

La Salle University's Communication Sciences and Disorders Departmental Policy on Students and Professionals Who Speak English with Accents and "Nonstandard" Dialects

This policy was adapted from ASHA Joint Subcommittee of the Executive Board on English Language Proficiency entitled *Students and Professionals Who Speak English with Accents and Nonstandard Dialects: Issues and Recommendations* and can be found at:

<http://www.asha.org/policy/TR1998-00154/>

ASHA defines an *accent* as a phonetic trait from a person's original language (L1) that reveals itself in a second language (L2); while, a dialect refers to an array of differences, that make one English speaker's speech different from another's. *Dialect* is defined as a language variation. Dialects are seen as applicable to all languages and all speakers. All languages are analyzed into a range of dialects, which reflect the regional and social background of their speakers (<http://www.asha.org/policy/KS2004-00215/>). Members of ASHA are urged not to discriminate against persons who speak with an accent or dialect.

Considerations Necessary for the Provision of Clinical Services by Accent or Dialect Speakers

There is no research to support the belief that speech-language pathologists who speak a "nonstandard" dialect (i.e., dialect other than General American English) or who speak with an accent are unable to make appropriate diagnostic decisions or achieve appropriate treatment outcomes. When working with students who speak a "nonstandard" dialect or speak with an accent, clinical supervisors and faculty should be asking such questions as:

- Does the individual have the expected level of knowledge in typical and disordered communication?
- Does the individual have the expected level of diagnostic and clinical case management skills?
- Is the individual able to model any aspect of speech and language that characterizes the client's particular impairment?
- Does the individual demonstrate *communicative competence* in the clinical setting as defined by ASHA? (<http://www.asha.org/policy/KS2004-00215/>)

Clinical Report Writing Skills

Clinical report writing skills and competencies are critical for effective documentation. Academic standards related to writing and documentation will not be altered for students who speak with dialects or with accents. Clinical standards will also not be altered for students who speak with dialects or with accents. All students in the CSD program have access to resources for improving writing skills. The Sheekey Writing Center (Olney 203) has tutors, free of charge, to help undergraduate and graduate students with research and documentation styles, study skills, and a variety of skills related to the writing process. See <http://www.lasalle.edu/services/sheekey/> for more information.

Speech Skills

Speakers with accents and dialects likely have the competencies necessary for full participation in the professions. Employers and clients of speech-language pathologists need to be educated about the benefits/advantages of hiring personnel from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

To minimize any discriminatory behavior that may be evident in the CSD Programs, clinical practicum settings, and employment settings, as well as to provide enhanced resources to professionals and students with accents and dialects, CSD faculty and staff will offer the following:

- According to ASHA's *Social Dialects Position Paper* ([ASHA, 1983](#)), students who speak dialects or who may not speak General American English are not to be considered as having disordered speech and language.
- Students who desire to modify their accent/dialect may participate in Accent Modification services at our On-Campus Clinics; however, the student may decline this offer without any resulting discrimination on the part of the CSD faculty and staff.
- Students who are unable to model any aspect of speech and language that characterizes the client's particular communication disorders would be given additional support by the supervisor.
 1. The Director of Clinical Education will meet with the student in order to jointly develop a plan so that the student can meet the clinical requirements as stated in the 2014 Standards.

Withdrawal of the Student from the Clinical Site

- In order to insure that the client or patient is receiving optimal care in accordance with Principle I of the *ASHA Code of Ethics* (2010), the Department Chair or the Director of Clinical Education reserves the right to replace any student clinician who is not easily intelligible to the client/patient or if the client/patient requests such a change.

Voluntary Withdrawal from a Clinical Site

- A student may choose to voluntarily withdraw from a clinical site if he/she feels that a language barrier and/or speech intelligibility is an obstacle to learning and delivery of optimal services to a patient or client.