

Characteristics and behaviors often associated with various learning problems	Common manifestations of English Language Learners (ELLs) during classroom instruction that may mimic various disorders or cognitive deficits.
Slow to begin tasks	ELLs may have limited comprehension of the classroom language so that they are not always clear on how to properly begin tasks or what must be done in order to start them or complete them correctly.
Slow to finish tasks	ELLs, especially those with very limited English skills, often need to translate material from English into their native language in order to be able to work with it and then must translate it back to English in order to demonstrate it. This process extends the time for completion of time-limited tasks that may be expected in the classroom.
Forgetful	ELLs cannot always fully encode information as efficiently into memory as monolinguals because of their limited comprehension of the language and will often appear to be forgetful when in fact the issue relates more to their lack of proficiency with English.
Inattentive	ELLs may not fully understand what is being said to them in the classroom and consequently they don't know when to pay attention or what exactly they should be paying attention to.
Hyperactive	ELLs may appear to be hyperactive because they are unaware of situation-specific behavioral norms, classroom rules, and other rules of social behavior.
Impulsive	ELLs may lack the ability to fully comprehend instructions so that they display a tendency to act impulsively in their work rather than following classroom instructions systematically.
Distractible	ELLs may not fully comprehend the language being spoken in the classroom and therefore will move their attention to whatever they can comprehend appearing to be distractible in the process.
Disruptive	ELLs may exhibit disruptive behavior, particularly excessive talking—often with other ELLs, due to a need to try and figure out what is expected of them or to frustration about not knowing what to do or how to do it.
Disorganized	ELLs often display strategies and work habits that appear disorganized because they don't comprehend instructions on how to organize or arrange materials and may never have been taught efficient learning and problem solving strategies.

Samuel A. Ortiz, Ph.D.
St. John's University