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# New programme to benefit dyslexics

## Touch-Type, Read & Spell helps dyslexics to learn better, slowly but surely

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD Teshvin Singh was diagnosed with dyslexia about two-and-a-half-years ago. He had poor language skills, especially his ability to read and write English. He also had difficulty concentrating in class.

He is now faring much better. His English grades have improved from 60 to 70 marks. His teacher and parents are pleased with his improvement, and he can now concentrate for a longer stretch of time. This, he said, is because of a new programme called the Touch-Type, Read & Spell programme or TTRS, a computer-based programme that was developed in the United Kingdom.

Mr Jarrod Fernandez, a teacher and head of the TTRS programme at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS), says that the programme has proven to be effective in helping students – both children and adults, especially those with dyslexia, visual or hearing impairment

and other learning difficulties – to read, write and spell.

Dyslexia is a learning difficulty – specifically a reading problem, said Adjunct Associate Professor Daniel Fung, consultant and deputy chief of the Child Guidance Clinic at the Institute of Mental Health. Children with dyslexia find it difficult to read, write, spell and comprehend written passages.

They may be confused with similar letters such as “b” and “d”, “p” and “q”, and with words that look alike such as “on” and “no”, or “was” and “saw”.

They may also be weak in other related areas such as language acquisition, phonological processing and sequencing.

“Sometimes the child is considered as lazy, not working hard enough and lacking in organisation and poor concentration skills,” said Mr Robin Mosley, the executive director of DAS and a dyslexic himself. “This is something I feel very strongly about, because dyslexia affects a child’s literacy skills, and literacy skills are fundamental to succeeding in life.”

According to Assoc Prof Fung, there have been no large scale studies conducted in recent years to account for the number of people with dyslexia here.

“It can be anywhere from one to three per cent, but this includes children with other learning difficulties as well,” he said. “So this may not necessarily be a good guide.”

The DAS estimates that about 16,000 children in Singapore aged between 6 and 16 have dyslexia severe enough to warrant the intervention of a specialist. This means that in a typical class of 40, one or two students could be dyslexic.

Sometimes, as a result of late diagnosis, some children end up struggling through school and performing well below their potential.

In TTRS, said Mr Fernandez, students learn how to spell through typing out words repeatedly, thereby igniting their motor memory. It is a structured programme, with 30 modules in all, and 24 levels in each module.



**REPEAT AFTER ME:** Students can improve their spelling by typing out words repeatedly, which helps them to remember what the words look like.

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