

SLPI PAPER #12: SUPPORT FOR LOCAL SLPI TEAMS AND SLPI TEAM TRAINING

Frank Caccamise and William Newell
 SLPI Co-Developers/Consultants
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Introduction

Over the years we have received numerous requests from individuals for Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) Training. In response, we have explained that our workshops are conducted on a local basis, not at a national or central training facility, and that participants generally are 8-to10 highly skilled local signers. Several individuals have then asked if they may join a workshop being conducted in another state. Unfortunately, given our experiences this is not an alternative that we believe is appropriate, and we have referred persons making such requests to programs that do provide training for conducting sign language assessments at central locations.

Expanding upon SLPI PAPER #3, *What Does the SLPI Assess?*, the purpose of this SLPI PAPER is to discuss why we support local people providing sign language communication skills assessment and, consistent with this, why we support and conduct our training for SLPI Teams on a local basis. In providing this information we wish to stress that there are good reasons for conducting training and conducting of assessments on a national or centralized basis as well, and depending on many factors, including goals, training and conducting of assessments on a national or centralized basis may be appropriate.

Support for Local SLPI Team Members and SLPI Training

Our primary goal for SLPI use is to support effective sign language communication among Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and Hearing people by: (a) providing information on how well people are able to use sign language for their communication needs; and (b) as appropriate, supporting people in development of their sign language communication skills. We believe that these goals can be best accomplished via integrated sign language communication skills assessment and development programs that are implemented and conducted on a local basis. Reasons we support locally trained SLPI Teams providing sign language assessment services include the following:

1. Allows skills assessment-development programs to be implemented and adapted in a manner that is consistent with and sensitive to local resources and needs.
2. Allows assessment and follow-up services to occur in a timely and cost effective manner.
3. Allows sensitivity and respect for local sign language dialectical variations. This is especially important for languages such as American Sign Language (ASL) that have developed and are used in bilingual communities. As stressed by Haugen (1977, pages 91 and 98), "The concept of 'norm' in reference to language is highly ambiguous and slippery ... we have to recognize that the communicative norm which grows up in bilingual communities is more elastic and less predictable than that of a monolingual community." This supports the training of highly skilled **local** ASL signers to conduct SLPI services (interviews, ratings, and follow-up meetings) in order to help ensure the assessment procedures is respectful of and sensitive to the local communicative norm for ASL communicators.

4. Allows opportunities for people to review and discuss their assessment results with people knowledgeable about both the assessment tool and local options for developing and refining sign language communication skills. A follow-up meeting to review and discuss assessment results, and suggestions for improving skills if appropriate, is a critical part of an integrated language skills assessment-development program.
5. Allows programs to take into consideration assessment results when planning courses, workshops, and other options to support sign language communication skills development, thus allowing for assessment and opportunities for skills development to be closely linked.
6. Reliable use of the SLPI Rating Scale requires that raters have shared perspectives on applying SLPI ratings to sign language communication, and, given what is discussed in #3 on the previous page, that raters have shared perspectives on interpreting SLPI ratings as they apply to local sign language communication. We believe this can be best accomplished by training local SLPI Team Members together. Further, since the SLPI is a criterion based assessment, with the anchor or highest criterion point of the SLPI Rating Scale being highly skilled native/native-like signers, it is important that this training involve rating of local signers, including highly skilled local native/native-like signers.

Importance of Independence of SLPI Ratings, Monitoring SLPI Team Members' Ratings, and CONFIDENTIALITY

The independence of each rater's first rating is critical to helping ensure fairness of the rating procedures. Although important for all assessment tools, this is especially important for our recommended use of the SLPI, since it involves local raters who often know persons who take the SLPI. In addition, consistent with SLPI PAPER #19, *Monitoring the Consistency of Your SLPI Team Members' Ratings*, we wish to stress the importance of monitoring SLPI Team Members' ratings in order to help ensure SLPI Team Members are consistently and appropriately interpreting SLPI Rating Scale ratings as they apply to local sign language communication. And again, although important to all assessment tools, use of local interviewers and raters means that special effort must be made to help ensure confidentiality of SLPI results. As stressed in SLPI Training Workshops and SLPI training materials, SLPI Team Members are critical to helping ensure confidentiality of SLPI results and documents guiding SLPI use should specify who receives copies of SLPI results. Sharing of results with any other persons or groups not specified in program documents should require release of information forms being signed by persons taking the SLPI.

Conclusion

Our primary goal for SLPI use is to support effective sign language communication among Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and Hearing people. In this SLPI PAPER we have shared reasons why we believe local SLPI training and implementation supports this goal. In addition, we have stressed the importance of independent SLPI ratings, the importance of monitoring SLPI Team Members' ratings, and the importance of confidentiality to helping ensure the fairness of locally controlled sign language communication skills assessment procedures. We wish to stress, as stated earlier, that there are good reasons for training and conducting assessments on a national or centralized basis as well, and we support all efforts that contribute to the effectiveness of sign language communication.