

Jankó, A Case Study of Dyslexia in Hungary¹

Eva Gyarmathy

Jankó is a lively boy of ten who is slight of build and possesses an inquisitive nature. He is very talkative and highly sensitive. He is an engaging child who selected his own pseudonym for his case study, which is also the name of a Hungarian folk tale hero, Erős (Strong) Jankó. During the break at the interview, Jankó played basketball using a crumpled-up piece of paper and aiming at the upper spring of the door. When the “ball” got stuck up there, he would not pull up a chair so as to reach it easily. He kept jumping up with a small stick he found in the room until he finally managed to push the crumpled paper out. His chances of success in this case were very low, but he was sure he could do it. It seems that whatever Jankó sets his mind on, he can accomplish. The only place this does not work is school.

Background

Family History

Jankó's mother is a kinesiologist and his father is a chemical engineer. The family lives in a middle class neighborhood in a large city in Hungary. Jankó has a six-year-old brother. The father, who is rarely at home, believes that Jankó would not have any difficulties if he paid more attention in school. The mother is aware that Jankó has true learning disorders and blames herself for not taking the appropriate steps to get him the help he needs. She also blames herself as she had learning difficulties in childhood. The mother reported that during her own school experience her memory was poor and she was always embarrassed during oral exams as she was afraid of failure. Thus, she developed self-esteem problems. Jankó's father, in turn, never liked to read. The mother thinks Jankó may have inherited dyslexia from his father and the related learning problems from her.

Medical History

Jankó was not a planned child. His mother, being unaware of her pregnancy, had an active social life that included frequent partying. When she became aware of the pregnancy, she was fearful and uneasy about the responsibility of having a child. The mother's labor was difficult and prolonged, eventually resulting in a cesarean delivery. At birth, the baby's heartbeat reportedly fell to a dangerous level, necessitating the administration of oxytocin. For the mother, Jankó's birth was a traumatic experience, which resulted in an emotional breakdown in the hospital that was so severe that she had to be placed in restraints. To this day the mother remembers the birth as a horrible experience.

Jankó has never been hospitalized nor had any serious illnesses. However, in recent years, he has begun to develop severe allergies. Not long ago, he exhibited such serious symptoms that his pollen allergy nearly progressed to asthma. He had been taking homeopathic medicine, when the family finally sought help from a specialist last year because of his allergy and his mental state. His anxiety increased to the extent that

¹ Gyarmathy E. (2011) Jankó. A Case Study of Dyslexia in Hungary. *In (Eds) Anderson, P.L, Meier-Hedde, R. International Case Studies*. Routledge, New York. 147-162.

he could not go to school. The specialist diagnosed the allergy problem as being psychosomatic in nature.

Early Development

According to his mother, Jankó was always a challenging child. He slept very little and cried excessively. Frequent stomach aches were a cause of discomfort. He also had some behavioral problems. His mother described him as a "small rebel" as he seemed to want the exact opposite of everything his parents chose. She felt bad about all this and blamed herself for not a good mother.

Jankó's development was adequate although a little uneven. His gross motor abilities were always very good. He moved very deftly at an early age, walking before he was one year of age. He learned to ski when he was about 4 or 5 years old and now at ten years of age, he has learned to snowboard in a single day. Jankó also learned to ride a bike between the ages of 4 and 5 years. He had less interest in fine motor activities. Even as a young child, he did not engage in drawing.

He pronounced his first words when he was one year old. Thereafter, he was for the most part a friendly and loquacious child. He got on well with the children of family friends. He was adaptive and never dominant with children, but he preferred being with adults. Jankó particularly liked to act, dance, and entertain on top of the table from an early age.

School History

Kindergarten

Jankó started kindergarten at the age of 3-years, but attendance was a problem from the beginning because he did not like school. His mother indulged him and did not force him to go as sometimes they traveled or visited relatives. Already at the age of 3-years, the child had the option to decide whether he wanted to go to the nursery school. Even though Jankó didn't have particular difficulties there, he didn't take a liking to either the teachers or his peers.

From the age of five years, kindergarten in Hungary is compulsory; however, there is no required curriculum. It is up to the individual teachers to determine whether children should have directed readiness experiences. If the teachers do not insist on these, children are virtually never engaged in developmental activities unless they appear to have serious problems. As Jankó wasn't in kindergarten very often, his early problems were not identified.

First Grade

At the age of six, Jankó was eager to begin first grade. He and his mother even made a tour of the classroom in advance. However, this experience turned out to be a great disappointment as Jankó lagged behind in learning and could never do anything as well as the other children. His peers bullied and physically abused him, so much so that he began hiding from them out of fear. Then, after less than two months of first grade, his homeroom teacher slapped him in the face for noncompliance and making fun of her. This was a very humiliating experience for Jankó, but even after this abusive incident, the parents were reluctant to move him to another school. They felt that this might be interpreted as escapism. The mother reported that this was one of the hardest

times of their lives. Eventually the school situation became unbearable for both Jankó and the parents. At midyear they moved Jankó to a Waldorf School. The mother joined the parents' association and became active in the school to help with Jankó's integration, but it quickly became apparent that he was also going to have problems at his new school. The mother described Jankó as a "dreamer" who "is really not the type cut out for school." He was referred to a specialist in the school who assessed him, but did not give the parents any results. By the end of first grade, Jankó still could not read or write. Even though it was obvious that he had significant reading problems, no one at the school mentioned dyslexia.

In Hungary, dyslexia is still nonexistent as far as many teachers are concerned. They usually blame the children and the parents for learning failures. They consider the child lazy and/or obtuse, and they believe that the parents are responsible for either neglect or overprotection. This attitude is of no help in identifying and solving the child's problems. In a number of schools, they do not diagnose dyslexia because that would require the need for extracurricular training, for which there is insufficient funding. According to the law, pupils cannot be failed in the first four grades. Consequently, problems usually come to light only after four years at school. By that time, however, the gap between achievement and age has widened and the child has lost precious time, resulting in diminished self-esteem.

Second Grade

Second grade was not an improvement for Jankó, as he was unable to successfully master the curriculum. At the age of 7-years, his problems with reading and writing became progressively worse. He was very slow and had problems concentrating, problems which were exacerbated by the high number of pupils in the class (i.e., 30 or more). His mother was regarded as an impatient, interfering and anxious parent because she was concerned with Jankó's lack of achievement. The homeroom teacher seemed unconcerned, thinking that he was simply a late developer. Jankó reported receiving some type of extra lessons at school, but the parents were not informed about the nature of these lessons and did not understand the purpose of this instruction. The fact that he received this support suggested that the school was aware of Jankó's problems, but chose not refer him for evaluation. The philosophy of this Waldorf School was to extend considerable latitude toward developmental expectations, but this position had severe consequences for Jankó as necessary intervention was delayed.

Third Grade

Jankó's problems continued in third grade. He could not read sentences or correctly write letters, and he was still very slow. His learning frustration resulted in continued behavior problems at school. He was frequently sent out of the classroom for being disorderly, which Jankó felt was an injustice. His mother was determined not to complain to the school further so she did not intervene. The homeroom teacher finally referred Jankó to an education counselor because of his academic and behavior problems. The counselor told the family that he had no idea how Jankó could be motivated. At this point, Jankó was also tested and diagnosed as dyslexic. However, the mother rejected the diagnosis because she did not want him to have this label. She, therefore, only accepted the expert opinion with the condition that Jankó be described as "at risk" instead of dyslexic. The mother's attitude was related to the fact that in

Hungary there is a general perception that dyslexia is some kind of mental illness. Parents are ashamed of the diagnosis and seek to avoid associated stigmatization. Hungarian parents are under no obligation to accept the opinion of experts; they can easily negotiate the diagnosis and may subsequently ask to change it. Because of this, a child's records may be altered substantially and therefore may not reflect the true nature of difficulties.

Fourth Grade

The gap between his grade level and actual achievement increased for Jankó as grade level advanced. To compensate, he misbehaved at school and vented his anger at his brother at home. Although Jankó tried hard to fit in with his peers, his efforts were in vain. The other children did not accept him socially and he seemed to disturb them. An "anti-Jankó" club was formed at his school, and these children actually beat him several times. During this time, Jankó often wet his bed and developed serious allergy and asthma attacks. The mother wanted to receive support for Jankó's learning, but she did not want him to be set apart and given different sorts of therapy. She wanted the school to accept him and to teach him in a way that he could learn. According to the mother the supplementary instruction that he received at school was of no help as it was basically "practicing the school work." The mother also took Jankó to a private reflexologist (i.e., a therapist who opens blockage of energy fields by pressures and movements), which Jankó detested as he found it to be boring and useless.

Finally, his mother took Jankó to a private psychologist to receive advice on how to help him. This psychologist tested him and informed the mother that the results of the assessment clearly indicated Jankó was dyslexic. In addition, his counting skills were found to be far below his high intelligence level. The psychologist recommended a private special needs teacher who could work with Jankó on a weekly basis to teach him reading and writing. The possibility of choosing a new school was also discussed, given that Jankó's situation was becoming worse. Subsequently the mother consulted the special needs teacher who started to work with Jankó. This teacher recommended a new school. Shortly thereafter, the mother changed her mind and did not take Jankó back to the special needs teacher nor did she change his school. As a result, there was no improvement. After this, Jankó's homeroom teacher began to work with him. The mother decided they should be patient and give this teacher a chance. However, the teacher suggested that Jankó give up sports and music so he could concentrate on learning instead of his hobbies. The teacher felt that these extracurricular activities made Jankó too tired in the afternoon and did not leave him with enough time and energy for learning. Jankó was thereafter deprived of his favorite activities. As in many other cases, this school had a misguided solution, which did not address the child's academic needs or interests (i.e., spending more time on the curriculum without exposure to specialized strategies designed to meet the needs of the dyslexic child).

Dyslexia Diagnosis and Treatment Issues

In Hungary, there is no uniform assessment procedure for identifying dyslexia. It is basically up to the specialists to select whatever tests they choose. Even committees of experts diverge in assessment procedures, and consequently, diagnoses are highly varied. If the assessment targets specific areas of the child's development, then the

testing is carried out by the experts responsible for that particular area and individual testing methods differ greatly. There are very different sorts of methods and tools in use in the identification of dyslexia, but these can basically be divided into four groups: (1) intelligence tests, (2) perceptual-motor measures, (3) achievement tests, and (4) multicausal measures. There are also methods that use the teacher's evaluation of the children's achievements and behavior, which are basically structured observations. The results of these are rather subjective, but provide a detailed picture of the children's abilities (Kósáné, Porkolábné, & Ritoókné, 1987).

For Jankó, difficulties with school performances were not observed in kindergarten, but this is probably due to the fact that his attendance was erratic and there were few academic expectations at that level. Jankó's problems were initially noted in the first grade where he received his first assessment for learning problems. The results of this testing, however, were not released to the parents. A second assessment, on the parents' request and with the school's agreement, was carried out two years later, when Jankó was a third-grader. His third grade teacher was of the opinion that Jankó had difficulties with learning. She noted that his general speed was slow and he made many mistakes of form and mixed up letters in his writing.

Since the Hungarian language is a phonetic transparent language, it is not thought to be difficult for dyslexics, yet there are certain features that can cause problems. For example, Hungarian is an agglutinative language (i.e., prepositions do not stand alone, but are added to nouns) and word order is not fixed (i.e., suffixes serve as markers for sentence construction), which means that words can be very long and misreading endings can interfere with comprehension. Thus, it was not surprising that Jankó's reading was very slow and laborious. Also, the letters of the Hungarian alphabet are divided into three groups: standard characters, consonant combinations (e.g., *sz*, *zs*, *gy*), and vowels with diacritical markers (e.g., *ő*, *á*, *ô*), the latter two of which present particular challenges for dyslexic children because of confusions related to visual and phonetic similarities (Gyarmathy, 2004). These errors of letter identification and formation were observed in Jankó's reading and writing as indicated above.

When Jankó was a third-grader he received his first professional assessment at the Educational Counseling Service, which is a state institution in every district in Budapest and in all Hungarian towns. The Ildkó Meixner test (Meixner, 1993) and the Meeting Street School Screening (MSSST) (Denhoff, Siqueland, Komich & Hainsworth, 1968) assessment methods were employed. Jankó's reading was found to be slow and erroneous, below developmental expectations of the test. His mistakes were consistent; he commonly mixed up letters (*ő-ú*, *ty-gy-ny*, *b-d*, *sz-zs-cs*) and he always halted when trying to identify the letters *b* and *d*. The results of this testing revealed that he exhibited sequential visual perceptual and visual-motor weaknesses as well as poor verbal memory. As previously mentioned, Jankó was diagnosed as dyslexic at this point; however, the diagnosis was changed to "at risk" for dyslexia at the insistence of the mother. The psychologists at the center recommended special education treatment. As a result of this testing, the special needs teacher at the school worked with him once a week for an hour. Jankó didn't like going to these sessions and no improvement was observed.

A year later in the fourth grade, Jankó was given the Gyarmathy-Smythe Cognitive Profile Test (Smythe, Gyarmathy & Everatt, 2002; Gyarmathy, 2009), which

again confirmed his dyslexia. In addition Jankó was found to have math problems, particularly in the area of counting. He also had serious difficulties in the area of spatial-orientation. His movement coordination was excellent, while his fine motor skills were somewhat below average. His counting, reading and spelling skills were all poor. The testing report described his need for intensive treatment as “urgent.” In addition to the development of the relevant abilities, targeted reading development was also recommended, which meant that a specialist should reteach reading to Jankó. To address counting problems, it is suggested that the child learn to use the *soroban* (i.e., a Hungarian type of abacus).

After this testing, the mother chose to delay a remedial program to give the classroom teacher an opportunity to achieve results. She also believed this would provide Jankó with another opportunity to experience success and confidence in his classroom. Thus, the reading problems that he exhibited in first grade were becoming progressively worse as the last four years represented a series of missed opportunities that could have greatly changed the outcome for Jankó.

In Hungary, it is common for parents to seek private therapy solutions when the child's school progress is inadequate. While it should be the responsibility of the school and the education counselor to provide for the child on the basis of an appropriately designed individual education plan, this seldom occurs. The specialists at the official educational counseling centers (Nevelési Tanácsadó) have the responsibility to provide support for children with special needs and their parents; however, these counseling centers are overloaded so the staff spends most of the time and resources providing for children with much more severe disabilities than dyslexia. Thus, parents of children with dyslexia are generally left to fend for themselves and must seek help and information from independent sources. There are many well-trained dyslexia specialists in Hungary, but it can be difficult for families to find these specialists and provisions for remediation can be very costly.

Parent Perspectives

Jankó's mother described him as a sensitive, independent child who has many talents. He is especially good at sports and is talented at table tennis, basketball, and climbing. Jankó also has talents in the areas of music and acting: Even as a small child he was very precocious in his ability to entertain others and always enjoyed being the center of attention. In fact, his ability to entertain is so extraordinary that his mother believes he will become an actor. However, during the last few years these abilities have been less obvious as he has been bearing the burden of school failure, which has adversely affected all areas of his life.

The mother has some concerns about Jankó's social skills and behavior. When he is in the company of adults, he demonstrates excellent social skills as he is highly verbal, inquisitive and ingratiating. However, when he is with peers his mother reported that he can be “manipulative, unsocialized, and thoughtless.” She noted that he doesn't seem to realize when he is “pushing limits.” When he hits someone, he doesn't understand that he is causing pain. However, the mother also described Jankó as a highly sensitive child, who cannot bear to see brutality on television shows. He even becomes overly emotional when watching cartoons, “which have a deep effect on him.” She believes that he is subject to extremes of behavior. His mother reported that Jankó rarely reads

independently at home, but his parents and grandparents read to him about five hours per week.

The mother defined dyslexia as “an ability disorder,” in which a child “sees letters differently, and mixes them up.” She also thinks he has a problem with motivation, meaning that if he is not interested in the topic, he cannot pay attention. She believes that dyslexia will influence her son’s life by continuing to decrease his self-esteem and causing socialization problems. The mother reported the significance of her son’s reading problem to be moderate, yet she believes that the effects on school and family life are severe. She also feels that Jankó’s reading problem significantly interferes with his social life.

The mother stated that the most difficult aspect of Jankó’s reading problem is that his “lack of success” affects his whole personality. She noted that he constantly experiences a feeling of being behind, which results in self-pity. He compensates for his poor reading by engaging in misbehavior, often resulting in his removal from the classroom, which puts him even further behind. His mother is also concerned about the way he mistreats his little brother. She reported that Jankó physically attacks and humiliates his brother, probably in an effort to relieve the accumulation of tension from school and the stress imposed by expectations he cannot meet.

For a long time, Jankó’s mother refused to accept that he had significant reading problems. Two years earlier she would not allow an expert to include the diagnosis of dyslexia in the formal diagnosis after his testing. Today, she has finally accepted that Jankó needs help, but she is still ambivalent about confronting the problem and its consequences. She equates obtaining help for Jankó with conceding that this is a significant problem. She is reluctant to draw attention to him through his problems and oddly believes that providing her son with help may be “forcing him into this victim role.” The father thinks it is the child’s fault that he can’t manage reading. He believes Jankó should pay more attention and work on improving his body posture while reading. The mother perceives that much of the problem may be due to Jankó’s poor attention. This is why she continues to send him to reflex therapy even though she has not seen any results. The mother previously hoped that the school would solve Jankó’s problem, but the Hungarian system does not have the capacity to provide this remediation. Supplementary lessons at school focus on the curriculum, not the remediation of specific learning problems, such as dyslexia. In spite of the latest diagnostic testing, which confirmed Jankó’s dyslexia, his current homeroom teacher regards the situation as a question of motivation. He perceives the responsibilities of his role to be devoted to uncovering ways to motivate this child. And the mother seems willing to go along with this even though she knows that this particular teacher “tends to delegate the problems of the child to the family.”

Jankó’s mother loves her son and it is painful for her to see the child strain and struggle. He doesn’t believe in himself because he keeps comparing himself to good students. Although he has made some progress in his reading, when compared to his peers the mother says it is “frightening” to see his lack of achievement. His homework creates a huge problem as he doesn’t even know what he is supposed to do. She noted that he is at a disadvantage because he doesn’t understand the lessons in class to begin with “so it is nearly impossible for him to do the homework, which is becoming an increasing problem.”

If there is one thing that the mother could change about the way the school treats children with dyslexia, she stated ironically that there should be “no sweeping things under the carpet,” which suggests that in spite of her ambivalence she wants help from the school. She also stated that “parents should not be left alone with their problems” as they need support. She wants small group classes, support for children with talents, greater attention to differences among children, and a special learning classroom where attention can be given to learning problems. The mother also sees the need for stress relief and self-esteem activities that might include “playful drama.”

Child Perspectives

Jankó does not accept that he has dyslexia. In spite of his school problems and diagnosis of dyslexia, he unequivocally stated “I don’t have reading difficulties.” He said that he loves books and is just getting “the hang of reading.” He cannot, however, name a single book he likes. Although he is 10 years of age, he has only read one book on his own and is now in the process of reading his second. He admitted that his mother helps him when he cannot cope and family members read to him a lot.

While his mother rated the significance of Jankó’s reading problem to be moderate, Jankó rated it as mild. He believes it only minimally interferes with school compared to his mother’s perception that it causes significant interference. Likewise, his mother noted that the problem severely interfered with family life whereas Jankó minimized the influence of the problem. Characteristically, Jankó was unwilling to admit that his reading problem significantly interfered with his social life.

His interview responses relating to school were concise, and, again, full of inconsistencies. Although this is a child who is highly verbal, he shuts down when the topic of conversation relates to his learning problems. When asked to name things that he has trouble with, he first mentions learning, and then turns to much more specific things in the area of sports, such as swimming and dunking in basketball. In an answer to a question concerning his strategy for dealing with challenging work, he says that if he cannot cope with a task, he will try until he finally succeeds. However, he admits that sometimes he gets so frustrated that he slams his work to the ground and shouts “I won’t learn this.” Although, his mother reported that Jankó cannot do homework independently, he claimed that homework constituted only a “little” problem for him. On the other hand, if he could change something about school, “there would be no homework.”

Jankó complained that teachers do not give precise instructions about their expectations. It is his opinion that they don’t tell him exactly what he is supposed to do and therefore he cannot follow through. He perceives this to be a stumbling block to his success in the classroom. He would like his teachers to be more patient and to provide more demonstrations. Jankó says that if they would do that, it “would be enough, and I wouldn’t need anything else.”

Jankó doesn’t seem to have any real friends. When he was asked to name his best friends, he answered “there are none.” He said his classmates consider him “stupid” and hurt him for no reason. He admits that he annoys them with his antics that are thinly disguised attempts to become more popular. Jankó thinks his peers find it amusing when he’s funny. On the other hand, his peers often misunderstand his jests and take them seriously. This is when they start beating him, upon which he becomes

angry and retaliates. Jankó reported that he doesn't get along well with his brother, either. He says his brother pesters him and he responds by beating him. Jankó considers it unfair that his mother scolds him for this as he is not the instigator. He doesn't seem to understand that it is inappropriate for a 10 year old to physically attack a much younger and smaller child.

If Jankó could, he would run away from his failures and constant conflicts. His magical wishes indicate a desire for escape on the one hand, and a longing for success and achievement, on the other. His wishes of being able to fly and do anything with his magic wand or that of being able to dig himself in anywhere clearly show this. And of course, what would really make him happy would be "if I could do my work properly."

He also has, however, many diverse aspirations for future careers, even though he doesn't yet know precisely what he wants to be. He mentioned possibilities in sports (football player, basketball player, etc), music, blacksmithing and chemical engineering, the latter being the profession of his father. In spite of all of his challenges and lack of confidence, Jankó possesses talents in sports and music that should be nurtured and appreciated.

Case Commentary

In many ways, Jankó's case is typical of a dyslexic child in Hungary, although in other respects his situation is unique. It is unfortunately typical that the identification of dyslexia and the risk of dyslexia, as well as the detection of deviations in abilities came late. Jankó was 9 years of age when was diagnosed as dyslexic, which is a little later than typical, but there is also quite a bit of diversity in assessment practice because of extenuating circumstances. Some children will be screened for dyslexia during kindergarten and will be identified as "at risk" if problems are observed. Many of these children will later be diagnosed as dyslexic, probably at the end of first grade, which means that the child will be 8 years of age by the time treatment is received. Yet, it is also true that some very intelligent children can cover their weaknesses for a long time and will not be diagnosed until much later. Teachers are not trained to identify the symptoms of dyslexia, especially when the signs are not clear. All too often no one will notice there is a reading problem as the child may be compensating for this weakness through outstanding intelligence. Thus, a child that should be performing well above grade level will be functioning at an average or slightly below average level. Girls are particularly at risk of being overlooked because they tolerate frustration better. In the case of boys, constant failure often triggers aggression, as a result of which they are referred for behavior problems. It is at this point that the dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties are uncovered, which preferably happens sooner rather than later. Even after the dyslexia is identified, however, it is uncertain that the child will be provided with the necessary therapy. The support a child is provided always depends on local circumstances and the financial situation of the parents. In Hungary, the school is not responsible for providing remedial services to dyslexic students. The mental health centers for children are required to deal with dyslexics after the school refers the child for assessment and treatment.

The perception of dyslexia at school is also beginning to change, but the old view still has firm footing in some classrooms. Some teachers believe there's no such thing as dyslexia, only lazy children who want to be excused from hard work. Depending on the

attitude, the teacher may rebuke the dyslexic child causing embarrassment in front of peers and/or perhaps even resort to violence such as in the case of Jankó who was slapped by his first grade teacher. Other teachers may attempt to try to find ways to motivate the child, as Jankó's teacher tried to do at the Waldorf School. Unfortunately, however, neither impatience, nor patience is of any help when the child in fact should be provided with remediation to address the specific problems of dyslexia.

Due to the nature of confusion surrounding dyslexia, this learning disorder was excluded from the category of special educational needs in Hungary, which would have entitled these children to an increased per capita subsidy. Although dyslexics belong to the category of Special Education Needs (SEN), they can mostly receive only *dispensation* instead of services so they don't receive failing marks in school as schools do not receive extra money to support remedial needs with classes for dyslexic students. If a child has serious learning disorders, *dispensations* can be obtained from an official committee of experts. A *dispensation* allows a child to be excused from grading for problematic subjects (i.e., reading, writing, grammar and second language). A *dispensation* also provides accommodations, such as additional time on written exams and oral administration. Consequently, only those who are diagnosed with another major SEN disorder, such as attention deficit with hyperactivity (ADHD) will obtain remedial support services. The dispensation process itself is problematic as it provides only a partial solution for students with dyslexia. The avoidance of failing marks is insufficient for these children. They can generally obtain full waivers in writing, reading, grammar, counting and learning foreign languages, but what they need is instruction to remediate their reading problems as opposed to accommodations. Due to their poor achievement, dyslexics will be at a disadvantage throughout their lives if they don't receive the help they need during their school years. For example, knowledge of foreign languages is indispensable in today's global society. In Hungary, performance on foreign language exams also exerts considerable influence on admission to higher education institutions and the awarding of degrees, which are given only to those who have passed at least one intermediate foreign language examination. Thus, if dyslexic students receive a waiver for foreign language, their chances for admission to certain university programs will be adversely affected.

In Jankó's case, there are a number of possibilities that might be suitable for meeting his educational needs, but each will require the assistance of a special needs teacher to help him cope with his difference in abilities, enhance his poor school skills and learn to use efficient learning methods. The first solution would be for Jankó to continue in his present school with the help of those teachers, but considering his current dire social situation and the meager experience of the teachers in teaching dyslexic students, this option could result in even greater tension leading to a further deterioration in Jankó's self-esteem. This is the fate of most dyslexics, who stay in mainstream education and obtain waivers in different subjects. As another alternative, the family could choose to obtain the status of a *private student*. This is a rare solution, as yet, and is used mainly in the case of a child who is unable to fit in due to emotional-behavioral disorders. As a *private student*, Jankó could have intensive support to overcome his disadvantage and the number of conflicts between him and his peers would also be reduced. Unfortunately, there is only a slight chance that a school will provide such an opportunity to a child like Jankó as dyslexia is not considered a severe

enough disorder to attain this status even if it leads to behavioral and emotional problems. A third solution is for Jankó to go to different school, which specializes in specific learning disorders, but in typical public school, dyslexics usually don't get enough help and individual support. It means that Jankó would find himself in the same situation he currently faces only in a different mainstream school. As none of these potential solutions seem ideal, it would appear that private remediation may be the only tenable answer for this child.

Jankó's case is also typical in that many dyslexics suffer from problems of low self-esteem and related behavioral difficulties due to continued school failure. Even a highly talented child, such as Jankó, can be deeply affected by the day to day struggle of not being able to live up to expectations. This frustration often turns to aggression as he tries to alleviate stress. Jankó will not accept that he has a reading problem. He resorts to self-deception and is constantly frustrated because he feels that there is something wrong with him. He uses his considerable willpower to deny and disguise his difficulties. He is angry at the world because he cannot achieve as his peers. What is unique in Jankó are his outstanding abilities and willpower. He has extraordinary achievement and outstanding success in activities he likes to do (i.e., sports, music, singing and acting). These are areas where he has tremendous possibilities and should be used to facilitate his learning. Jankó's skill development could be best achieved through his artistic vein. His talent for acting and interest in literature could provide great opportunities for learning. Physical exercise and music also help learning. For example, he could learn literature through studying plays, prose, and poetry. These areas of strength must be emphasized as they are positive influences in Jankó's life, which will help him face the adversity that is imposed by his condition.

Jankó's plight is complicated by the mother's lack of willingness to make a decision about his treatment, which is in turn related to her concerns about calling attention to a disorder that she believes carries a certain stigma. As with all problems that families face, it is difficult to discern the dynamics that are preventing the parents from squarely addressing this problem with a reasonable solution. His current school and teacher, although of no help, are at least well-meaning. Apparently, in spite of the adversity that Jankó has faced, his family is not convinced that there is a preferable solution, at least not at this point in time. Jankó is a child with extraordinary abilities and talent who may well mature into a very successful adult. His chances of success will be greatly increased if he can manage to find a community where he is accepted and receives support for his dyslexia. Considering his strong determination and talents, he could be capable of outstanding achievements.

References

- Denhoff, E., Siqueland, M. L., Komich, M. P., & Hainsworth, P. K. (1968). Developmental and predictive characteristics of items from the Meeting Street School Screening Test. *Develop. Med. Child Neurol*, *10*, 220-232
- Gyarmathy, É. (2004). Research on dyslexia in Hungarian. In I. Smythe, J. Everatt, & R. Salter (Eds.), *International book of dyslexia: A cross language comparison and practice guide* (pp. 123-131). West Sussex, England: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Gyarmathy É. (2009) Kognitív Profil Teszt. *Iskolakultúra* 3-4. 60-73.

- Kósáné Ormai V. Porkolábné Balogh K. & Ritoók Pálné (1987). Neveléslélektani vizsgálatok. [Educational Psychology examinations]. Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó,
- Meixner, I. (1993) A dyslexia prevenció, reedukáció módszere [Method of dyslexia prevention and re-education]. Budapest, BGGYTF.
- Smythe, I., Gyarmathy É. & Everatt, J. (2002). Olvasási zavarok különböző nyelveken: egy nyelvközi kutatás elméleti és gyakorlati kérdései. [Reading difficulties on different languages: Theoretical and practical issues of a cross-linguistic study]. *Pszichológia*, 22, 387-406.

Jankó's Interview

1. What do you want to be when you grow up? ***I don't know. A football player, an NB1 basketball player, a musician, a blacksmith, or perhaps a chemical engineer.***
Why do you think you would be good at that job? ***Because then I could achieve what I want. My dad's a chemical engineer, too.***
2. Tell me about a teacher who has been really important to you or one who has helped you. What did she do to help you? ***He was called Mr L. He helped me catch up when I fell behind, and he often told me what I had to do, and not how I had to do it.***
3. Tell me about a teacher who didn't really help you that much or one who did not give you the help you needed. What did you want her to do to help you? ***Ms H, she didn't specify the exercises as well as she should have. (In teaching eurhythmic.) But she was fair.***
4. Tell me what your mother thinks about your dyslexia. Does she talk to you about the problem? ***Yes.*** What does she say? ***What's that? I don't have such a problem. I don't have reading difficulties.***
5. Tell me what your father thinks about your dyslexia. Does he talk to you about the problem? ***He doesn't talk about it usually.*** What does he say? ***He only said I read differently. Because he thinks it's my body posture that's incorrect when I'm reading.***
6. Tell me about something that makes you really happy. ***If I could do my work properly, singer, basketball player, and I would also have time to spend with my children. If I could fly, that would make me very happy.***
7. Tell me something that makes you really sad. ***Mum thinks I pester my little brother, but I don't, and this really hurts me.***
8. When the work gets very hard at school and you think you can't do it, what do you do? ***I keep trying until I finally succeed. Sometimes I'm so much frustrated that I slam it to the ground and say I won't learn that.***
9. What kinds of books do you like to read? ***None of them. I've only just begun to get the hang of reading. I'm reading Nils Holgersen all on my own. My mum helps, when I get stuck. So far, I've only read PomPom on my own. I liked that.***
What is your favorite book? ***I don't have one, I like books.*** Do you read by yourself? ***Yes.*** Who else reads to you? ***Dad, mum, my grandmothers. I've only just begun, but I enjoy it now. Writing, however, I don't like***

10. Do your friends know you have dyslexia? **No**
Do you talk to them about it? **No**
What do your friends say to you about dyslexia? **Nothing**
11. Do your siblings know that you have dyslexia? **No** Do you talk to them about it? **No**
What do your siblings say about dyslexia?
12. Name three things that you really good at:
(1) **table tennis**
(2) **basketball**
(3) **dodge ball**
13. Name three things that you not so good at:
(1) **learning**
(2) **swimming**
(3) **dunking in basketball**
14. If you are feeling bad about your reading, is there one person you can talk to who makes you feel better? **My mother.** What does she say to you? **She says, try to concentrate on what you're reading, and don't pay attention to anything else.**
15. Do computers help you with reading? **No**
16. Do you usually have problems with your homework? **Sometimes.** Can you do your homework independently or does someone help you? **I get help.** Is homework a big problem or just a little one? **Just a little one.**
17. If there was one thing you could change about school, what would it be? **There would be no homework.**
18. If you had three wishes, what would they be:
(1) **That I could fly.**
(2) **That I had a magic wand with which I could do anything.**
(3) **That I were good at digging, so that I could dig myself in anywhere.**
19. Tell me three things that you would like your teacher to do to help you with your dyslexia:
(1) **That they would be patient.**
(2) **That they would demonstrate things more times.**
(3) **That would be enough, I wouldn't need anything else.**
20. Who is the best reader in your class? **Péter**

How did he get to be such a good reader? ***He once started reading and got to like it very much.***

If you did that would you be a good reader? ***Yes.***

21. Is it important to learn how to read? ***Yes***

Why or why not? ***If you're given a piece of paper you should read, it's not good if you don't understand what you're reading. If you can read, you will enjoy and understand it, which is very important.***