.9% (*n* = 16)	5.6% (*n* = 10)	2.46	1.56
C1.2	I learned about how to teach English to learners with dyslexia on my own from available resources.	20.5% (*n* = 37)	15% (*n* = 27)	18.3% (*n* = 33)	20.6% (*n* = 37)	16.7% (*n* = 30)	8.9% (*n* = 16)	3.34	1.61
C1.3	I feel the need for more information on the language teaching methods effective with dyslexic learners.	2.2% (*n* = 4)	3.9% (*n* = 7)	8.9% (*n* = 16)	14.4% (*n* = 26)	20% (*n* = 36)	50.6% (*n* = 91)	4.97	1.31
C1.4	I am interested in further training in the area of teaching English to learners with dyslexia.	3.3% (*n* = 6)	6.1% (*n* = 11)	12.2% (*n* = 22)	18.9% (*n* = 34)	22.2% (*n* = 40)	37.2% (*n* = 67)	4.62	1.41

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strongly agreed with this claim), while only 5.6% of respondents strongly agreed that the courses offered as a part of their initial or ongoing professional development helped them learn more about EFL and dyslexia. When compared to teachers in state schools, more teachers in private schools feel that they have acquired knowledge on teaching English to dyslexic learners through their university or teacher training courses. It can be because of compulsory professional development opportunities for private school teachers, while continuing professional development is somehow voluntary for state school teachers. 46.2% of respondents acknowledged that they learned about teaching EFL to dyslexic students through available materials and through self-education. The results demonstrate that inclusive methods for dyslexic foreign language learners are not sufficiently covered in pre-service foreign language teacher training programs. The lack of readiness to teach dyslexic foreign language learners in inclusive classrooms as reported by English language teachers in this study may therefore be significantly attributed to the insufficient (in aspects of quantity and quality) curriculum content regarding dyslexia and inclusion, along with the limited interaction and teaching experience with dyslexic learners during practicum.

While 50.6% of teachers were determined to learn more, 34.4% of teachers (20% of teachers mostly agreed with this claim) felt they needed more information on how to teach language to dyslexic students. In a similar vein, Erdeljac and Franc (2012) draw attention to the issue of inadequate and insufficient dyslexia education as well as techniques for working with dyslexic students. Research repeatedly demonstrates that teachers' views towards inclusive education are significantly influenced by the knowledge they acquire via initial education and professional development (Avramidis et al., 2000). While the gender balance among teachers is uneven in this study, female educators have expressed a greater inclination to seek information to support dyslexic students. Similarly, 41.1% of teachers expressed some interest in taking additional training on EFL, dyslexia, and inclusive practices, while 37.2% were adamant about enrolling in professional development courses in this field. The aforementioned results, which are in line with earlier studies on the training requirements for EFL teachers, unequivocally demonstrate the high need in this field for professional development opportunities. Unfortunately, teachers are not sufficiently educated to work with students with dyslexia (Martan et al., 2015).

According to earlier studies, the vast majority of study participants acknowledged a definite need for more training, regardless of the country where teachers taught or studied to become teachers or their prior experience in the fields of EFL, dyslexia, and inclusion. In order to fulfil the needs of learners with learning difficulties, teachers also need to possess a special set of competencies (Dockrell & Lindsay, 2001). They also need additional training in how to instruct dyslexic individuals (Washburn et al., 2014).

The need to improve student education as well as professional teacher development is emphasized in the field (Bell et al., 2011; Moreau, 2014; Soriano-Ferrer et al., 2016). It is interesting to see that although the number of teachers who definitely feel the need for more information on the language teaching methods effective with dyslexic learners is 50.6% ($n = 91$), the number of teachers who are definitely interested in further training in the area of teaching English to learners with dyslexia is relatively low with 37.2% ($n = 67$).

In addition to the questions in part C above, the best method of instruction for EFL and dyslexia is also asked. Most of the participants provided more than one answer. 43.3% of the participants chose printed self-study materials, 42.8% chose online learning courses, 50% chose online self-study resources and 80.6% chose face-to-face training workshops.

Another question was asked to understand what English language teachers in Türkiye would like a training course to cover, and teachers were given the choice of ticking more than one answer. It is seen that the highest expectation from a training course to cover is learning difficulties associated with dyslexia with 81.7% ($n = 147$) followed by language teaching techniques that assist language learners with dyslexia with 77.2% ($n = 139$), problems dyslexia causes in language learning with 73.9% ($n = 133$) and general teaching and classroom management tips for teaching language learners with dyslexia with 70.6% ($n = 127$). Teachers are interested in the assessment

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of learners with dyslexia in the language classroom with 67.8% ($n=122$), the nature of dyslexia with 63.3% ($n=114$) and how dyslexia is diagnosed with 61.7% ($n=111$). The lowest number seen is in accommodations that learners with dyslexia are entitled to in high-stake exams, with 55% ($n=99$). Teachers did not specify other topics; only one teacher mentioned disabled students. The findings indicated that content that may assist teachers in overcoming common teaching obstacles was of the utmost interest to them. As a result, they were interested in learning about the specific difficulties dyslexic learners face when learning a foreign language as well as how to properly support these students by adapting their teaching, assessment, and classroom management strategies to their unique needs. In contrast to the previous study by Nijakowska et al. (2018), teachers in this study are interested in learning about theoretical aspects of inclusion, such as the nature of dyslexia. It can be advised that these issues be covered in the training as a better understanding of legislation and policy is considered.

The participants gave answers about useful components of a training course (tasks and activities) in the following question. Teachers mentioned that they would find watching videos of classrooms as the most useful feature in a training course, with 74.4% ($n=134$), listening to/reading interviews with learners with dyslexia at 68.3% ($n=123$) and listening to/reading interviews with teachers of dyslexic learners at 68.3% (n = 123) as equally useful. In a training course, teachers would welcome brief lectures with 53.3% ($n=96$) and reading articles with 46.7% ($n=84$), followed by reading online resource materials with 43.9% ($n=79$) and evaluating lesson plans with 41.7% ($n=75$). Teachers value learning how to design language teaching materials for learners with dyslexia with 73.3% ($n=132$), designing lesson plans so that the needs of learners with dyslexia are catered for with 63.9% ($n=115$), reading book chapters with 32.8% ($n=59$) and evaluating language teaching materials designed for learners with dyslexia with 58.3% ($n=105$). Only one teacher mentioned some online courses for other tasks and activities that they could specify.

The participants were asked if they had any further comments. On the whole, the participants' further comments included a wide perspective, from their belief about dyslexia's being temporary and that it can be treated to the difficulty of convincing teachers regarding teaching English to students with special needs. The significance of pre-service teacher training in raising English language teacher candidates' understanding of dyslexia was also emphasized by the participants. Here are some excerpts from the participants' responses:

> It's very difficult to convince teachers in Türkiye about teaching English to students with special needs, especially in small towns such as (…) where I taught for 6 years and had a student with dyslexia. Teacher education schools must include teaching students with special needs in Türkiye in order to help future students succeed. (P9)

> Dyslexia is temporary and if there's enough education, it makes accelerate the progress of amelioration. (P8)

> Universities should include how to teach language to learners with dyslexia in their programmes. (P3)

English teachers also added that it is of great importance to observe how dyslexia is approached abroad by teachers, so they should make observations abroad and apply the useful practices in Türkiye as well as attend training courses that focus on teaching dyslexic learners:

> The teachers who want to work with dyslexia students should go abroad (especially the good ones interested in dyslexia) and take some courses, make observations and apply them in our country. (P10)

> Language teachers should be informed and encouraged to take training courses in the area of teaching English to learners with dyslexia. (P12)

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6 | CONCLUSION

Dyslexia is a global problem that affects people of all ages and nationalities. Despite improvements in diagnosis, comprehension, and teaching strategies, too many dyslexics are still allowed to slip through the cracks and never reach their full potential in learning or in life. The problem becomes much more challenging for those who learn new languages because different languages have different needs and features. Planning educational services for the instruction of dyslexic learners requires specific attention to this. Particularly, if language teachers are not given the necessary resources, we cannot expect them to be able to address the requirements of dyslexics. In this regard, the current study tries to strengthen the body of research on language teacher knowledge on dyslexia while also laying the framework for future research due to its exploratory approach by offering some insightful information into the ELT field regarding the structure of teacher education programmes and professional development opportunities.

As for the highlights of this study, most of the teachers claimed that the courses that colleges, universities, and teacher training institutes offered them did not provide them with the knowledge of EFL and dyslexia, which was in line with the findings of earlier studies (Gwernan-Jones & Burden, 2010 (cited in Sümer Dodur & Altındag Kumas, 2021); Kizilkaya & Sari, 2021). It has also come to light that most of the teachers had inadequate knowledge about dyslexia, which is in line with a previous study that investigated Turkish classroom teachers' knowledge about dyslexia nearly ten years before today (Doğan, 2013). Similar results can be seen in other studies worldwide (Bell et al., 2011; Washburn et al., 2014). This may be interpreted as teachers not being knowledgeable enough about dyslexia is not a local problem.

As for the implications of this study, language teachers' awareness of learning difficulties and inclusive education also needs to be supported within the context of professional development (Lauterbach et al., 2019). Therefore, it is crucial that ELT training programmes provide teachers with sufficient subject-matter expertise on inclusion and learning challenges. Also, existing courses should contain more pertinent information about dyslexia that can be applied right away in real-world situations. Moreover, students should take part in formal field experiences and informal opportunities to observe or tutor dyslexic students. This will help them understand the significance of learning how to best meet the needs of these students. A shared knowledge of dyslexia is necessary not only for preservice teachers but also for the teachers who are currently in the profession because research suggests that teachers' attitudes and expertise regarding learning disorders have an impact on the success of learners with disabilities like dyslexia in school and in life (Levine, 1998; Washburn et al., 2014) (cited in Sümer Dodur & Altındağ Kumas, 2021, p. 594). Teachers in the classroom require the assistance and backing of experts who are familiar with the challenges that learners face and how to address them. The staff development process can be carried out on a whole-school or regional level when a group of class instructors has been formed.

As for the limitations of this study, because convenience sampling was utilized, it is not possible to generalize the study's findings to all English language teachers in Türkiye. Also, variations in responses among demographic factors like gender, school type, level of experience, and educational background could not be shown quantitatively due to the unequal distribution of responses across these variables. Future research must broaden the sample and examine the factor structure. The current study's concentration on language teachers working for MoNE was another drawback. By including language instructors at the tertiary level in the sample, the literature would gain vital information.

Considering the insufficiency of studies carried out on this subject in Türkiye and the dominance of studies in European countries, this study might open a path for educators to include dyslexic learners in EFL classes, giving these students the opportunity to explore another language like their peers. To increase awareness, knowledge, and good attitudes about dyslexia, researchers should therefore continue to investigate this topic. Also, in light of this study, teacher education programmes might consider enriching their programmes by providing more inclusion strategies.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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