



## Multilingualism and Dyslexia

Dyslexic students have difficulty with their native language, and so it is surely going to be harder for them to learn a second. However, the benefits of knowing a foreign language are often underestimated and dyslexic learners who have good aural/oral skills may appear to have mastered a second language – until they are faced with the need to read and write the new language, which often signals the return of dyslexic-type difficulties.

Bi/multi-lingual students who continue to exhibit an auditory-verbal processing delay are often considered simply to be taking longer to develop fluency or perhaps struggling with cultural differences and unfamiliar subject vocabulary, when they are actually demonstrating dyslexic difficulties. The underlying language processing problems experienced by many dyslexic students can make learning any new language difficult.

Differences between the developing aural/oral abilities of students who are learning a new language and their written work in that language is to be expected, but dyslexic reading deficiencies may be more difficult to detect, since all students will experience some problems with pronunciation, impeding fluent reading.

When multilingual learners fail to make progress in the curriculum as they begin to develop fluency in the new language subject teachers should not assume that their language status is the only reason. Specialist teachers and psychologists have tended to misdiagnose or ignore dyslexia indicators in multilingual students because of the multiplicity of possible causes for failure to make progress and the risk of a 'false positive' result. (Peer and Reid, 2000 p 5) Schools should look carefully at all aspects of multilingual students' performance in different subjects to establish whether any problems in the classroom arise from dyslexia.

Dyslexia in multilingual children is under-diagnosed though it is possible that some multilingual children are mistakenly being considered to be dyslexic.

### Reading:

**Peer, L & Reid, G** (eds) (2000) *Multilingualism, Literacy and Dyslexia – A Challenge for Educators* London, David Fulton

This book provides: current and informative guidance for practitioners involved in areas of literacy, multilingualism and dyslexia, invaluable advice on assessment and support for bilingual learners and those needing to acquire a modern foreign

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language, an essential text for staff development in this area, reference to innovative approaches in technology and other teaching programs beneficial to multilingual learners, advice on learning additional languages. With contributions from international practitioners and researchers, this book will provide guidance to anyone involved in literacy development, language learning and teaching

**Schneider E & Crombie M** 2003 *Dyslexia and Foreign Language Learning* Abingdon Oxon David Fulton Publishers pp 4-5

**Cline, T. and Shamsi, T.** (2000) *Language needs or special needs? The assessment of learning difficulties in literacy among children learning English as an additional language: a literature review* [RR 184] London : DfES - from:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR184.doc>

**Reid, G, Deponio P, Mullin P. K. & Landon J** *An Audit of the Processes Involved in Identifying and Assessing Bi-Lingual Learners Suspected of being dyslexic* **IN** - *Dyslexia: An International journal of research and practice* Volume number - 6 Issue Number 1 January -March 2000 Pages - 29-41

### Online

**Peer L & Reid G** (2001) *Multilingualism and Dyslexia - Issues and Challenges* presentation at the 5<sup>th</sup> BDA international conference at York 2001.

This presentation provides an overview and some detailed insights into key issues in relation to multilingualism and dyslexia. These include:

- assessment,
- cultural factors,
- curriculum access,
- parental liaison,
- community support
- issues relating to equity, expectations and policy.

Each of these issues generate considerable challenges and this presentation will discuss these and suggest how they be met by schools, professionals and education authorities.

[http://www.bdainternationalconference.org/2001/presentations/thu\\_s6\\_a\\_3.htm](http://www.bdainternationalconference.org/2001/presentations/thu_s6_a_3.htm)

**Smyth Ian 2001** – highlights of a talk delivered at the Language and Literacy Unit, February 2001. *Difficulties of diagnosing specific learning difficulties in multilingual children*

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/wdnf/multilingual.html>

### Websites:

National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum (NALDIC) – May 2008 -

<http://www.naldic.org.uk/ITSEAL2/teaching/Dyslexiaandmultilingualism.cfm>

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<http://www.gavinreid.co.uk/index.php?action=ShowArticle&id=129>

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