

SLPI PAPER #8: MAY ASL TEACHERS SERVE AS SLPI INTERVIEWERS AND RATERS FOR PEOPLE THEY HAVE TAUGHT?

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October 1998 (1st edition); December 2007 (7th edition)

SLPI Coordinators, SLPI Team Members, and others have, in various forms, raised the issue of a possible conflict of interest for someone who teaches American Sign Language (ASL) and who serves as an SLPI Interviewer and Rater. Therefore, we have decided it is time for SLPI PAPER #8

in order to address the question: “May ASL Teachers serve as SLPI Interviewers and Raters for people they have taught?”

We assume that this question stems, at least partially, from the concern that:

If I have taught this person sign language, I may not be able to be objective when s/he takes the SLPI. Therefore, this may influence my SLPI interview with this person, and regardless of what skills this person demonstrates during his/her SLPI interview, I may tend to give a high rating if this person received a high grade in my class and to give a low rating if this person received a low grade in my class.

While we do consider this a legitimate concern to raise, we believe ASL teachers may conduct SLPI ratings with persons they are teaching or have taught.

Why?

First, there is more than one rater for each SLPI interviewee.

Second, for most applications of the SLPI, interviewees may request re-ratings.

Third, sign language teachers are professionals who routinely evaluate the sign language skills of students for whom they serve as teachers.

Fourth, sign language teachers should be expected to exhibit the same professionalism during SLPI ratings that they exhibit as sign language teachers.

Fifth, names of raters for SLPI interviewees are confidential; that is, raters’ names are not shared with persons taking the SLPI.

We understand and appreciate that SLPI Team Members may be uncomfortable conducting SLPI interviews with people they are currently teaching or have recently taught (past 6-to-12 months). This is one reason we recommend that if interviewers are uncomfortable interviewing certain persons, regardless of the reason(s), they should not interview these persons. This same right is given to persons scheduled to take the SLPI; that is, persons taking the SLPI may request another interviewer (though we do not recommend people be allowed to choose their interviewers).

It is (almost) impossible to setup an SLPI assessment process for which both interviewers and raters do not know persons taking the SLPI. The major reasons for this include the fact that the SLPI procedures, as developed by us, involves local interviewers and raters who are skilled in, knowledgeable about, and accepting of the local/program sign language dialect; and (b) the fact that the SLPI procedures works best when SLPI Follow-Up Meetings are conducted in a timely manner by persons who are able to connect SLPI results to local opportunities for sign language communication skills development.

Although our answer is 'yes' to the question of may ASL teachers serve as SLPI interviewers and raters for people they are teaching/have taught, there are exceptions. Therefore, if an SLPI Team Member is uncomfortable interviewing and rating someone, s/he should not serve as an interviewer and rater for this person. In order to assure that persons taking the SLPI do have the opportunity to show and be rated on their best sign language communication skills, it is important that interviewees, interviewers, and raters all are as comfortable as possible within the context of the SLPI process.