NTID Master of Science in Secondary Education (MSSE) Program

Applicant and Student Sign Language Communication Skills

Assessment and Follow-Up Process

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May 2008 (11th edition)

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Introduction

The sign language communication skill level expectation for MSSE Program students at time of graduation has been established at the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) *Intermediate Skill Level Rating* or *Above*. (See Appendix B, page 10, for a copy of the SLPI Rating Scale.) This standard and the MSSE Applicant and Student Sign Language Communication Skills Assessment and Follow-Up Process are based on studies conducted by Caccamise, Bateman, and Gustina (2001), Caccamise, Bateman, Gustina, and Holcomb (2001), and Caccamise, Bateman, and Poor (2002 and 2003).

MSSE Program Applicant and Student Sign Language Communication Skill Assessment and Follow-Up Process

1. All MSSE Program applicants complete a Sign Language Background Questionnaire (SLBQ) that includes: (a) age began to learn/acquire sign language, (b) a self-rating of American Sign Language (ASL) communication skills, and (c) information about previous SLPI results (see Appendix A, p. 5). This questionnaire is included in the MSSE Program applicant packet. Also, as appropriate, students may be requested to complete and return the SLBQ via email.

2. If an applicant has taken the SLPI and achieved a rating of Intermediate Skill Level or above, the applicant is requested to provide an official report of this rating to the MSSE Director from the program that conducted the rating. If this is done, the applicant is considered to have satisfied the sign language communication skill level expectation for MSSE Program graduation.

3. As part of the MSSE Program admissions process applicants who self-rate their ASL skills as *No Skills* are expected to attend a summer sign language course/program prior to their first quarter in the MSSE program and applicants who self-rate their ASL skills as *Basic* or *Intermediate* may be expected or strongly encouraged to attend a summer sign language course/program (see #8 on next page).

4. Generally MSSE students are expected to take the SLPI prior to their second MSSE Program student teaching experience; this means by December of students' second year in the MSSE Program. Exceptions to this may be made for students who are judged by the MSSE Director as not ready to take the SLPI.

5.   At the Fall MSSE Program orientation meeting the MSSE Director (or her/his designee): (a) informs students of SLPI expectations and scheduling, (b) provides students with a packet of information about the SLPI (see Appendix B, pages 6-10), (c) shows a sample video of signers across the SLPI rating range, (d) discusses skills needed to achieve in the SLPI Intermediate Skill Level Range or Above, (e) stresses the importance of SLPI Follow-Up Meetings and use of SLPI results and videos to assist students in planning sign language communication skills development, and (f) informs students that the SLPI sample video is available for additional viewing in the NTID Self-Instruction Lab, LBJ-3205. The MSSE Director also provides this information upon acceptance or entry for students who begin the MSSE Program during Winter and Spring Quarters.

6.   The MSSE Director provides the OCAS Coordinator with the names of students requested to receive SLPI services (a) at the beginning of the Fall Quarter for Fall Quarter services, (b) at the end of Fall Quarter for Winter Quarter services, (c) at the end of Winter Quarter for Spring Quarter services, and (d) during Spring Quarter for April/1st week of May SLPI services. Given the demand for SLPI services, Winter is the best quarter and Fall the second best quarter for requesting SLPI services.

7.   Accepted applicants who self-rate their sign language communication skills as *Advanced* or *Native/Native-Like* Skills are encouraged to take the SLPI during their first or second quarter in the MSSE Program; those who self-rate their skills as *Intermediate* may be encouraged to take the SLPI during their first or second quarter in the MSSE Program.

8.   For applicants who self-rate their sign language communication skills as *Basic* or *Intermediate* Skills, other information they provide about their sign language communication skills and use is reviewed by the MSSE Director (see Appendix A, p. 5). Based on this review, and possibly an informal interview conducted by the MSSE Director #7 above or #9 below is followed and these students may be expected or strongly encouraged to attend a summer sign language course/program prior to their first quarter in the MSSE Program (see #3, page 1).

9.   Applicants who self-rate their sign language communication skills as *No Skills*, in consultation with the MSSE Director, may take the SLPI during Winter or Spring Quarters of their MSSE Program first year, and, as stated in #4 on page 1, generally they take the SLPI prior to their second MSSE Program student teaching experience.

10.   Students not achieving an SLPI Intermediate Skill Level Rating or above prior to their MSSE Program second student teaching experience take the SLPI during Spring Quarter of their 2nd year in the MSSE Program.

11. SLPI Interview, Rating, Sharing of Results, and Follow-Up Process for MSSE students:

   A. SLPI Interviews: The one-to-one interview process described by Caccamise and Newell (2007a) is followed.

   B. Official SLPI Ratings are recorded and reported to MSSE students as follows:

      1) Advanced Plus-Superior Plus Skill Level Range
      2) Advanced
      3) Intermediate Plus
      4) Intermediate
      5) Survival Plus
      6) Survival
      7) Novice Plus
      8) Novice
      9) No Functional Skills

   C. SLPI Rating, Sharing of Results, and Follow-Up Process -

      1) SLPI Rating: The SLPI Three Rater Team process described by Caccamise, and Newell (2007b) is followed.

      2) The OCAS Coordinator sends a list of all results and SLPI results memos for students to the MSSE Director who shares SLPI results memos with students.

      3) SLPI Follow-Up Meetings are:

         a. Part of the normal SLPI process first time SLPI is taken at NTID if rating achieved is up to the Survival Plus Skill Level. Results memos sent to these students state that next step in the SLPI process is to contact the OCAS Office to schedule follow-up meetings and that they will receive their ratings at their follow-up meetings. (See Appendix C-#1, p. 11).

         b. Optional if rating achieved is Intermediate Skill Level or above or SLPI has been previously taken at NTID. Results memos sent to these students include their SLPI ratings and state that they have the option to schedule SLPI Follow-Up Meetings. (See Appendix C-#2, p. 12).

      4) As stated in Appendix C (#1 and #2), at SLPI Follow-Up Meetings students have the opportunity to review their SLPI videos and to discuss suggestions for developing their sign language communication skills.

      5) Students may be requested to give permission to use their SLPI videos for training, demonstration, and research (see Appendixes C and D, pp. 11-13).

      6) On a quarterly basis the OCAS Coordinator provides the MSSE Program Director with the following information for MSSE students who take the SLPI during each quarter: (a) names and OCAS code numbers, (b) SLPI Interview dates, (c) SLPI official ratings, and (d) whether they did or did not attend SLPI Follow-Up Meetings.

References

Caccamise, F., Bateman, G., and Gustina, D. (2001). *National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) Master of Science in Secondary Education (MSSE) Applicant and Student Sign Language Skill Expectations and Assessment and Follow-Up Process Study*. Working Paper, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY.

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Appendix A

National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID)
Master of Science in Secondary Education (MSSE)
Applicant/Student Sign Language Background Questionnaire

Frank Caccamise and Gerry Bateman
October 2007

This questionnaire is part of our efforts to provide appropriate sign language learning experiences for MSSE students. Information from this questionnaire will remain confidential, with this confidentiality maintained for any group reports generated.

Information from this questionnaire will not be used in making MSSE admissions decisions. Thank you for completing this questionnaire and returning it to us.

1. Name:

2. Date:

3. Expected MSSE Program Entry:

4. Expected Graduation Date:

5. Please check one: Deaf _____ Hard-of-Hearing _____ Hearing _____

6. Date-of-Birth:

7. Age began to learn/acquire sign language:

8. How would you rate your current skills in using and understanding American Sign Language with people who are deaf? (check or place an X in only **one** box)

No Skills	Basic Skills	Intermediate Skills	Advanced Skills	Native/Native-Like skills
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. Have you ever taken the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)? _____ Yes _____ No
    If yes, please provide rating you received and where you took the SLPI.

10. Please share any other information you wish about your sign language skills.

Appendix B

Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)
Information for
Master of Science in Secondary Education (MSSE) Students

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE
SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW-AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (SLPI-ASL)[a]

Frank Caccamise and William Newell
October 2007

The SLPI, a conversational approach to sign language communication skills assessment, is based on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) (also known as the Language Proficiency Interview/LPI). Like the O/LPI, the SLPI permits interview content to vary according to the job responsibilities/ schooling, background, and interests of each person interviewed. Consistent with the O/LPI, the goal of the SLPI is to assess how well people are able to use sign language for their communication needs, and, as appropriate, to assist people in development of their sign language communication skills.

The SLPI involves a one-to-one conversation between the interviewer and candidate/interviewee, with each interview recorded and subsequently rated independently by SLPI raters. [See Attachments 1 and 2 for SLPI candidate information and tips.] The basis for ratings is the SLPI Rating Scale (Attachment 3), a standard scale based on highly skilled, knowledgeable native/native-like signers.

The SLPI-ASL assesses American Sign Language (ASL) as it is used among skilled sign language communicators in the United States. This use includes the full range of ASL from pure, linguistic descriptions of ASL to English-like contact signing. This full range is characterized by meaning-based sign language vocabulary selection consistent with standardized signs in current use by skilled language users and a variety of grammatical features that are consistent with effective use of gestural-visual language for communication. These grammatical features include: (a) space, indexing, eye gaze, sign movement directionality, and body shifts to separate ideas and to identify and discuss persons, places, and objects present and not present; (b) classifiers for describing and representing persons, places, and objects and their movements (for example, use of the index finger to represent "a person"); (c) sign-word order which facilitates effective communication in gestural-visual language; and (d) facial expressions and other body movements (non-manual signals) to support and add to information communicated (for example, affirmative and negative head movements). In addition to vocabulary and grammatical features, clarity of sign production, fluency, and comprehension are important to effective communication when using a gestural-visual language, and therefore are considered in SLPI-ASL ratings. Further explanation of what is assessed by the SLPI is provided in a document entitled *Skills Important for Effective Sign Language Communication and SLPI-ASL Rating Levels*. Copies of this paper are available from the NTID Office of Communication Assessment Services (OCAS) SLPI Coordinator and Training Materials Section of the SLPI website: www.ntid.rit.edu/slpi.

As we have discussed consistently in SLPI presentations and published materials, follow-up is critical to successful use of the SLPI. Thus, SLPI interviewees are encouraged to schedule SLPI Follow-Up Meetings. At these meetings interviewees have the opportunity to review their SLPI-ASL videos, to discuss their sign language communication skills, and to discuss suggestions for improving their sign language communication skills. .

_____

[a]The SLPI was referred to as the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) from 1983 to May 2006.

Attachment 1

Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)
Information for Candidates

1.   We will have a conversation about social and school/work topics. I will ask you questions, and you may ask me questions.

2.   We want to get the best sample of your American Sign Language (ASL) skills.

3.   In order to elicit your best ASL skills, I may ask you to "re-sign" (restate) some responses. Do not use voice during our conversation (some natural ASL lip movement is OK). Using sign (ASL) only will allow us to focus on your best ASL skills.

4.   We will evaluate your ASL skills, including: (a) ASL vocabulary; (b) clarity and control of sign production; (c) use of ASL grammar (for example, use of space, sign directionality, classifiers, time indicators, and sentence and discourse structure); (d) nonmanual behaviors such as facial expressions and body shifts; (e) fluency or smoothness of sign and fingerspelling production; and (f) comprehension (skill in receiving ASL).

5.   Please try to maintain a good "signing posture;" that is, please sit upright. This should help you show your best ASL skills.

6.   Please answer my questions as completely as possible.

Do you have any questions? Please use ASL.

Note: PLEASE USE YOUR BEST ASL.

Attachment 2

Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)
Tips for Candidates

1.   RELAX: Sip a cup of coffee, rub your hands, talk about the weather--anything that will help you to relax and be confident.

2.   RATE OF SIGNING: Sign at a rate that is comfortable for you. If you know that you make many mistakes when you sign quickly, slow down.

3.   KEEP SIGNING: Don't stop the conversation by answering simply YES or NO. Be generous. Give details, explain your point, develop your thoughts, and make comparisons. Anything that shows you can discuss a topic in depth will help you perform better. If you are not a "talkative" person by nature, you must make an extra effort to communicate during the interview.

4.   DON'T DOWNGRADE YOURSELF: Don't apologize for your signing skills. Be positive. Let the interview show your skills.

WHAT TO DO...

1.   IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE: If you know you made a mistake, correct it and continue. Correcting a mistake can help your performance.

2.   IF YOU ARE LOST IN A LONG EXPLANATION: Stop. Think. Say something like, "Let me tell you again--it is complicated." Then try again. Don't worry about what happened. No one expects you to sign without mistakes.

3.   IF YOU BECOME NERVOUS DURING THE INTERVIEW: The interviewer will know you are nervous and help you. You can stop for a few seconds and get control. Relax. Admit that you are nervous and joke about it. Often this is enough to make you comfortable again.

4.   IF SOMETHING IS INTERFERING WITH YOUR SIGNING: If the air conditioner bothers you, say so. If you can't see the interviewer clearly, say so. Remember that this is your interview. You should have the best possible interview conditions.

Attachment 3
SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI) RATING SCALE[a,b]

<u>RATINGS</u>	<u>DESCRIPTORS</u>[c]
<u>**Superior Plus**</u>	<u>**Able**</u> **to have a fully shared and natural conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.** All aspects of signing are native-like.
<u>**Superior**</u>	<u>**Able**</u> **to have a fully shared conversation, with in-depth elaboration for both social and work topics.** Very broad sign language vocabulary, near native-like production and fluency, excellent use of sign language grammatical features, and excellent comprehension for normal signing rate.
<u>**Advanced Plus**</u>	<u>Exhibits</u> some superior level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.
<u>**Advanced**</u>	<u>**Able**</u> **to have a generally shared conversation with good, spontaneous elaboration for both social and work topics.** Broad sign language vocabulary knowledge and clear, accurate production of signs and fingerspelling at a normal/near-normal rate; occasional misproductions do not detract from conversational flow. Good use of many sign language grammatical features and comprehension good for normal signing rate.
<u>**Intermediate Plus**</u>	<u>Exhibits</u> some advanced level skills, but not all and not consistently.
<u>**Intermediate**</u>	<u>**Able**</u> **to discuss with some confidence routine social and work topics within a conversational format with some elaboration; generally 3-to-5 sentences.** Good knowledge and control of everyday/basic sign language vocabulary with some sign vocabulary errors. Fairly clear signing at a moderate signing rate with some sign misproductions. Fair use of some sign language grammatical features and fairly good comprehension for a moderate-to-normal signing rate; a few repetitions and rephrasing of questions may be needed.
<u>**Survival Plus**</u>	<u>Exhibits</u> some intermediate level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.
<u>**Survival**</u>	<u>**Able**</u> **to discuss basic social and work topics with responses generally 1-to-3 sentences in length.** Some knowledge of basic sign language vocabulary with many sign vocabulary and/or sign production errors. Slow-to-moderate signing rate. Basic use of a few sign language grammatical features. Fair comprehension for signing produced at a slow-to-moderate rate with some repetition and rephrasing.
<u>**Novice Plus**</u>	<u>Exhibits</u> some survival level skills, but not <u>all</u> and not <u>consistently</u>.
<u>**Novice**</u>	<u>**Able**</u> **to provide single sign and some short phrase/sentence responses to basic questions signed at a slow-to-moderate rate with frequent repetition and rephrasing.** Vocabulary primarily related to everyday work and/or social areas such as basic work-related signs, family members, basic objects, colors, numbers, names of weekdays, and time. Production and fluency characterized by many sign production errors and by a slow rate with frequent inappropriate pauses/hesitations.
<u>**No Functional Skills**</u>	<u>**(May be) Able**</u> **to provide short single sign and "primarily" fingerspelled responses to some basic questions signed at a slow rate with extensive repetition and rephrasing.**

_____
[a]Adapted from US Foreign Service Institute and ACTFL LPI Rating Scales by Drs. William Newell and Frank Caccamise
[b]The SLPI was referred to as the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) from 1983 to May 2006.
[c]For all SLPI rating descriptors, **first statement (in bold type) always a statement of ASL communicative functioning,** with all remaining statements (regular type) descriptors of ASL form (vocabulary, production, fluency, grammar, and comprehension).

June 2006 (revised edition)

Appendix C - #1

SLPI Results Memo for MSSE students Achieving
SLPI Ratings Upto Survival Plus Skill Level
October 2007

RIT   Rochester Institute of Technology   **OCAS**   Office of
Communication
Assessment Services

Office Memo

To: NAME
From: NAME, OCAS Coordinator
Date: DATE
Subject: Your SLPI Result

Your Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) Rating for your DATE SLPI has been
completed.

The next step in the SLPI process is an SLPI Follow-Up Meeting. Please contact the OCAS Office
at x6329 (TTY) or come to the office in LBJ-3236 so that we may schedule your SLPI Follow-Up
Meeting. At this meeting you will receive your SLPI rating and you will have the opportunity (a) to
review your SLPI video, (b) to discuss your sign language communication skills, and (c) to discuss
suggestions and opportunities for improving your sign language communication skills if
appropriate. This SLPI Follow-Up Meeting, which is an MSSE Program Expectation, should be
requested within two weeks from the date of this SLPI report memo.

Your SLPI rating is RATING. The SLPI Rating Scale attached will help you understand your
rating.

**Note: Two lines immediately above may <u>or</u> may not be included in memo sent to MSSE
students. If not included in memos sent to MSSE students, then they are added and these new
memos are given to MSSE students at SLPI Follow-Up Meetings.**

Also, attached is a form requesting permission to use your SLPI video for research, demonstration,
and training. Please consider completing this form and returning it to me. Thank you.

Note: Last paragraph is optional.

Appendix C - #2

SLPI Results Memo for MSSE Students Achieving
Achieving SLPI Ratings of Intermediate Skill Level and Above
October 2007

RIT   Rochester Institute of Technology

OCAS   Office of
Communication
Assessment Services

Office Memo

To: NAME
From: NAME, OCAS Coordinator
Date: DATE
Subject: Your SLPI Result

Your Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI) Rating is RATING. The SLPI Rating Scale attached will help you understand your rating.

If you wish to review your SLPI interview tape and discuss your sign language communication skills, please contact the OCAS Office at x6329 (TTY) or come to the office in LBJ-3236 to schedule an SLPI Follow-Up Meeting. At this meeting you will have the opportunity (a) to review your SLPI video, (b) to discuss your sign language communication skills, and (c) to discuss suggestions and opportunities for improving your sign language communication skills if appropriate. You should request this meeting within two weeks from the date of this SLPI rating report memo.

Also, attached is a form requesting permission to use your SLPI video for research, demonstration, and training. Please consider completing this form and returning it to me. Thank you.

Note: Last paragraph is optional.

Appendix D

Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI)
Video Release Form

Office of Communication Assessment Services (OCAS)
National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID)
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)
October 2007

The National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology uses SLPI videos for assisting in research, demonstration, and training. Permission from persons taking the SLPI is expected for all such uses and this form provides you with the opportunity to grant this permission for your SLPI.

Please check the purposes for which you wish to permit use of your SLPI video recorded on DATE;

Please return this form in the enclosed envelope to NAME, OCAS, LBJ-3236.

- o   Research

- o   Demonstration

- o   Training

Signature:

Date:

Please Print or Type:

Name

Phone:

Email

FC October 17, 2007