



Editorial Comment

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Welcome to the latest edition of the Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences, published to coincide with the international Unite SpLD conference in June 2018. Following the previous edition which was edited by my colleague Professor John Everatt, in this edition we return to our standard format. I would like to thank John for his splendid contribution in enriching our journal. In this edition, we again present seven original articles drawn largely from the Asian Pacific region. Once again, as appropriate for an international journal, we have contributions from Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, India, and the UK. A number of the articles have been submitted by authors who have previously contributed to our journal and it is a pleasure to welcome them back.

In the first article in this issue, from Tuty Elfira Abdul Razak, Edmen Leong and colleagues at DAS from the English Exam Skills Programme (EESP) present a follow up to their earlier published article, which established significant improvement in dyslexic children following this support regime, by contrast with a control group who received ordinary classroom teaching. In this article, the Orton Gillingham approach is evaluated in light of the principles of the Universal Design (UD) for learning framework, and applied to a small group of non-dyslexic learners, who followed the intervention for 20 weeks. As in the previous study, the pre-test established the starting level of this group, and the post-test established the significant benefit 5 of the learners obtained from the EESP. Effect size analyses established that this was particularly effective for the students in the Standard stream. Interestingly, this research showed qualitative effects gathered from student interviews and teachers logs, to enrich our understanding of the usefulness of this approach with a non-dyslexic cohort.

In the second article in this issue, from Jieping Ou, Akiro Uno and colleagues from Japan, the authors evaluate a checklist, the Pupil Rating scale revised, which is commonly used to identify children with dyslexia in China, in comparison with standardised measures of literacy and intelligence. This important article established that although 18% of this cohort of 140 children showed problems in literacy indicative of dyslexia, not one of these was identified by the checklist, which focuses on auditory comprehension and spoken language, as well as orientation, motor co-ordination and behaviour. The results suggest that this screening test may be dated and an assessment including measures of literacy as well as IQ is more effective in identifying risk, than teachers' perceptions.

An article from Indonesia, by Rexsy Taruna and Auliya Syaf, speech therapist and psychologist respectively, adopts a rare experimental approach in examining the overlaps between the different disorders, here dyslexia and language impairment. Using an experimental approach to compare data in two experiments to evaluate the difficulties experienced by children with differing diagnoses and profiles in working memory and phonological memory. The results from the digit span test, a standardised test of intelligence, drawn from the WISC, suggested that both groups were impaired by comparison with age norms, but that children with SLI showed the greatest impairment in planning, reflecting issues with executive function. It is exciting to see new research coming through from this area, which suggests that Indonesian children show a similar pattern of difficulties to children identified by English language testing.

A further article from Suvarna Renta Chinta from India, examined the impact of phonological awareness and rapid naming speed as predictors for progress in dyslexic children learning in Teluga, a native Indian language. This is an important article, because there are few standardised tests available in native Indian languages, but the researchers were able to design their own versions in order to investigate these skills which have been identified as highly predictive for children learning in English. Interestingly, in this multi-lingual study, rapid naming proved the most useful in identifying children who were likely to struggle within the education system. Here, there are suggestions of a different pattern of processing from children with English as a first language, possibly reflecting the differing approaches in teaching in Teluga, which is primarily based on segmentation for early readers.

Family literacy is now emerging as an important topic in understanding the response that some children make to intervention. Clearly the support of parents is particularly important in order to benefit fully from academic support either within school or from an educational provider such as DAS. Previous research on this topic in Singapore has shown that sometimes parental involvement can compromise satisfactory progress, particularly if parents are unaware of the difficulties a dyslexic child might experience and try to push the child to achieve at the level of their peers. In an interesting article in on this topic, Yiyao Weng investigated the impact of the family literacy approach for a small group of young children with dyslexia and their parents in Singapore. On this occasion parents were presented a series of workshops to ensure that they give appropriate support while working with their children at home. Interestingly it seems that the period of support was not long enough to impact significantly on the children's performance, although the effect sizes were extremely promising in terms of future impact. Nevertheless, it is clear that the parents were very receptive to the workshops they had received and their involvement led to an improvement in their children's literacy. Consequently, there seems to be considerable potential to move forward with this approach in Singapore, in order to develop understanding further.

In a lively and novel approach, Patricia Mui Hoon Ng presents here a review of the robot applications available and in use with children in Singapore. The article aims to sensitise the reader to the potential for the use of robots with the new generation of children that will grow up in a highly technological world. The approach has potential for working in areas such as behaviour modification, social and motor skills, numeracy, language and literacy, as well as enhancing executive function through the need for planning, and the possibilities for use with children with special needs are discussed.

Finally, Neil Alexander-Passe needs no introduction to readers of this journal. In this article, Alexander-Passe addressed the issues of disability or difference in terms of adults with dyslexia, and covers a range of potentially contentious issues such as whether or not to disclose your dyslexia to a potential employer. Introducing a major new framework, the bi-ability model from Valeras, 2010, Alexander-Passe argues that this approach is a more realistic evaluation of the combination of strengths and weaknesses that comprise dyslexia. He goes on to investigate the growth that dyslexics can experience through developing resilience in handling academic stresses, although he emphasises here that it is not necessary to suffer in order to become successful.

As you may see, this is another varied and interesting issue, combining experimental work, reviews and new models to explain the phenomena of dyslexia. We look forward to receiving many more contributions for review, and thank you as readers for your interest in this journal.