Kourtney Landis

Dr. Guler

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Importance of Writing in Speech Language Pathology

Whenever you hear of the profession Speech Language Pathology (SLP), many people think of speaking or the techniques of how to speak properly. This kind of thinking is correct; speech pathologists focus on helping patients with their speech impediments. But there is another part to this profession that people often forget about, writing. These documents will vary in purpose and intended audience. Some papers are completed solely for the therapist while other papers are written in the hope they will be published. These writing projects are different than writing projects done in other majors. It is not necessarily like English where the majority of their essays are written in MLA format or like chemistry how the majority of their writings are lab reports. In this essay, I will discuss the importance of writing as a SLP, the unique styles of writing, their intended audience for their varying papers, and the purpose behind the different writing projects an SLP must complete.

Writing is, in fact, a large part of speech therapy. In Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSDS) classes, the amount of writing required to complete the class will depend on the class. Some classes are labeled as writing intensive and some are speaking intensive. For the writing intensive classes, you are expected to write at least 3 to 4 big papers, each being 10 to 15 pages. In other CSDS classes, the students may have to complete smaller writing assignments like practice evaluations or fake progress reports (Reveals). These writings will not be as long or intense as other writing projects but they are still an important aspect of this major.

Dr. Cralidis, CSDS professor at Longwood University, explained that SLP’s have a variety of writings to complete in order to receive their diploma. One type of paper that SLP’s may complete is a research paper. In research papers, therapists will address the issue or problem that they are researching right away. Next, the writer will go into detail about their prior knowledge on the subject. Then he/she will start to address the answer to the issue previously discussed. All of the evidence will be cited from reliable sources to ensure the writers credibility (McCartney). This is the only type of paper that must be completed in a specific format. Research papers must be written in APA format (McCartney). This is the format that all speech therapists will use when writing formal research papers. Writing research papers is an important part of being an active member in the SLP community.

Along with writing research paper, a speech pathologist will also write a variety of papers that are focused on their patient. A SLP will write progress reports, evaluations, and SOAP notes (Cralidis). Sarah Reveals, senior majoring in CSDS, thinks that the most important writing a SLP will complete is evaluations and progress reports (Reveals). The evaluations and reports are used to keep track of each patient’s progress. Sarah went on to explain that at first, evaluations are written informally. They do not have to be in any specific format and the information does not have to be written in complete sentences. The first draft contains quick notes that will help the SLP when they are writing the final evaluation. This final evaluation will be written as a formal essay. When writing a formal evaluation, it does not have to be in a specific format but it is normally formatted like a professional essay (Reveals). When completing evaluations and reports, the SLP will discuss what they specifically worked on with their patient, what they observed while working with their patient and their patients response to their treatment (Cralidis). These types of writing are used daily to monitor and keep track of their patient’s progress.

With the variety of writing projects that speech pathologist complete, their intended audience is consistent. Whenever a therapist writes a research paper, he/she will write to other therapists or anyone who is interested in the topic (Cralidis). This is different when a SLP is writing an evaluation. When completing an evaluation, an SLP may share their progress report with other therapist that a specific patient is working with. All of the therapist will share their reports with each other so they can figure out how to effectively help their patient (Nelson). People may think that these reports are done so that the parents or loved ones of a patient can see their progress, but this is not true. A speech therapist is only allowed to share their evaluations with whomever it may concern. This includes other therapists and the patient (Cralidis). Although speech therapists publish different styles of writings, the intended audience remains same.

In a majority of majors, the purpose behind a writers published works is to convey a message or get a point across. This is different for speech therapist. They have a unique purpose behind why they write. Most speech therapists say that they complete their reports and evaluations in order to monitor their patient’s progress (Nelson). As a part of the major, SLP’s have to keep record of everything that they do with their patients and in order to do so, they complete evaluations of everything they work on with their patients. Speech pathologists must write down everything that their patients do and say (Cralidis). The evaluations and reports are helpful to other therapists as well. They want to be able to look back and see what styles of therapy worked best for their patient (Reveals). All the reports and evaluations that a SLP completes are with the intent to help their patients.

People may not think that writing is essential in speech therapy but it is. SLP’s must complete evaluations and reports on all of their patients. These writing will be formally and professionally written. Speech therapists also complete research papers to stay knowledgeable in their profession. Although the writing formats and styles are unique to this specific major, they are still crucial in order to be complete undergraduate school and graduate school in CSDS. Writing is an essential part of becoming a successful speech language pathologist.

Works Cited

Cralidis, Ann. Personal Interview. 9 November 2015.

McCartney, Elspeth. “Research Report: Early Literacy and Children with Severe Speech and Physical Impairment: A Review.” 9. 2 (1994): 200-214.

Nelson, N W. “The speech-language pathologist’s role in a writing lab approach.” *National Library of Medicine* 22. 3 (2001): 209-219.

Reveals, Sarah. Personal Interview. 9 November 2015

Appendix:

Dr. Cralidis

As a speech pathologist, what genres of writing do you ?

* Research
* Student progress reports and
* SOAP notes
* Evaluation report
* Non-fiction- based on what was observed and what they did and what the patients response is to what they did

What is your main purpose behind the writings you complete?

* To have a record of what they have done
* Record of care that has been helped

Is writing a main part of this major?

* Very much so
* Large part of clinical practice
* If you don’t document it, it may as well not have happened
* Document everything, do that in the school system too
* Document everything that you do or what you are told

Who is your intended audience for your writings?

* Other members of the rehab teams
* Physicians
* Nurses
* IEP team
* Occupational therapists
* Only people will read who have a need to know
* Families do not normally need to see the reports
* Health insurance companies

Other:

* A lot of writing in certain classes
* Depends if the class is writing intensive or speaking intensive
* No Wikipedia and use gov websites
* Be careful with what source you use, some will be false

Sarah Reveals

What genres do you write for CSDS?

* Expository text- informational
* Collect data and write SOAP notes. How to assess data that you take after working with a patient. Putting in an essay format and professional format
* First draft can just be sloppy notes

What is your main purpose behind completing the writings?

* To help you plan future sessions and monitor progress
* Document everything that you have done with your patient.
* To help them succeed more

How often do you have writing assignment in your CSDS classes?

* Depends on the class
* 3 or 4 for writing intensive classes
* a lot of speaking intensive and writing intensive
* only a few big papers (10-15)

How do you effectively write or complete writings in this major?

* Writing center, very helpful
* Assha webpage for research
* Nsshla website and give you different sources- send you emails about helpful links.
* Depends on the class- some professors give you helpful resources
* Know how to cite your sources correctly
* Use APA to source papers