

SECTION 4B

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING
SIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SLPI)
RATER WORKSHEETS

Frank Caccamise and William Newell
National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) and Washington School for the Deaf (WSD)
www.ntid.rit.edu/slpi

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INTRODUCTION

This *SLPI Notebook* section provides guidelines for completing SLPI Individual Rater Worksheets. As discussed in SLPI Training Workshops, all persons taking the SLPI are unique. Therefore, it is important that the wording in your worksheet matches the person you are rating; that is, it is important that you describe each candidate, remembering that all candidates, even at the same rating level, are individuals with unique skills (and errors) and it is important to not force candidates to fit the SLPI Rating Scale. This is especially true for long-term Survival-Intermediate Range signers who may show skills (and errors) that are characteristic of more than one rating level.

Similar to SLPI interviewing and rating skills, skills for completing SLPI Rater Individual and Discussion Worksheets develops over time. It is important, therefore, that SLPI Rater Team members receive training and feedback for completing rater worksheets (generally the responsibility of SLPI Coordinators – see page 7 in this document).

Based on our SLPI training and follow-up experiences, we have developed a set of guidelines for completing SLPI Rater Worksheets. These guidelines, which begin on the next page, re-enforce and expand upon the information provided in *SLPI Notebook (NB)* Sections 1 and 3B (S1 and S3B) and they are intended to assist you in completing worksheets for candidates that you rate.

OVERVIEW OF GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING SLPI RATER WORKSHEETS

The guidelines in this Section are organized as follows:

- #1 (page 3) - Importance of reviewing and re-reviewing *SLPI NB S4A* Rater Worksheet Samples.
- #2 (page 3) - Importance of describing person on video, considering --
 - A. All persons, even at same rating level, have unique skills
 - B. All statements start positive
 - C. Each candidate's best skills are described, thus minimizing need for negative statements
 - D. Importance of raters not trying to force an candidate to fit the SLPI Rating Scale (especially long-term signers in Survival Plus-Intermediate skill range; for example, see *SLPI NB S4A*, pages 16-17)
 - E. Importance of including examples that are definitely correct and incorrect, not borderline examples.
- #3-to-#7 (pages 4-7) - Guidelines for **Function** and each **Form** category (Vocabulary Knowledge, Production and Fluency, Grammatical Features, and Comprehension).
- #8-to-#10 (pages 5-6) - Guidelines important to all **form** categories:
 - #8 - Importance of quantifiers (words like many, several, a few, etc.).
 - #9 - Importance of qualifiers (words like native-like, excellent, good, etc.).
 - #10 - Use of upper and lower case letters, hyphens, and plus (+) symbol to distinguish sign language examples from English descriptions - These are suggested guidelines for representing sign language in print format.. There are different ways to describe sign language skills in print and you may choose different format conventions than those described in this paper. Whatever format you choose, what is important is that you provide examples that support your ratings and that are clear to your SLPI Coordinator and other SLPI Team members who may conduct SLPI Follow-Up Meetings.
- #11 (page 6) – Importance of comparing completed SLPI Rater Worksheets to SLPI Rating Scale and worksheet samples in *SLPI NB S4A*.

Note: Last page of this section provides rater worksheet reviewing guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING SLPI INDIVIDUAL RATER WORKSHEETS

1. Periodically review *SLPI NB S4A* Rater Worksheet Samples. The more familiar you are with these worksheet samples the better you will be prepared to rate and to complete rater worksheets.
2. It is important that you describe each candidate, remembering that:
 - A. All candidates, even at same rating level, are individuals with unique skills and errors.
 - B. Start all statements positively. Remember, you should describe each candidate's best skills, as well as to add errors and problems for each description as appropriate.
 - C. Since you are describing candidate's best skills, you often can avoid or minimize negative statements; for example, if you describe person as having "Good knowledge of basic sign language vocabulary," you do not need to write, "Does not know advanced sign language vocabulary."
 - D. It is important to not try to force candidates to fit the SLPI Rating Scale. Be careful with long-term Survival-Intermediate Range signers who show skills (and errors) characteristic of more than one rating level (see pages 16-17 in S4A). These signers generally function at a higher level than their final rating. Thus, for all candidates, and in particular long-term signers in Intermediate range, it is critical that both your rating and report consider **function** and **form**.
 - E. You should include only examples that are either definitely correct/acceptable or definitely incorrect/unacceptable/overuse; do not include borderline examples. Be especially careful with initialized signs and sign selection based on meaning. Your SLPI Team may wish to develop two lists, one for initialized signs with three columns for examples that are (1) acceptable, (2) overuse, and (3) borderline, and one for sign selection based on meaning with three columns for examples that are (1) acceptable, (2) not acceptable, and (3) borderline. If such lists are developed, they should be updated on a regular basis in order to remain consistent with current sign vocabulary use by skilled signers.
3. For **Function** be sure:
 - A. To circle **Functional Range** (#1 on worksheet).
 - B. To check appropriate **Functional Descriptor** (#2 on worksheet).
 - C. To write **Possible Final Ratings** (#3 on worksheet).

Note: Remember, #1, #2, and #3 on rater worksheet initially completed after first viewing of first 6-10 minutes of interview. If, after viewing entire interview, your final rating of **function** changes, you should cross out your original **function** rating information and insert your final **function** rating information for #1, #2, and #3 on your rater worksheet.

4. For **Vocabulary Knowledge**^a -

- A. **Vocabulary Knowledge** includes (1) signs used and produced correctly, (2) sign selection errors based on meaning, (3) overuse of initialized signs, and (4) fingerspelling words with standard signs.
- B. The key word when listing sign selection errors based on meaning is for; that is, SOME + TIME for SOMETIMES, GRADUATE (verb) + SCHOOL for GRADUATE-SCHOOL, HAVE (possessive) + TO for HAVE-TO, GROW (plant) + U-P for GROW-UP.
- C. If you cannot identify or write clearly which sign was used for which sign, list as a sign production error in **Production and Fluency** category rather than as a sign selection error in **Vocabulary Knowledge**.

5. For **Production and Fluency**^a -

- A. All rater worksheets up through Intermediate Plus, and some Advanced reports, should include identification of a few, some, several, or many sign vocabulary knowledge and production errors, with fewer errors noted as you go up the SLPI Rating Scale.
- B. If use of signing space is restricted, it is important to state “why” in order to assist candidate in understanding how to improve; for example, use of signing space a bit restricted due to elbows being held too close to body.”

6. For **Grammatical Features**^b -

- A. If your descriptor for grammatical features starts with “Basic or beginning or fair use of” then it is not necessary to write “Basic or beginning or fair use of” with each grammatical feature listed. Why? Because the lead in descriptor relates to all grammatical features that follow. Remember, you are describing person’s best skills in your “lead” statements; see #2C on previous page. [Note: “Beginning use...” should only be used with short term signers (2 years or less); write “Basic use...” for long(er) term signers.]
- B. When referring to indexing and use of space, provide examples; for example, SCHOOL THERE-rt., LIBRARY THERE-lt., or SCHOOL-rt., LIBRARY-it. Inclusion of THERE optional, but rt., lt. and ctr. (for right, left, and center of signing space) should be included with examples. If space, but not indexing, is used, THERE should not be included.
- C. Similar to B immediately above, when sign verb movement and indexing used to show directionality and/or location, rt., lt., ctr. should be used; for example, LIVE NEW-YORK THERE-rt., MOVE-TO-rt.-to-lt. CALIFORNIA-lt. Again, THERE should be included only if indexing used.
- D. Generally facial expression and sign movement modification are used together for degree, size, and temporal aspect (BEAUTIFUL-very, RUN-very-fast, HOUSE-big, WORK-hard-for-a-long-time, LOVE-really, PLAY-a-lot, STUDY-for-a-short-time). Include degree, size, and temporal aspect modifiers in lower case letters as shown for examples.
- E. Examples of sign verb movement directionality and eye gaze for pronoun incorporation written as TELL-me, SHOW-them, etc.

^aAlso, on page 5, see #8, #9, and on page 6, #10A, C, and D.

^bAlso, on page 5, see #8A and #9, and on page 6, #10B and E.

7. For **Comprehension** -
- A. Rate at which a candidate can understand interviewer's sign language and frequency or number of repetitions and rephrasings needed are both important.
 - B. Repetitions and rephrasings are part of normal conversations for even native/native-like language users. However, repetition and rephrasing is rarely needed for Advanced Plus-Superior Range signers, with more needed as you go down the SLPI Rating Scale.
 - C. Signer at the Intermediate skill level and below should show breakdowns in comprehension. If they do not, this is likely due to interviewers adjusting their signing to match the candidates' skill levels and remaining at these levels rather than challenging candidates by returning to more normal like signing in terms of rate and structure. This presents problems for raters since the highest skill level at which candidates can understand sign language is not clear.
8. Importance of Quantifiers for **form** descriptors:
- A. Use of quantifiers (words like few, some, several, many, etc.): While reviewing the SLPI Rating Scale, consider how the use of each of these quantifiers may influence your ratings. Quantifiers are important for **Vocabulary Knowledge, Production and Fluency, and Grammatical Features**. (In "general", write "few" for 2-to-3, "some" for 4-6, "several" for 7-9, and "many" for 10 or more.)
 - B. For **Vocabulary Knowledge** and **Production and Fluency** the quantifier **many** (errors) is most associated with Survival (and possibly Survival Plus) and below level candidates. If a person makes many sign selection errors, overuses many initialized signs, or misproduces many signs, and/or together these three error types add up to many errors, **vocabulary knowledge** should not be described as broad, fairly broad, or good (even if s/he know many signs). See page 16 in S4A for an example of how to describe a person who knows many signs and makes many sign errors.
 - C. Do not specify an exact number in a report; for example, rather than "three sign meaning selection errors" write "a few sign selection errors." In order to do an exact number count, hours of analyses would be required.
9. Importance of Qualifiers for **form** descriptors:
- A. Qualifiers (adjectives and adverbs - words like native-like, near native-like, excellent, good, fair, etc.) are also important.
 - B. For qualifiers important for **Vocabulary Knowledge** (fair, good, broad, etc.), **Production and Fluency** (native-like, normal rate, moderate rate, etc.), **Grammatical Features** (native-like use, excellent, good, basic, etc.), and **Comprehension** (excellent, normal, etc.), see the SLPI Rating Scale and SLPI Analyzing Form (see SLPI blue-laminated back-to-back page).

10. Use of upper and lower case letters, hyphens, and the plus (+) symbol:
- A. Upper case letters are used as glosses for signs (FATHER, MOTHER, etc.) and upper case letters with hyphens between are used for fingerspelled words (S-O-Y-B-E-A-N-S, F-A-T-H-E-R).
 - B. Use lower case letters for examples of classifier (CL) use; for example, CL: 33 for many cars in a row and CL: BB for book shelves. This is consistent with the general writing guideline that caps are only used for signs themselves.
 - C. Hyphens between words in upper case letters indicate one sign was used while “plus” (+) symbol between words in upper case letters indicates more than one sign was used; for example, LAST-WEEK indicates one sign was used while LAST + WEEK indicates two signs were used and TWO-WEEKS-IN-THE-FUTURE indicates one sign was used while TWO + WEEKS + IN-THE-FUTURE indicates three signs were used.
 - D. When using “+” symbol between two signs, you should space on either side of this symbol; for example, LAST (final) + WEEK for LAST-WEEK, SOME + TIMES for SOMETIMES; also, see C immediately above.
 - E. The plus symbol (+) is also used to indicate repetition of sign movements for repeated action and for plurals; that is, GO+++, READ+++, FLY+++, FAMILY+++, CLASS+++.
 - F. Also, see sample worksheets in S4A.
11. Compare your completed worksheet to SLPI Rating Scale and SLPI Rater Worksheet Samples in *SLPI NB S4A*: Does description of candidate match descriptor for rating in SLPI Rating Scale? If not similar, re-consider your rating and your worksheet. Do you have sufficient examples to support your rating? If the worksheet sample in S4A at the same rating level as your rating differs significantly from your worksheet, consider the possible need to revise your worksheet and the possibility that your rating may not be accurate.

Note: Remember, **function** establishes highest possible rating; regardless of **form**, rating can never be higher than **function**.

SLPI COORDINATOR GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWING SLPI RATER WORKSHEETS

1. Skills in Completing SLPI Rater Worksheets Develop over Time: It is important that SLPI Coordinators provide their SLPI Team Members with feedback and in-service training on completing rater worksheets, as well as interviewing, rating, and follow-up meetings. Encourage your SLPI Team to periodically review *SLPI NB Ss 4A and 4B*. Also, as you review worksheets jot down both common errors and examples of well-written descriptors and examples, and share these with your SLPI Team via writing and/or in-service training. This sharing should include periodically updated lists of (your) definitely acceptable, definitely unacceptable/overuse, and borderline ‘initialized sign’ examples and ‘sign selection errors based on meaning’ examples (if your SLPI Team has such lists) (see page 3, #2E).
2. You should review all print materials returned by each SLPI Rating Team prior to SLPI Report Memos being shared with persons taking the SLPI. This review should include:
 - A. Check to ensure SLPI Individual Rater Worksheets are filled-out correctly. If you note any problems with individual rater worksheets, this should be discussed with raters individually and/or in SLPI Team in-service training sessions as appropriate.
 - B. Comparison of SLPI Individual and Discussion Rater Worksheets with the SLPI Rating Scale: Wording in each worksheet should be compared to lines/phrases in the SLPI Rating Scale. To facilitate this procedure remember that the descriptors in the SLPI Rating Scale are in the same order as categories on the SLPI Rater Worksheets; that is, FUNCTION and then the FORM categories (Vocabulary Knowledge, Production and Fluency, Grammatical Features, and Comprehension).
3. When reviewing a set of worksheets, review in order from highest to lowest ratings. This means that as you review each worksheet you may expect the descriptors to go from the best skills you will read to the lowest skills (though all worksheets should be written positively; that is, each report describe a person’s best skills (see page 3, #2B and #2C). (See #4 below for an alternative approach.)
4. You may wish to sometimes read worksheets and ‘assign’ your ratings prior to knowing/looking at ratings written on worksheets.
5. If SLPI Coordinator believes ratings and descriptions of candidates do not match, coordinator and raters should meet to discuss ratings and worksheets, and to resolve “matching” problems. Review interview video if appropriate.

Note: SLPI Coordinator should not review videos and unilaterally change ratings that have been agreed to by rating teams. As noted above, if rating and description of candidate do not match, SLPI Coordinator should discuss this with raters. Also, remember, if candidates, after reviewing their interview videos, believe ratings are not correct, they may request another rating.

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