

Retraction Statement

The Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals (JAASEP) is dedicated to maintaining the highest level of integrity, validity and reliability in the research-based articles published in the our journal. At this time, based on information presented to us, we find it necessary to retract articles from a lead author that have been deemed questionable from our journal in order to maintain the level of peer review status that aligns with our commitment to our readers.

The following papers have been published in different issues of JAASEP between 2009 and 2013. Following an investigation by Nanyang Technological University, primary data are no longer available to be authenticated and we have been informed that there are serious concerns about the ethical environment in which the data were collected.

The authors (Noel KH Chia, Dorothy LF Wong, Angie GT Ng, Meng Ee Wong, Chiew Peng Kho, Stacey SK Tan, and Lay Hwee Wee) wish to withdraw the papers below published in JAASEP in order to protect the integrity of the research record. They apologize for any inconvenience caused, especially to the investigators, who have used these papers (Please note the authors have been unable to contact the first/lead author Pauline TC Poh of Paper #6 and the co-author Esther Yap of Paper #6 with regard to these retractions.)

- Chia, NKH, & Wong, DLF (Winter, 2009). The effectiveness of dimethylglycine (DMG) as a dietary supplement and adjunct treatment to P.E.C.S. approach in treating children with autism spectrum disorders and severe speech delay. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 4(1), 16-42.
- Chia, NKH, Poh, PTC, & Ng, AGT (Winter, 2009). Identifying and differentiating children with hyperlexia and its subtypes: A meta-analysis of results from WISC-III subtests and standardized reading tests. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 4(1), 71-99.
- Poh, PTC, & Chia, NKH (Spring, 2009). The effectiveness of narrative story-telling as a strategy to improve the narrative speech of children with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 4(2), 58-101.
- Chia, NKH, Wong, ME, & Ng, AGT (Fall, 2009). The effectiveness of concrete poetry as a strategy to teach reading comprehension to children with Asperger syndrome. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 4(3), 20-37.
- Chia, NKH, & Ng, AGT (Spring, 2010). An investigation on the error patterns in computation of whole numbers committed by Singaporean children with dyscalculia. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 5(2), 5-37.
- Chia, NKH, Yap, E, & Ng, AGT (Spring, 2010). An analysis of verb pattern errors in active-passive sentence transformation made by upper primary Singaporean and Malaysian children with specific language impairment. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 5(2), 96-141.
- Chia, NKH, & Kho, CP (Winter, 2011). An investigation study on the learning difficulties in mathematics encountered by primary 4 children: In search of a cognitive equation for mathematics learning. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 6(1), 93-119.

Chia, NKH, Ng, AGT, Tan, SSK, & Wee, LH (Fall, 2011). A comparative study on the correlation between (i) mathematics quotient and nonverbal intelligence quotient, and (ii) mathematics quotient and draw-a-person intelligence quotient in primary 3 children with selective mutism. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 6(3), 52-79.

Chia, NKH (Fall, 2013). The effect of hypnosis on the academic performance of students with learning disabilities in school examinations: A single-group pre-test/post-test experimental study. *Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals*, 8(3), 33-47.

Given the importance of this issue as indicated by evidence from Nanyang Technological University and the seriousness with which we take it here at JAASEP, let us walk you through what happened and our overall conclusions on this matter.

First, as a peer reviewed journal, JAASEP always assumes that the research and writing submitted by authors are gathered in the utmost professional and honest manner according to acceptable methodology and procedures. We will continue to maintain that stance. When university professors and professionals throughout the world submit research articles to JAASEP, it is never questioned as to whether the data are real or have been fabricated. There has been and will always be, the belief that what is being submitted is truthful in 100% of its wording.

With that said, we were contacted by Helmy Faber, Psychologist NIP, via an email questioning the veracity of the work by one of the lead authors, Dr. Noel Chia, on multiple articles in JAASEP. We immediately responded to her and to Dr. Chia.

Ms. Faber's allegations were premised upon her assumption of Dr. Chia having access to specific data and the people/organization who/which collected the data. According to Dr. Chia, he was not given access to the identities of the participants in the data collected because of a confidentiality clause. Ms. Faber's questions probed into the identities of individuals (e.g., parents and students) who collected the psychoeducational profiles (e.g., standardized tests and instruments) of pre-test and post-test results for analysis. These amassed data were then tabulated and sent to Dr. Chia for analysis. Dr. Chia reported that he was essentially working on secondary data where all participants' identities were coded to ensure anonymity. Besides Dr. Chia's questions about his knowledge of the participants mentioned in the articles, Ms. Faber's other questions were related to how the primary data were collected by the Malaysian organization Dr. Chia collaborated with at that time. According to Dr. Chia, since he did not collect the data, he could not supply specific details as to how the data were collected.

According to Dr. Chia, he referred Ms. Faber to contact the key individuals regarding her questions, but they had moved on and were unable to be contacted. He reported that this was perhaps due to the time lag (about 1 to 2 years apart) between the periods when these analyses of data were conducted and when Ms. Faber first contacted him.

Dr. Chia reported to us that he tried to contact the key individuals from the organization who supplied him the data, to liaise with and explain to Ms. Faber regarding her questions about the

primary data, but to no avail. He also checked up and found out that the organization had closed and its website was no longer accessible.

According to Dr. Chia, he informed Ms. Faber of his lack of success to contact the organization and its key individuals and he stated that she appeared not to believe him. However, he was able to provide evidence (e.g., email correspondence and a letter of appointment by the organization of him as their research consultant) of the existence of the organization and the individuals he corresponded with to the University Research Integrity Committee at his university, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

JAASEP reached out to Mr. Tony Mayer, Research Integrity Officer in the President's Office at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Upon correspondence with Mr. Tony Mayer, it was reported that a university group advising the President's Office completed a thorough evaluation on this matter and was reported to the Provost in line with university procedures.

Mr. Tony Mayer reported to JAASEP that the allegations of fabrication by Dr. Chia were found to be unsubstantiated.

Mr. Mayer stated:

Thank you for informing me about the further complaints/accusations from Helmy Faber. As you know, the university group advising me completed its work last year and accordingly I have reported to the Provost in line with university procedures. Our conclusions were that no evidence was provided by Ms Faber that the data were fabricated or falsified. We also concluded that there is clearly an academic disagreement between Ms Faber and Assoc Prof Chia over the interpretation of the data and this is a matter which should be pursued as normal academic discourse through the medium of scholarly journals. Both parties to the dispute (Noel Chia and Helmy Faber) were advised accordingly in late November 2014.

He further reported:

The committee examined all the evidence presented to it by Helmy Faber and the responses from Noel Chia and, as I said in my earlier email, we could find no evidence to substantiate the allegations made by Ms Faber. The report is of course confidential to the University. We concluded that the dispute between the two persons was more one of interpretation and should be pursued through the medium of scholarly discourse. The dispute centres on the data used by Noel Chia. This had been provided by another organisation in Malaysia and Singapore, which no longer exists. There was no evidence to show that this data had been fabricated.

On May 12, 2015, Ms. Faber sent an email to JAASEP questioning the existence of Ms. Esther Yap. We will not repeat the details of the email content but after laying out her review, she stated:

Based upon all these facts it can be concluded that "Esther Yap or Esther Yap S.T. speech therapist" does not exist and the persona has been fabricated. Therefore the data in the paper "Chia, Yap & Ng (2010) 'An analysis of the verb pattern errors in active-passive/passive-active

sentence formation in English made by Upper Primary Singaporean & Malaysian Chinese children with specific language impairment' have also been fabricated and this should warrant a retraction for your kind consideration. Furthermore, Noel Chia revealed in earlier emails that all the data from the 8 papers were provided to him by the PPC Consortium which was led by speech therapist Esther Yap. Since 'Esther Yap' was fabricated, the 'PPC Consortium' has been fabricated as well, so this should warrant a further retraction of all 7 other articles mentioned in the previous emails for your kind consideration.

In response to this email, we searched for Ms. Esther Yap and immediately found the following information on Google:

Yap, E. (2011). Oligolexia or what is it? *Journal of Reading and Literacy*, 3, 52-56
http://www.srl.org.sg/www/downloads/JRL_Vol3_2011.pdf

About the Author: Esther Yap is a qualified speech language therapist currently in private practice in Malaysia.

Furthermore, we contacted Mr. Tony Mayer, Research Integrity Officer, and Professor Paul Teng on this issue. They responded with the following:

During the two investigative processes (one conducted by NIE and the second by a university-wide committee advising the Research Integrity Officer) into Ms. Helmy Faber's allegations against Dr. Noel Chia, we examined email and other correspondences between Ms. Esther Yap and Dr. Chia that date back to September 2007, and do not doubt that these came from a "real" person and an organization called the "Pusat Pembelajaran Cacat" (or "PPC" in short).

We also had sight of email exchanges between the PPC liaison officer and Dr. Chia, and between Esther Yap and other third parties. It is unfortunate that the organization which Esther Yap represented has ceased to exist but this is the nature of such voluntary bodies, especially when the funding support changes.

We did not feel the need to contact Esther Yap as we had no reason to doubt that the correspondence shared with us were genuine. Dr. Chia himself described his various meetings with Esther Yap and we had no reason to doubt her existence or that of the PPC.

On the matter of contacting Esther Yap, we don't have her current whereabouts. But a "google search" showed the following public information:

*Oligolexia or What is it?
Esther YAP, [B.App.Sc](http://www.srl.org.sg/www/downloads/JRL_Vol3_2011.pdf), MCSLT
Speech Language Therapist
EY Ucapan Klinik, Johor Baru, Malaysia
Journal of Reading & Literacy Vol.3, 2011: 52 - 56.
http://www.srl.org.sg/www/downloads/JRL_Vol3_2011.pdf*

At that point, based on our review of the evidence provided, and using the standard of "clear and convincing evidence", our conclusions were that Ms. Faber had not met the burden of proof that

Dr. Chia's data were fabricated or falsified. Ultimately, if Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, with its resources, did not find a need or a basis for a retraction of articles or evidence to support it, we could not see justified in doing so.

Then, on April 4, 2016, JAASEP received notification from Dr. Chia regarding his wish to withdraw the aforementioned papers in JAASEP (see beginning of this Retraction Statement). JAASEP did not have any information as to why this statement was now submitted by Dr. Chia nor were we given any forewarning of it.

JAASEP then reached out to Tony Mayer again with the following:

Our initial decision not to retract articles last year was based on the information you provided us regarding your investigation. It is very important for us to understand what has transpired. We saw on your website (<http://research.ntu.edu.sg/ResearchIntegrity/Pages/Notice-On-Research-On-Children-With-Special-Educational-Needs.aspx>) the statement:

"NTU has zero tolerance towards any form of research malpractice and will not hesitate to take action against anyone found to be lacking in research integrity. In accordance with its policy of research integrity, NTU conducted an in-depth investigation following allegations of research malpractice. This concerned research in the area of children with special educational needs carried out by researchers at the NTU National Institute of Education. Because of the non-availability of primary data we are unable to authenticate the data. Consequently, the University considers that coupled with doubts about the ethical approvals for the collection of the data, and in order to protect the integrity of its research record, the papers based on those data need to be retracted. Associate Professor Noel Chia and his co-authors have requested for the following papers to be retracted."

What does "Because of the non-availability of primary data we are unable to authenticate the data" actually mean?

What does "coupled with doubts about the ethical approvals for the collection of the data" mean?

We are respectfully requesting a response from you on this matter. JAASEP is issuing a formal response in its Spring 2016 edition. The more information we have, the better our understanding of the facts and the issues that led to the university's decision. Please let us know what happened that changed the decision of the university and warranted your formal response to the allegations.

Mr. Mayer then responded to us with the following:

Since we last corresponded the complainant produced new information which we have been investigating. In addition, other information was presented again which we have investigated and hence our change of stance.

The data for these studies was collected prior to A/Prof Chia joining NIE/NTU. It had been provided by an organisation called PPC/LDC from Kuala Lumpur. A/P Chia said that all data had been returned to LDC and had not been retained by him. Although the data collection was before he joined us – the analysis and writing had been carried out at NIE.

The complainant has said that the PPC/LDC and its intermediary – a Ms Esther Yap – do not exist and so the data must have been fabricated as ere this organisation and this person. We have sworn Statutory Declarations of people who have met Esther Yap so that argument falls. However, we cannot trace the PPC/LDC in Malaysia.

In late 2015, some sample data sheets of child assessments carried out by PPC/LDC were presented to us by A/P Chia which had not been returned to PPC/LDC. We subjected this material to forensic examination and it appears that there may be problems over the signatures of the parental consents.

Because we cannot authenticate the data and because of our concerns about the ethical conditions in which the assessments have been conducted the University feels that we need to protect the integrity of the academic record and papers based on data from PPC/LDC in your and other journals should now be retracted. A/P Chia has agreed and has the agreement of those co-authors who he has been able to contact.

I hope this explains our change of stance.

JAASEP Conclusions

The above stated information are the facts as presented to us at JAASEP. Based on this entire process, here are our conclusions:

1. JAASEP would like to personally and professionally thank Helmy Faber, Psychologist NIP, for her hard work and tireless efforts in this matter. She was clearly up against many professional roadblocks, yet she stayed true to what she believed and ultimately served the review process very well. We thank her for her professionalism and helping JAASEP maintain the integrity of our journal.
2. Based on this experience, Ms. Faber's work has made us realize that JAASEP needs its own independent review committee if a situation like this arises again. We hope it never does but we need to be prepared. JAASEP spent numerous hours examining all of the evidence presented to us by Ms. Helmy Faber and the responses from Dr. Noel Chia. It was a long arduous task, however, in order to do our professional due diligence in this matter and make such a significant and serious decision, we felt it essential that every document be reviewed and discussed.

JAASEP followed the lead of a university doing its own evaluation and ultimately, we were gaining access to information based on what it was telling us, not our own independent work. In the situation discussed, a university group advising the President's Office completed a thorough evaluation on this matter and was reported to the Provost in line with university procedures that the allegations were not substantiated. Then, new information was produced and other information was presented again which the university investigated and changed its stance.

JAASEP recognizes that we need to do our own independent investigation if a matter like this should ever materialize.

We want to thank Ms. Helmy Faber again for seeing this need and helping us move forward in the formation of such policy and procedure.

3. Based on the information presented, JAASEP has made the professional decision to retract all articles submitted by Dr. Noel Chia, not just the ones requested for retraction. Unfortunately, because of the uncertainty surrounding the prior research done that warranted the aforementioned retractions, JAASEP has made the professional decision to retract all of Dr. Chia's articles published in JAASEP in order to protect the integrity of our journal.

4. JAASEP has become a highly reputable peer reviewed journal in the field of special education. Every article submitted gets blind reviewed by multiple reviewers and the process for publication takes many hours. Our Editorial Board is exceptional and devotes itself to putting together a truly high quality journal and one that we are all very proud of publishing. It is JAASEP's hope that this retraction of articles by one lead author in no way impacts the outstanding research and writing done by all authors over the past 10 years for JAASEP. JAASEP will do everything possible to be sure that our integrity as a journal is maintained both now and in the future.