Dyslexia theory challenged

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A common perception that dyslexia can be corrected by focusing on listening abilities has been challenged by the University of Hong Kong.

Dyslexia affects about 10,000 children in Hong Kong.

The University of Hong Kong found that dyslexic schoolchildren can be helped by focusing on their Chinese writing, rather than listening, skills. A professor at the university said that experts believed that reading is strongly associated with a child’s listening skills.

But research, conducted in Beijing and involving 131 schoolchildren aged seven to 10 last year, found that a child’s ability to read Chinese is associated with his or her writing skills.

University of Hong Kong linguistics department associate professor Siok Wai-ting said that, for alphabetical languages such as English, evidence shows listening to words can help dyslexic children.

But, because the Chinese language comprises characters based on meaning rather than sound, listening cannot aid those suffering from dyslexia.

Siok explained that dyslexic children will better memorize a Chinese character by repeatedly writing it.

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