

Attachment D

SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI): A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The SCPI, 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 SCPI permits interview content to vary according to the job responsibilities, background, and interests of each person interviewed. Consistent with the O/LPI, the goal of the SCPI 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 SCPI involves a one-to-one conversation between the interviewer and candidate/interviewee, with each interviewee videotaped and subsequently rated independently by SCPI raters. The basis for ratings is the SCPI Rating Scale, a standard scale based on a highly skilled, knowledgeable native/native-like signer. The SCPI 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 influenced signing. This full range is characterized by

1. Meaning-based sign language vocabulary selection consistent with standardized signs in current use by skilled language users, and
2. A variety of grammatical features that are consistent with effective use of gestural-visual language for communication. These grammatical features include:
 1. 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;
 2. classifiers for describing and representing persons, places, and objects and their movements (for example, use of the index finger to represent "a person");
 3. sign-word order which facilitates effective communication in gestural-visual language; and
 4. 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 SCPI ratings.

SIGN COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW (SCPI) RATING SCALE and DESCRIPTORS

Superior Plus

Able 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.

Superior

Able 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.

Advanced Plus

Exhibits some superior level skills, but not all and not consistently.

Advanced

Able 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.

Intermediate Plus

Exhibits some advanced level skills, but not all and not consistently.

Intermediate

Able 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.

Survival Plus

Exhibits some intermediate level skills, but not all and not consistently.

Survival

Able 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.

Novice Plus

Exhibits some survival level skills, but not all and not consistently.

Novice

Able 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.

No Functional Skills

(May be) Able to provide short single sign and "primarily" finger-skills spelled responses to some basic questions, signed at a slow rate with extensive repetition and rephrasing.

Adapted from US Foreign Service Institute & ACTFL LPI Rating Scales by Drs. William Newell & Frank Caccamise, March, 1999 (revised edition). <http://www.rit.edu/~wjnncd/scpi/Desc.html>