



## Dyslexia or ELL?

It is much more difficult for someone with dyslexia to learn to speak, read, and write a second language. So if some of your ELL students are taking much longer than most of your students to master English, consider the following symptoms of dyslexia that have nothing to do with English:

- When did he begin to speak 5 to 10 simple words that you could understand?  
Delayed speech is correlated with dyslexia.
- Is she left-right confused?
- Did this student have difficulty learning to tie shoes?
- Can he write the alphabet in sequence?
- Did she have difficulty learning the names of the letters -- no matter what language she used at the time?
- Can he recite or write his name, address, and phone number? (If he speaks English well enough to be taught in English, he should be able to memorize his name, address, and phone number. That has nothing to do with reading. It is a rote memorization issue.)
- Does she reverse some of her letters and numbers even after two years of handwriting instruction and practice?
- Does he have an odd pencil grip and dysgraphia?
- Does she have trouble telling time on a clock with hands -- even using her native language?
- Does he have trouble memorizing multiplication or math facts?

If a student has three or more of these warning signs, then it is likely the student is an ELL and has dyslexia.

Source: Barbara Steinberg, M.Ed., PDX Reading Specialist, LLC, Lake Oswego, OR  
Additional Reading: [Essentials of Dyslexia Assessment and Intervention](#), Chapter 11