

A reflection on life with aphasia by Dong Jun Hua

“I have Intra-cerebral Haemorrhage and Aphasia (speech problem). When I fell down with stroke in September 2007, I couldn’t talk at all. It’s left side of brain and right side of body that was disabled. I consider myself lucky that I’m alive!

Imagine I never woke up at all, because I was unconscious for three weeks. And imagine the hell that my wife was going through that time. We had been married for less than one year, and my wife was new to Australia, learning English.

My experience with Aphasia is exactly like learning a foreign language. Luckily I know that feeling, having learnt English, Russian and French from the beginning. It’s getting used to embarrassing and panicky moments, when you are looking for words that disappear on tip of tongue. Now it’s back to the beginning again, doubled with difficulty with native language (Korean) as well! But considering my life was meant to be learning foreign languages all the time, it’s not so bad. My life is getting used to panic!

I thank my wife Kayoko. She’s sharing with me the experience with learning all those new languages. I see remarkable improvement in her that challenges me. She said to me, “Now that you have Aphasia, you know what we foreigners are going through.” I totally agree with her.

With Kayo and Cookie (our new puppy), we’ve got nothing to wish for (...except for the fact that I’m embarrassed to be unemployed, and my wife is my carer, but I’m looking for work). Except that, I’m happy.

I have now two years of my marriage, and one year I’m disabled with a stroke. If someone were to ask me to choose between a life without a wife and without a disability, and a life with a wife and with a disability, I’m confident I’d choose the second. That is my life, and I’m satisfied.”