Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences
Vol. 12, No. 1, January 2025, pp. 1—3

Editorial Comment

Angela Fawcett, Editor in Chief

It is a very great pleasure to provide my comments for the January issue of Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences (APJDD), as Editor in Chief of the Journal for the last 11 years and moving forward. I am proud to confirm that the APJDD has gone from strength to strength during these years. This issue has proved to be a particularly impressive one, with 8 articles presented here, by contrast with the standard 7 usually presented in this journal. One of the overarching themes of this issue are the impact of technology for teachers and learners across the age range, particularly in relation to higher order skills, a key area as we move into 2025. In fact, the majority of this issue focuses on adolescents and adults and the challenges they face, in terms of both teachers and learners, and changes in the format of support needed.

In our first issue of 2025, it is a pleasure to introduce the article "Vocabulary Instruction, Reading Comprehension, and Writing - Examining the effectiveness of an online intervention literacy programme for secondary students with dyslexia" by Melcher Tan and Serena Abdullah from DAS. In a qualitative study, the authors evaluate the efficacy of computer intervention plus teachers questioning techniques, and how this approach enhances learning by observing student's engagement and response. This article draws on the synergy between online tools and teacher strategies in future development for Special Education. The second article from Dr Damaris Carlisle and Prof Jennifer George 'Bridging the Gap: 5 Minutes of Digital Inclusion Empowers Educators in Higher Education for Learner Success' draws on a similar theme, here again focussing on the role of the teacher, but this time in Higher Education in building strategies for their input into online intervention through regular short targeted sessions. This is particularly invaluable to upgrade the skills of teachers who are less familiar with online tools. Again the third article, by Rosalyn Wee and colleagues from DAS, "Effectiveness of support for speech-writing and presentation skills for students with learning differences: Teachers and students perspectives", evaluates the effectiveness of the iStudySmart™ programme for the transition between secondary and tertiary education. Results confirm the usefulness of this approach in self-directed learning, using a variety of online tools and diagnostic assessments.

The next article addresses 'Orthographic awareness and its relationship to Chinese word reading and spelling in young bilingual learners with Chinese reading difficulties in Singapore' from Kong Yun Rui and colleagues. In this major study, including 218 typically developing and 513 bilingual learners with difficulties in Chinese, the authors

© 2025 Dyslexia Association of Singapore Limited
www.das.org.sg

highlight significant differences in both structural and functional orthographic awareness in reading and spelling for those with difficulties, throughout elementary school, with greater difficulty as participants move from grade 1-6, which needs to be addressed to improve literacy. This study has implications for remediation, emphasising the importance of providing structured support as soon as possible for Chinese language learners with difficulties.

Returning again to older students, the next article by Nur Ashabiena from DAS, entitled 'An exploration of the perspectives of students with dyslexia regarding the factors that affect their learning' the results of semi-structured interviews are presented with students aged 14-15. Three themes are identified: Factors helpful to learning; factors which are a barrier to learning, and factors with no effect on learning. The importance of a supportive environment for learning is emphasised in encouraging sound learning habits, and the need for both parents and teachers to provide ongoing support.

Following on from the enhanced interest in computer supported learning, the next article applies this approach with children taking the primary examination in Singapore at DAS, which determines their placement in secondary school. Preparation for this is highlighted in a qualitative study "Efficacy of teaching practices in online English comprehension lessons for learners with Specific Learning Differences (SpLD): A qualitative analysis" by Tuty Elfira and colleagues at DAS. This presents an analysis of lesson observation videos for two therapists, coupled with student worksheets and online learning tools, with data analysed within a novel framework, Engagement for Learning (EFL). The results highlight the interconnectedness of thought to facilitate cognitive engagement and critical thinking for these students with a questioning technique as an essential part of teacher support, with implications for self- evaluation for the therapists involved.

I hope you will agree that the issue so far has important implications for working with older children and those with difficulties who speak an alternate language. The final two articles in this issue address the impact of failure in dyslexia, for those who have not benefitted from the structured support provided here, namely prisoners who are incarcerated and suffer from dyslexia or other aspects of neurodiversity. The first article from Dr Christina White Prosser and Dr Roswita Dressler, "Integration of Assistive Technology in the Teaching of Incarcerated Students with Learning Challenges: One Instructor's Perspectives, identifies some of the issues in using technology in prison with limited access to many of the tools we take for granted. This article provides a case study of using the Reading Pen to facilitate learning for this group, allowing them to check words without constant access to the teaching therapist. The final article here, by Dr Neil Alexander-Passe, provides a substantive overview of the route from failure to criminality, "Dyslexia and Crime: the 'school-to-prison' pipeline and why it happens". This comprehensive article is lengthy and covers a great deal of ground, highlighting the importance of early screening and support, or later screening on arrest and provision of

© 2025 Dyslexia Association of Singapore Limited

support in court. This article is modified from the book "Dyslexia Neurodiversity and Crime", published in 2023, with a recent edition to the series "ADHD and crime", advocating for the importance of neurodiversity in leading participants into crime, and providing appropriate intervention and support for those struggling with basic literacy and attention.

We hope that you find the issue an interesting one. It is my pleasure to introduce to you here, for those who are not familiar with her work, Dr Eunice Tan, Head of the Special Education programme at S R Nathan School of Human Development, Singapore. Dr Eunice presented a fascinating contribution to last years' UNITE 2024 conference at DAS, which was much enjoyed by her audience. I am pleased to welcome her as the Guest Editor, for the second edition of APJDD in July 2025, Eunice enriches the range of neurodiversity in the APJDD to include autism and savants, and we look forward to working with her, and welcome her forthcoming contribution to this journal.

Angela J Fawcett

January 2025

© 2025 Dyslexia Association of Singapore Limited