

My Chinese Learning Journey

by Andrew Lam (2E)

George Evans once said, “Every student can learn, just not on the same day or in the same way.” As a student with dyslexia, this quote really speaks to me. When it comes to learning Chinese in Hong Kong, most people may think that it’s as easy as child’s play. But for me, it’s exactly the opposite of that.

As a student with dyslexia, learning Chinese is a tedious and difficult process. I need to spend extra time studying and remembering words. Reciting poems for Chinese dictations is also much more complex for me. You need to know what each word sounds and looks like, and as someone who has trouble decoding words, this comes with different challenges. There are also other issues that I face daily. When talking to people, I may not have enough lexicons to make my sentences connect when talking, and sometimes I may sound rude because I’m speaking very directly. I sometimes come off as rude, illogical or weird when speaking Chinese, because I can’t always produce the correct language.

You may wonder how I overcome these challenges. I usually write a word I know above the unfamiliar word to help with understanding and pronunciation. I also think about how the Chinese character or word is formed, so I like to think in pictures. I also make leads for specific things, and force myself to remember the whole character. As for speaking, I will observe how people talk. 90% of the time, I still speak it in the wrong way or use the wrong sound. My classmates will remind me of how the word is spoken, so I learn from my peers, even though I kind of feel embarrassed when doing so. Since my feelings would hinder my courage to ask, and make me feel like I’m looked down upon, I usually just disregard my feelings, take the leap, and just say the words out loud.

I do not use my dyslexia as an excuse and try my best to take responsibility for my own learning. It may just be on a different day, or in a different way, but in the end, I will get there too.