

DYSLEXIC: SELF INTERVENTION

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Nothing is impossible in the modern world of technology. Even a dyslexic girl is able to solve her language problems with the supporting tools from the latest technology. This paper reveals the story of an undiagnosed dyslexic child aged sixteen years old who had been struggling for more than ten years, without knowing she is dyslexic and what dyslexia is all about. Findings indicated that her will to achieve success in her life was the most powerful tool that brought her this far in life. Her success in school led her to believe that nothing is impossible. She once said being dyslexic is “troublesome but not problematic”. It is hoped that school authorities, educationalists and members of the public will review their roles in the talent development of dyslexic children, where they should acknowledge their shortcomings and help these children reach their dreams like any other child in this world.

Keywords: Dyslexia, self-intervention

There is still little understanding about children with difficulty in language called “dyslexia” in Malaysia. Mainstream teachers are able to recognize who in their class performs well and who are struggling with language. However, without understanding the child’s condition, teachers become frustrated when handling children with language difficulties; especially, when the teacher had implemented numerous remedial methods and the children continue to have the same difficulties. Therefore it is not surprising if the classroom teacher is not the one who first noticed the problem neither is it the parents; it is often the third person that would suggest the possibility of dyslexia to the family (Altieri, 2008). This also shows that the present education system is inadequate to cater to the need of the current demand for special need intervention (Peters, 2010).

Various definitions for dyslexia are being used by different organizations. Numerous research shows that dyslexia is an inborn disorder with unexpected difficulties in reading, writing and spelling, in relation to one’s verbal intelligence, motivation, and educational opportunities (Grey, 2008; Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Pugh et al., 2001; Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Fulbright et al., 2003). It occurs

at all levels of one's intellectual ability. According to Orton Gillingham Centre (2009) in Singapore, children who are otherwise quite capable, the frustrations of difficulties in expressing themselves through writing and understanding printed words can be stressful and may even lead to secondary symptoms such as behavioral difficulties or low self-esteem.

Sariah Amirin, President of the Dyslexia Association of Malaysia (DAM) stated that "80% of children with dyslexia cannot read well" (Wong, 2009). Each dyslexic child is unique and has his/her own specific difficulties. It was suggested that the problems in the functioning cerebellum accounts for a number of wide-range difficulties associated with dyslexia, including automatization (Serrano & Defior, 2008), phonological awareness, working memory, spelling, balancing, handwriting as well as motor skills (Odegard, Ring, Smith, Biggan, & Black, 2008). Dyslexia in children and adults is characterized by an unexpected difficulty in reading, which otherwise possessing the intelligence (Shaywitz et al., 2001). The question here is how an undiagnosed child is able to overcome or hide some of the symptoms in order to gain success in academics?

Background

It is estimated that children with learning difficulties in Malaysia range from 7% to 9%. Based on a study conducted by Sosio-economic & Environmental Research Institute Penang in 2002, 9.4% of children in Grade 1 elementary schools in Penang are facing learning difficulties (Lee, 2008). However, there is lack of study done to calculate the percentage of dyslexic children among the on-going school children in Malaysia (Pang, 2009). According to Peters (2010) the World Health Organization estimated that 4-6% (354 400 – 531 600) of Malaysian aged 0-14 years old are dyslexic. Unfortunately, the study shows that there were only 306 recorded cases of dyslexic children in 2007. This shows a high possibility that many children out there are not being identified and still struggling with language without knowing the actual reason for their inability to master language as other normal children.

This paper is aimed at uncovering the story of an undiagnosed dyslexic child aged sixteen years old who had been struggling with language problems for more than ten years, without knowing she is dyslexic. It also studies the types of self-intervention and other factors that contribute in the subject's improvement on her difficulties. It discusses some of the pre symptoms that she had been facing since pre-school till lower secondary. If ever she was diagnosed earlier in pre-school, she would have been able to go through the proper intervention process that is available in Malaysia. In specific, this paper will try to reveal the strategies used in overcoming reading problems for more than ten years by a girl who never came across the word dyslexia, until recently. With this information sharing, we hope that school teachers and parents are able to know more about dyslexia and the reality of being a dyslexic.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a neurologically based learning disorder which is manifested by difficulties in reading (Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Blachman et al., 2004), especially sequencing alphabets as well as transferring printed word to phonological elements (Orton Gillingham Centre , 2009; Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Pugh et al., 2001). Many dyslexics have trouble with sequencing; young dyslexics especially may have problem remembering the order of the alphabet as well as numbers and mathematical formulas (Stowe, 2000). The International Dyslexic Association had adopted a complete definition on dyslexia as stated below (Stowe, 2000):

Dyslexia is a neurologically based, often familial disorder which interferes with the acquisition and processing of language. Varying in degree of severity, it is manifested by difficulties in receptive and expressing language – including phonological processing – in reading, writing, spelling, handwriting, and sometimes in arithmetic... Although dyslexia is lifelong, individuals with dyslexia frequently respond successfully to timely and appropriate intervention. (pp. 2-3)

No two dyslexic children are the same. Each dyslexic has an individual learning style for spelling, reading, sequencing, and writing (Hoffpauir, 2009; Shaw, 1990). Many dyslexics exhibit the signs of confusion about direction, particularly right, left, up and down. As Stellpflug (2008) states, confusion on directions is the result of mixed dominance which is a motor skill manifestation where a person favors one hand for some tasks and the other hand for others. Mixed dominance can be found at the root of many problems such as dyslexia and poor coordination and control of motor function. According to Hoffpauir (2009), difficulty with organization comprises losing paperwork, messy desk, poor sense of time, forgetting homework, downward trend in school performance, inconsistent school work, varied attention and comments like “if only she/he would try,” or “she/he is just lazy”.

A child must know how to make the translation of spoken language into written language accurately. This is because spelling is a process of translating spoken language into words (Hilte & Reitsma, 2006). A dyslexic child can master spelling skills in several ways. Bourassa, Treiman, and Kessler (2006) suggested that learning to spell involves learning to map sounds and letters, which are the phonemic segmentation skills. However, the poor phonological spelling problem can be overcome by using morphological method (Bourassa et al., 2006) or spelling pronunciation for the better speller (Hilte & Reitsma, 2006). It is very difficult for dyslexics to understand what they are reading, making it difficult for them to “write clearly and spell correctly” (Orr, 1999). According to the British Dyslexia Association (n.d.), children must first link the shape of the word on the page with the sound it makes before being able to recreate that shape

back onto paper. However, decoding these patterns and making these links can be very difficult for dyslexic children. Consequently, they are unable to develop the automatic flow of writing that makes them express themselves clearly and easily in writing (British Dyslexic Association, n.d.)

Dyslexics frequently have problems with social relationships (Orton Gillingham Centre, 2009). As some have difficulty reading social cues, they may be oblivious to the amount of personal distance necessary in social interactions or be insensitive to other people's body language. Dyslexia often affect oral language functioning, so a dyslexic person may have trouble finding the right words, may stammer, or may even pause before answering direct questions (Orton Gillingham Centre, 2009). This puts them at a disadvantage as they enter adolescence, when language becomes more central to their relationship with peers.

Although dyslexia does not affect a child's speech, however it may limit a child's understanding and ability to learn and acquire new words. As Xiu-Wen's condition was not detected early by either her parents or her teachers, she was unaware of her learning difficulties as an uncommon condition. She suffered in silence. She had to resort to self-interventions in order to overcome certain problems. The story of her struggles in the past 12 years in educational settings, namely language and self-interventions, is in the results section of the study.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method was adopted in this case study as it will give us more room to see the child's life and to understand her educational experience with dyslexia. Qualitative method was chosen as it allows us to see the emotional side of a person whereas a quantitative method is unable to cover this portion of research (Zambo, 2004). It will give reference to teachers and researchers to observe how and to what extent a dyslexic child was able to self-remedy in overcoming her dyslexic characteristics. The objectives of this study are;

1. to provide concrete examples of how dyslexia will affect a subject's academic life with difficulties in reading, writing and spelling.
2. to identify the types of self-remedy skills that were used to lessen the subject's difficulties in reading, writing and spelling.

Participants

This single subject study participant is a sixteen year old adolescent from a Kuala Lumpur Chinese Independent School, Xiu-Wen (not her real name). Xiu-Wen comes from a middle class family with Mandarin as her first language and English as her second language. She was first suspected to be dyslexic by her teacher at the age of fifteen. A year later when she moved up to Senior 1 (upper secondary), her English teacher found out that her essay contains multiple spelling errors, which suggests the difficulty of learning the letter-sound

correspondences. After consulting scholars who studied dyslexia and acquiring parental consent, she was later diagnosed as having dyslexia.

Xiu-Wen is a diligent student, who pays attention to lessons and actively participated in Girl Guides. She portrays talents in science, mathematics, art and music. However, the difficulty of reading and spelling had affected her academic performance, particularly all the language subjects (Bahasa Malaysia, English and Mandarin). Despite the absence of a fully inclusive setting or any support services in the school, Xiu-Wen has shown positive learning attitudes through the use of self-intervention methods. This case study is thus significant as it sheds light on the unique characteristics and self-intervention strategies of an adolescent dyslexic girl studying in a normal secondary school.

Xiu-Wen's English teacher, Miss Katherine (not her real name) who has daily contacts with her helps in conducting current test on language difficulties faced by Xiu-Wen. They were both interviewed to obtain insight of Xiu-Wen's unique dyslexic characteristics and the methods of self-intervention used to improve her reading and spelling.

Data Collection

Data came from two sources, observation and interviews with the subject as well as interviews with the teacher of the subject. The teacher's observation was done over a two-month period from 2nd February 2009 to 4th April 2009 at which time saturation was achieved. Teacher's interview focused on the common characteristics that she perceived in Xiu-Wen's daily school work.

The semi structured interviews were conducted in a way that the interviewees felt comfortable and could speak openly and honestly, as the confidentiality would be maintained. These goals were achieved by spending ample time in the field, getting to know the interviewees in less formal situations. However, the data collection from the subject's interview was done in different time frame from the teacher's observation and interview.

RESULTS

The results of this case study are divided into two parts, namely the anecdotal of Xiu-Wen's story, and the girl's condition based on the past incidence reported by the informers.

Anecdotal Description of Xiu-Wen's Story

"I am Kang Xiu-Wen, 16 years old. I study in Tsun Jin High School. My class is S1S2. My family is very open mind. My parents treat me as an adult since I'm small. They respect me and give freedom to me so when I face any problem, they didn't help me but they did give me the instruction. Subsequently, I have trained to face problem myself and to solve it myself. I love to read books since

I was very young. At that time, my mother used to read story books to me every night. Besides reading, I also like to play piano and drawing.

My mother has discovered that I am having problem mastering my language when I am five years old. During that time I used to write mirror image word. At that time my mother just thought that I am a bit weak in that, it will no longer happen as I grow up. At first we didn't seek help from others.

When I was standard 4 (upper primary), my class teacher asked my mother to bring me to the doctor because I have too many spelling error. However, she did not highlight any languages problem that I was facing at that time. Therefore, my mother thought that was eye sight problem, as she had never heard about mirror image writing is a sickness. After getting some opinion from her friends and relative, she decided that things should get better as I grew up due to brain development maturation.

I proceed on with my normal schooling life and joined the Chinese essay writing competition at the age of 14. I have won the 5th prize, I have joined this competition because I wanted to make it a try and I enjoyed the fun of writing novel. I don't enjoy writing any other types of essay but I like to write novel because it is unlimited and fun. The ideas come from my brain naturally. I didn't face any difficulties in the process of writing because I used the computer to type my novel. Computer helps me a lot, it can help me to do the spelling check and I just have to type the spelling of the Chinese word then the computer will help me to insert the correct Chinese word. With this technology help, there is no wrong word in my novel and I can write it fluency and effective. However, winning this price makes some of my relatives wonder why I can write well in this competition and not able to have the same achievement during exam.

As time pass, we had forgotten about the language problem that I am facing up until lower secondary (aged 15). I went to ask the counseling teacher in our school about this matter but she told me that it is not a serious matter. She also shows me some information about dyslexia. At last, I thought that it was just some small matter and no need to worry about it so we didn't see the doctor.

After I met my junior 3 English teacher, Miss Woon, she told me that I might be a dyslexic. But at that time both my mother and I didn't take any action because we thought it is just a small problem, maybe I didn't pay enough attention when I learn language. But it started to get worse because it will affect my academic result especially when I am in high secondary class. I met my current English teacher Miss Wong. She started to help me about it. She takes it more seriously because she has more knowledge about dyslexia. So she asked a friend of her who major on dyslexic, Miss Kang to help me. Both of them really help me a lot. I get to know more about dyslexia from them and they help me to register for the advantage of using computer and a reader during SPM exam from the Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia (Bahagian Pendidikan Khas).

I don't really care about my academic study when I was still in primary school. Actually, I didn't face a lot of problem because my family didn't force me to study hard. My agreement with my mother is I have to finish my homework

before I can play. At those days I don't even care about my exam marks. I don't really know is those lesson is hard or easy because I don't really study at those day. My teacher didn't penalize me because they also think that it is just a small problem. After I grow up I won't make so many spelling mistakes anymore.

I used to have problem to memorize the sequence of a, b, c even I am already standard five. At that time I have been scolded by my mother because she can't understand why I can't remember such kindergarten stuff. When I copy the words from the board or book I will copy them wrong. There are some words that is hard for me to remember the spelling. For example, horse and house, which and witch, and some other words. Sometimes I will suddenly forget the spelling of a word that I used to remember. Sometimes I will memorize a wrong spelling of certain word and can't remember the correct one. Most of my teachers complain that my handwriting is very messy and ugly. Sometimes I will confuse between left and right. Such as, I mistaken left hand as right hand. It is hard for me to read long word. I have to read it using more time and I have to read it a few times before I can pronounce it. Besides that, it is hard for me to read all capital letter sentences. I also find out that it is uneasy for me to read words on some kind of papers that reflect light because the words will become unclear for me and make me feel uncomfortable.

I used the song 'ABC' to memorize the sequence of a, b, c. After I become a scout, I used sign language and flag semaphore that I have learn to help me to memorize them more fluency and accurate by doing them repeated over and over again. After I realize I keep copping the wrong word, I paid more attention to what I read and what I write. By using this way I manage to decrease the spelling error a little bit. For spelling problem, I tried to use computer to do my homework. If I can't I will get my friends to check for me if they are free. But usually I ask them strict away whenever I have problem to spell any word. I think that my friends are very helpful because they don't mind to spell all those words for me. Right now I don't confuse toward left and right. It is because I have learned marching in scout movement. When one marches you must not confuse between left and right so I have defeated this problem during my scout life.

If I read magazine printed on shining papers, I find the words harder to read. It is not like flying around but it look like floating on the paper. The words look messy and jumble up so I have to focus more attention to read this type of magazine. But if I read normal books I can read them easily unlike books that printed on shinny papers".

DATA ANALYSIS

Characteristics of Dyslexia Manifestation

From data collected, the information was analyzed and some common characteristics of dyslexia were found. The information collected during reading test results by the teacher's observation are listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Description of Reading Difficulties Faced By Xiu-Wen

Types of difficulties	Description
English reading ability	Book/test resource: Form 3 novel “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde Test Result: Xiu-Wen did not mispronounce any word, as she read the extract slowly and conscientiously. She paused a few times while reading to look at the words thoughtfully to avoid making any pronunciation mistakes.
Bahasa Malaysia reading ability	Book/test resource: Form 4 literary text, “<i>Lambaian Malar Hijau</i>”. Test Result: Xiu-Wen had put in conscious effort in reading slowly and carefully so as not to make any mistakes. When reading slowly, she did not have much difficulty in pronouncing the words correctly, but still occasionally, she made some mistakes, such as “Daneng” as “Denang”, “garis-garis” as “gadis-gadis”, “suaranya” as “saudaranya”, “hektar” as “hengtar” and “mengingati” as “menginkati”, even though she spoke fluent Malay.

Table 2
Other Types of Difficulties Faced by Xui-Wen

Types of difficulties	Descriptions of Xiu-Wen’s past difficulties
Difficulty copying notes: Kindergarten	Remarks: Signs of dyslexia were not prominent. Example: From her Bahasa Malaysia written work, she had a problem copying from a text; after copying the words “Gemilang” correctly for half a page, she then missed out the letter “i” in “Gemilang”. This could easily be dismissed as carelessness as basically kindergarten students do make mistakes while copying.
Year 1	Remarks: sign was slowly appearing. Example: In a Bahasa Malaysia test, students were asked to match the <i>suku kata</i> or syllables and write in the place provided. Xiu-Wen actually managed to match all the syllables correctly, but when it came to writing the answers, she made some obvious “careless” mistakes, such as “Pa + yung = Buyang”, “Sam + pan = Sampem” and “Pin + tu” = “Pata”.

Form 1

Remarks: Problem persisted when she was asked to copy from a text to do mind mapping.

Example: She copied “would” as “wold”, “never” as “naver”, “travel” as “traver”, “friend” as “frin”.

Difficulty spelling words:

Primary

Remarks: Age 8, she started exhibiting the peculiar structures of spelling that clearly show difficulty in learning the connection between letters and sounds.

Example: In one of the essays that she wrote, she spelled “neck” as “neack”, “walk” as “wolk”.

Remarks: In upper primary, the problem remained.

Example: In a spelling test, “sandcastle” was spelled as “sandcastel” and “snorkel” as “sornkel”. The problem became more serious at the age of 12 as the spelling became more difficult. In a spelling test, “refrigerator” was misspelled as “refreejalater”, “ketchup” as “keckucp”, “challenge” as “chelland”, “authors” as “alter”, “paragraph” as “paregrave”, “receipt” as “resitve” and “encyclopedias” as “encyclobetier”.

Lower secondary

Remarks: Continued having difficulty in spelling in lower secondary.

Example: “supermarket” was misspelled as “suppermarket”, “pieces” as “pieaces”, “squeeze” as “squze” and “mushroom” as “muchroom”, “medicine” as “medicene”. As she went up to upper secondary, the problem worsened, words like “haunted” was spelled as “honted”, “cursed” as “cursted”, “screamed” as “scrcamed”, “climbed” as “climped” and “these” as “thiese”.

Remarks: Spelling difficulties in Bahasa Malaysia examination.

Example: some of the spelling mistakes made were like “mengemukakan” as “mengemukkan”, “keupayaan” as “keupayan”, “mengisahkan” as “menyesahkan”, “bertekad” as “bertekat”. It was discovered that the spelling mistakes made by Xiu-Wen were different. “Penyalahgunaan” was spelt as “penyalangunaan”, “biadap” as “biadak” and “penguatkuasa” as “pengunkuasa”.

Poor handwriting:

Kindergarten

Remarks: Xiu-Wen’s handwriting was neat and tidy. She even obtained a compliment of “Amat Baik (very good)” from the teacher.

Secondary

Remarks: As she moved on to the next level, her handwriting started to deteriorate. The problem persisted, but it could be seen that she was trying to write as neatly as possible. In fact, when she was in lower secondary, she was remarked by the teacher for having unsatisfactory writing by asking her to “Write Neatly!”.

**Confusion about directions
(right/left; up/down)**

Kindergarten

Remarks: She was always confused between her right and left shoe, which often caused her to wear her shoes wrong.

Primary

Remarks: Xiu-Wen claimed that sometimes she is confused with right and left directions. When walking, especially in a new place, she finds herself heading towards the wrong direction as she does not think carefully about the correct direction. However, her sense of direction has improved since she joined Girl Guide at the age of thirteen. Through marching practices she learned to find the correct directions.

**Difficulty
sequencing letters
of the alphabet**

Remarks: Xiu-Wen had difficulties in sequencing alphabets (a-z) in primary school. To find out whether this problem persisted, the secondary school English teacher carried out a sequencing test that required Xiu-Wen to sequence letters of the alphabet from a to z. She successfully wrote down all the letters in the correct order. The sequencing problem was resolved through self-intervention methods which will be depicted in the next sections.

**Difficulty with
organisation**

Remarks: Xiu-Wen portrays the characteristics of difficulty with reading, written language and oral language. However, she does not exhibit any difficulty with organisation. Xiu-Wen never forgets to bring her books or homework to the class; she has a tidy desk and pays attention to the lesson; she submits her homework on time; she is never late to class, and sometimes even comes 5 minutes before the lesson starts. During writing lessons, she asks questions about the essay topic for clarification purposes, and often contributes ingenious ideas to the writing.

Self-Interventions

According to Orr (1999), although dyslexics may have difficulty paying attention in class and may daydream, “they are often experts at memorizing things”. As such, they do not have to rely heavily on reading material. Juggins (2000), a dyslexic artist and writer stated that the use of visual aids such as video and other forms of visual representation are very important. Discussion and debates are also vital as this provides the dyslexic student an opportunity to check for understanding and again attempt to store information into the memory.

Xiu-Wen uses different methods as her self-intervention in coping with daily classroom demands, namely memorizing spelling, visual aids and mental imagery, seeking help when needed, and music.

Memorizing spelling

Xiu-Wen knows her strength of memorizing words. She started memorizing words at the age of thirteen. For example, she managed to remember the spelling of the words “house” and “horse” because of the different sounds, diphthong “ɔ” and vowel “ë”. However, she is still facing difficulty remembering words that have similar sounds such as “witch” and “which” as both contain the same pronunciation /wItʃ/.

Using visual aids and mental imagery

Xiu-Wen is talented in art and has won numerous drawing competitions. She said in the interview that she has been using mental images to remember scientific facts especially biology and physics. Mental imagery, also called visualization and mental rehearsal, is defined as experience that resembles perceptual experience, but which occurs in the absence of the appropriate stimuli for the relevant perception (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2008). These mental images help her in remembering the structure of a cell, light ray and even Hooke’s Law. Nonetheless, she finds it perplexing to use mental images in language subjects.

Asking friends for help

Throughout the two-month classroom observation, Xiu-Wen has always been an optimistic adolescent who chats with classmates cheerfully and participates actively in group discussions. Even though she does not speak as fluently as other classmates, she remains a sociable person who takes initiative to mingle with peers. As the only child in the family, she has no siblings to turn to when she needs help in error correction. In school, she asks for help from her friends to write down the correct words in an essay which is marked mostly in red for spelling errors. Whenever she could not remember the spelling of the word, she would not hesitate to request for her classmates’ assistance. Her positive personality traits are a major reason for her success in moving up from primary school to upper secondary.

Using music and songs

Before being detected as a dyslexic, Xiu-Wen did self-intervention on the sequencing problems using her musical talents. When asked how she overcomes the difficulty of sequencing the alphabet, Xiu-Wen mentioned the use of an ABC song at the age of ten. After singing the ABC song repeatedly, she was eventually able to sequence the alphabet accurately.

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study showed that Xiu-Wen shared most of the characteristics displayed by a dyslexic, in particular difficulties in copying, spelling words, reading and poor handwriting. Nevertheless, Xiu-Wen did not exhibit all of the negative traits such as extremely disorderly or compulsively orderly, being a class clown, trouble-maker, or too quiet, having strong sense of justice, emotionally sensitive or strives for perfection (Davis, 1992). Furthermore, she portrays positive learning attitudes as she completes the work and participates in group discussions earnestly. Her self-esteem is high enough to cope with mainstream demands. According to her group members, she is outspoken in conveying her views. This is supported by the Bandura, Barbarabelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) study, which stated “children who believe they can exercise some control over their own learning and mastery of coursework achieve success on their academic pursuits”.

Despite the spelling errors, she can produce creative sentence structures which vary in the usage of subject-verb agreement. An example of the phrase that impressed her peers and teachers was;

“Suddenly they heard the glasses broken into pieces. They were scared of the surroundings. The wind blew behind them. It increased the fear inside these children”.

Besides that, she uses plenty of creative ideas in her essay which arouse interest of the readers to read on for instance, “*a country road that leads to an uninhabited cottage*”.

According to research conducted by Kirby, Silvestri, Allingham, Parrila, and La Fave (2008), the results of the study revealed that “postsecondary students with dyslexia have a different profile of self-reported learning strategies and study approaches than their peers without dyslexia”. Xiu-Wen’s self-intervention reflected her effort in sidestepping her learning difficulties. Through the interview sessions with Xiu-Wen and observation based on her classroom performance, her strategies involved memorizing spelling, using visual aids and mental imagery, asking for friends’ help, and using music and songs.

It was indeed amazing to see how Xiu-Wen managed to overcome her learning difficulties all by herself, until now in Form 4. Her determination revealed that it is possible to go against all odds and end up being someone who is not entirely affected by dyslexia. According to Pn. Sariah the President of Dyslexia Association Malaysia, dyslexics who are not treated become frustrated and develop emotional problems, in fact, some may also fall into depression or even get involved in criminal activities (Wong, 2009). According to Bandura et al. (1996), prosocial and peer acceptance can reduce or prevent a child from depression. Yet, Xiu-Wen was resilient enough to stay away from this stereotypical fate.

Importance of Early Identification

Early identification aims to provide the children at risk an equal chance to receive early intervention (Souroulla, Panayiotou, Cyprus, & Kokkinos, 2009). According to the United Nations (2006), late identification will deprive a child from receiving effective treatment and intervention. With early intervention, they will receive a chance to be successful in school as well as their future career in life (Lerner, 2003). The findings showed that Xiu-Wen's dyslexic characteristics were obviously revealed throughout her school years. It shows she had obvious spelling problem despite her ability to read many books and write wonderful composition. However, her condition was not detected both by her parents and school teachers. Some of her obvious signs were overlooked by the teachers. She was very lucky because her parents were very understanding even though they were unaware about dyslexia. Teacher and peer acceptance was another factor that supported her in a natural way.

From the above finding, it shows that the signs of dyslexia can be detected by parents as early as five years old, but they were either too busy to notice or play the waiting game, hoping that their children would gradually pick up reading skills (Wong, 2009). It is important for parents and teachers to be aware of this condition to prevent children from deteriorating in their studies. According to Wong (2009), "Early detection and treatment is the key to helping them achieve in school and in life". This is supported by the finding from Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Fulbright et al. (2003) suggesting that early intervention benefits children with reading difficulties.

The study by Lane and Menzies (2005) suggested that early identification plays a crucial role in meeting the three goals of intervention, namely; to prevent harm done to the society by cultivating positive behavior, to reverse any harm done to the student that did not give any positive response to general intervention and lastly provide individual support to the student who needs individualized intervention.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, dyslexic children are often associated with negative remarks such as stupid and retarded. However, dyslexia has nothing to do with a person's IQ; some of the most creative and talented figures like Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Leonardo da Vinci, Tom Cruise and Whoopi Goldberg faced the same problem with dyslexia at a young age (Orr, 1999; Stowe, 2000). Thus, to build up a child's self-esteem, parents and professionals alike should help these children find their niche in life (McNulty, 2003). They should spend time and exploit every opportunity to reexamine their children's gifts and potentials so as to help them gain confidence despite the negative impressions branded on their dyslexic children. Based on the findings by Shaywitz, Shaywitz, Blachman et al. (2004), the nature of remedial education intervention is critical to the

success of the students with reading disability; the use of phonological reading intervention helps the development of the neural system. This is where the school plays an important role in providing a proper remedial intervention class that will benefit all the dyslexic students.

In the Malaysian education system, mainstream teachers generally have limited knowledge about children with learning disabilities as the pre-service course was designed to cater for subject-based teaching options. For Xiu-Wen's case, her dyslexic symptoms were not detected at an early age because the teachers were not equipped with the knowledge. A small but growing number of studies had indicated that, the current teachers were lack in essential competencies in regards of identification of children at risk as well as providing the right intervention for them (Kenny, 2004; Kohler & Greene, 2004; Koller & Bertel, 2006; Trout, Epstein, Nelson & Reid, 2006; Trout, Nordness, Pierce & Epstein, 2003).

It is only when the teachers understand the condition, they can then create "a more sensitive, supportive, and pluralist culture of learning at home, on the playground, and in the classroom" (McNulty, 2003). Empathy is very important when dealing with this learning disability. Teachers need to show the students that they can still learn and succeed despite their learning disabilities. Thus, as stated by the Dyslexic Association of Malaysia, teachers' training courses should include dyslexia in their curriculum. Apart from that, kindergarten operators should also look out for symptoms of dyslexia in children (Wong, 2009).

According to Register, Darrow, Standley, and Swedberg (2007), children are particularly drawn to music; hence, music teachers and therapists can play an important role in helping children with reading disabilities. Besides that, in certain cases, the use of computer games as a therapy may also help children overcome language impairment, such as dyslexia (Madeleine, 1996). With the changing of times and technology, we need to develop more user-friendly methods and intervention to help children with learning disabilities.

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