



## Editorial Comment

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It is a very great pleasure to introduce the second issue of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences*. I am once again proud of the depth and breadth of material we are able to contribute, including experimental studies, reviews of the area, case studies and meta-analyses. It is particularly important to acknowledge the diversity of research in dyslexia and other learning differences, in terms of both theory and practice. A journal such as APJDD which targets areas across the Asia Pacific where access to local materials may be limited, has a responsibility to introduce experts from across the world, and to provide an opportunity for young researchers to make their mark, as well as providing a forum for local expertise in these areas. I am proud that we are able to fulfill our mission once again to present a series of peer reviewed articles that form a contribution to the literature. We have been able to maintain our standards and meet our publication deadlines in a manner appropriate for a well-rated international journal

In this issue I am particularly proud to present an authoritative review from Professor Joe Torgesen and colleagues from the USA on the importance and value of early intervention. This is an area of research very dear to my heart,

through many years experience working with children in the early school years. The evidence from Torgesen on the impact of intervention at an early age has been seminal in the move towards universal early screening and support which I have been advocating since the publication of our early screening test, the DEST, in 1996. It is clear that even a short-term intervention at this age can have lasting effects, on the principle 'a stitch in time saves nine'. In recognition of the importance of this topic, we plan to draw together a series of articles over the next few issues of APJDD in conjunction with further evidence in to an *Asia Pacific Handbook of Early Intervention*, to be published in 2015. We would like to encourage researchers with material pertinent to this issue to submit their work for review.

Our 2nd article in the current issue is drawn from Priscillia Shen and her colleagues at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, who have undertaken a rigorous analysis of deficits in children learning Chinese. Their article identifies a distinctive profile of deficits in visual-orthographic, morphological awareness and visual-motor integration in students with dyslexia, in comparison with non-dyslexic controls. In an example of good practice the team use their theoretical

insights to create an intervention targeted towards these deficits, and evaluate the programme with a second small group of dyslexic children. Moreover, the children involved in this study are learning Chinese in addition to their main language of English, and many are not able to practice their skills at home. There is clear evidence for success in improving skills overall, although the children continue to struggle suggesting that many will need further more intensive support. It is excellent to note that parents and children alike enjoyed the programme, and there is clear evidence for improvement from the outcomes achieved. This is an important article because the research in this area is more constrained than research into English speaking children, and the results are a resounding endorsement of the approach adopted.

Much of the research into children with dyslexia has focused on decoding, but of course the goal of decoding is to be able to read and understand the material the child is accessing. Sadegi from the Islamic Azad University and colleagues from the University of Canterbury, address the important issue of comprehension, directing their research towards an experimental analysis of reading comprehension in the Persian language.. The results of this study indicate that there are two groups of children who struggle with comprehension. Firstly there are those with problems in decoding, who show evidence of phonological difficulties. Secondly, there seems to be a further group of children who are accurate decoders but who show evidence of problems with morphology. For both of these groups performance

remains slow and laboured, which in itself impacts on comprehension through deficits in working memory. This article is clearly an important contribution to the field.

In the current context, the role of computers in improving literacy is particularly important. Our own research indicates that for many children with difficulties, computer based support has many advantages in terms of the child's self esteem. Even the most supportive teacher may become irritated after many attempts to read have failed, but the computer remains unmoved and uncritical. In this article, Dr Thomas Sim from the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, presents a meta-analysis of effect sizes for computer-based intervention studies, with the main criteria that the intervention includes phonology in a pre-post design with full data available for comparison. The four studies identified provide evidence for a medium effect size which suggests that computer based intervention can be a useful tool in supporting children with difficulties. This is an important area for further research, and implications for practice are considered here.

One of the major theoretical contributions of recent years has been the recognition that naming speed may be a factor in deficits arising in dyslexia, with those children who experience both phonology and speed deficits the most difficult to remediate. This is based on the research of Professor Maryanne Wolf and her colleague Professor Pat Bowers. Naming speed is an interesting test, because it involves eye movements, keeping your place on the page, and retrieving names

from your lexicon, while maintaining your speed of articulation. It has been called a compendium test with the ability to identify a range of different problems, particularly when there are difficulties in object naming. However, it is clear that this knowledge has not yet been widely disseminated across the Asia Pacific region. Therefore a review of the area provides a useful adjunct to our understanding of deficits in dyslexia, in this article by Dr Kadi Lukanenok from Taillin University.

It is important to recognise the many manifestations of dyslexia in different subtypes of dyslexia, while not denying the importance of the overarching phonological deficit. In the next article by Jost from the Czech Republic, the progress of a young child in developing literacy is followed, with a case study of the predictive value of eye movements, amongst other tests for learning differences. Over a five year period, a group of around 100 children were tested on eye movements, IQ, reading, motor skills, attention and self-esteem. The case study from this child provides some support for the use of eye movements as a possible prognostic indicator for dyslexia and other learning differences.

Finally, the last article in this issue by Hani Zohra Muhamad from the Dyslexia Association of Singapore, addresses the issues of co-morbidity and dyslexia. It is very clear that the child described here is hard to reach or teach because of the attention deficit hyperactivity problems concurrent with his dyslexia. In a sensitive analysis, flexibility is shown in addressing the issues arising from handling this complex child. We now

know that co-morbidity between dyslexia, specific language impairment (SLI), dyspraxia and ADHD are the rule and not the exception. It is therefore particularly germane that we should identify approaches that allow this complexity to be addressed. This is a clear success story that is worthy of reporting in this journal, as an example of good practice for those struggling with similar cases.

In conclusion, the APJDD welcomes the submission of further articles in the field of developmental differences. The journal continues to be available freely and we hope to provide a dedicated website shortly, as well as the facility to preview articles which have been accepted for publication.