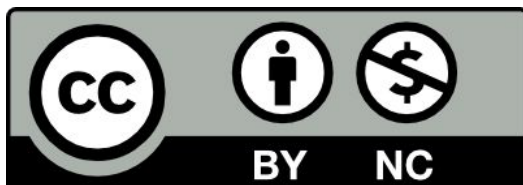# UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

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Improving Rural Interpreter Skills

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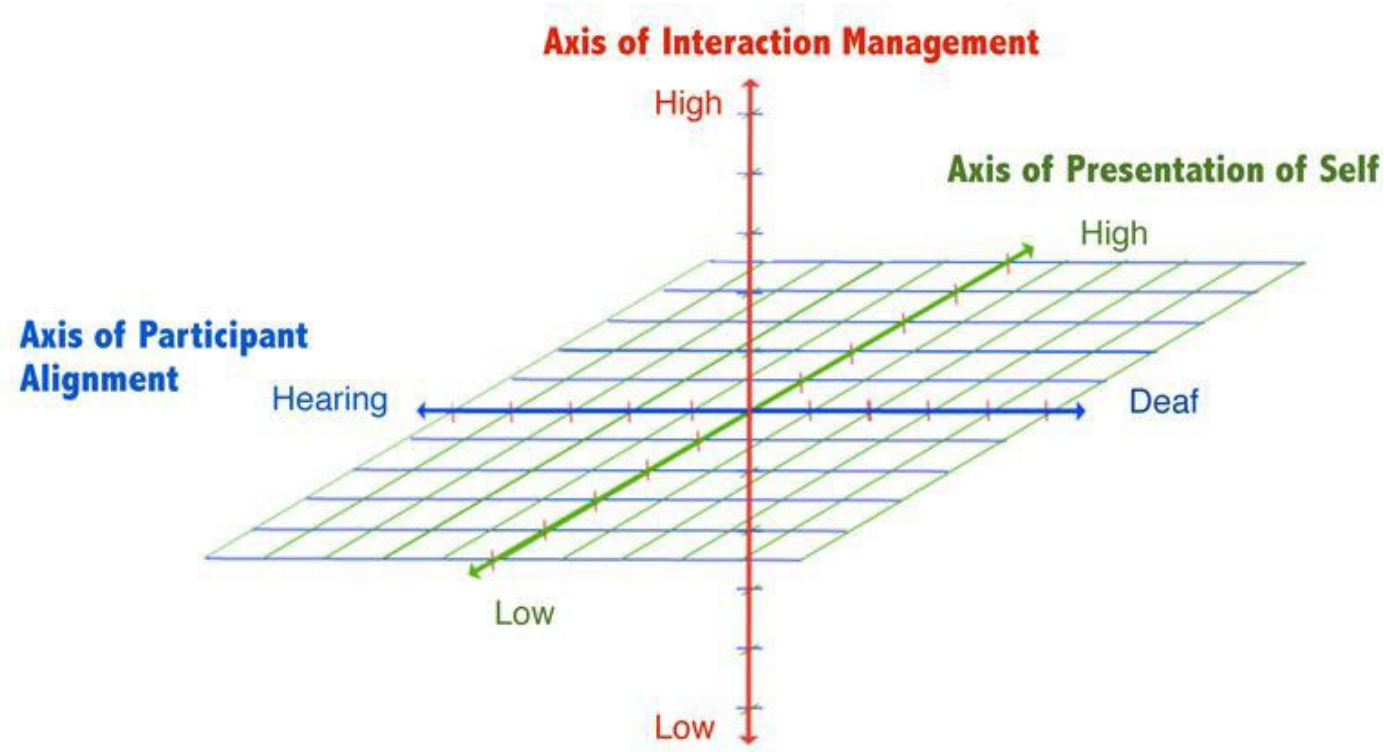
Module 4: Role-Space Applied

Axis of Interaction Management

High

Axis of Presentation of Self

High

Axis of Participant Alignment

Hearing ← → Deaf

Low

Low

Lee & Llewellyn-Jones

Module content developed in part by UNC-IRIS Project & UNC-Project CLIMB
ASL lectures by: Kristina Marie Balao Miranda, Naomi Sheneman, and Amy Williamson

Overview & Objectives

Overview: This module will cover the Role-Space Model, as a tool to discuss ethical decision-making in interpreting. The Role-Space Model, created by Peter Llewellyn-Jones and Robert G. Lee, encourages us to reconceptualize how we discuss the role of the interpreter and challenges the idea of interpreters "stepping out of role."

Learning Outcomes and Objectives

Upon Completion of this module participants will be able to:

1. Reflect on your own view of the interpreter's role.
2. Discuss interpreting through the framework provided by the Role-Space Model.
3. Identify where an interpreter's actions fall on the three axes of the Role-Space Model.
4. Apply the Role-Space Model to discussions about the work of interpreting when engaging with novice interpreters.

Discussion: Interpreting Thought Question

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

1. In your experience as a working interpreter, what does the phrase "stepping out of role" in the interpreting profession mean to you?
2. Have you ever experienced a time where you felt like you were "stepping out of your role"? If so, what led you to the feeling that you needed to "step out of your role" and what was the result? Please explain while also keeping any assignment-specific information confidential.

Response post directions:

Review the original post from several of your colleagues. Respond to at least one colleague noting the similarities or differences between your responses when thinking about "stepping out of role".

Role-Space: A Refresher

Role-Space check in

In the IRIS: CORE Initiative module 5 *Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks,* you had exposure to the Role-Space. That may have been your first introduction to Role-Space or a review of what you already knew. Over these next few pages, you will see very similar information to what you have already seen in the CORE module 5 *Ethical Decision-Making Frameworks* as a refresher. Sometimes seeing information more than once, presented in a different way, can help make it stick.

Try the knowledge check on the next page to jog your memory of Role-Space. After taking the knowledge check, if you are feeling confident in your knowledge feel free to skim these next few pages and jump right into the "Discussion: Case Analysis" assignment. If you'd like a full-on review of Role-Space with an example of an analysis applied to an interpreting scenario, study these next few pages closely before attempting the next assignment.

Knowledge Check

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this knowledge check

1. In your own words, name and briefly describe each of the three axes represented in the role-space model.

Correct responses: 1. X Axis of participant alignment, Y Axis of interaction management, Z Axis of presentation of self

Introduction

What is Role-Space?

The basis of the Role-Space model is that interpreters are humans and very much present in all interpreted interactions. As humans, we are expected to follow certain behavioral norms, such as responding when asked a direct question. At the same time, we are operating as interpreters with the goal of fostering, supporting and effectively managing communication between people other than ourselves.

Role-Space gives us a way to show that those two expectations are not mutually exclusive. At any given time, we are choosing how little and how much to interact, with whom we interact, and how much we manage the conversation. A discussion of how we make those choices and the resulting consequences is much more valuable than conceiving ourselves as simply being in or out of role.
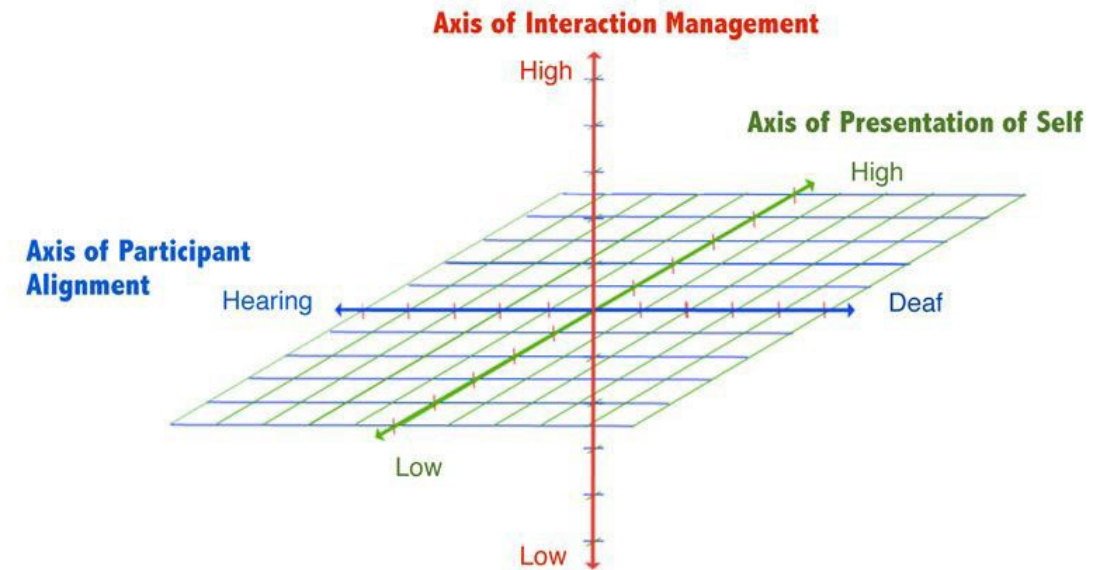
The Axes

Three Axes

Lee and Llewellyn-Jones share a three-dimensional model of interpreter involvement, based on three axes. An interpreter moves into different positions along these axes throughout an assignment. By breaking down the position an interpreter may take along the axes during an assignment, an interpreter can explore ethical ramifications and actual consequences of their choices, as well as strategies for decision-making in future assignments.

The three axes of the model are:

1. X Axis: participant alignment
2. Y Axis: interaction management
3. Z Axis: presentation of self

Axis of Interaction Management
High

Axis of Presentation of Self
High

Axis of Participant Alignment
Hearing   Deaf

Low

Low

Lee & Llewellyn-Jones

Three Axes Explained

Participant Alignment

This is the extent to which the interpreter engages with any of the participants in the interaction. This engagement is not about expressing the interpreter's opinion. Rather it is about simple things such as introducing themselves, checking in with eye-gaze and using facial expression or sounds to indicate that communication is happening, as well as positioning themselves in the space in ways that show a connection to a participant.

Interaction Management

This includes control of the turn-taking process. An interpreter is constantly choosing to work more "simultaneously" (even though simultaneous is a misnomer, as we always have some processing time) or more consecutively to allow more time to get the message before beginning the interpretation. The axis of interaction management graphs how much or how little the interpreter intervenes to manage that process. This includes managing overlapping speech and using overt/covert management strategies.

Presentation of Self

This axis is the degree to which the interpreter speaks, signs, or communicates nonverbally (also called "authoring") their own thoughts instead of the content of the interpretation. Most of our field's discussion of "role" seems to be about this axis. Our history and some previous codes of conduct make it seem as though we should never speak for ourselves in our work. In reality, we do so all the time. We introduce ourselves, we indicate errors, we ask for clarification and, in many cases, we engage in direct conversation with participants because if we did not, the relationships in the interaction would be damaged.

Role-Space in Application, Part I

Case Scenario

Now that you have a better understanding of the Role-Space model it is time to apply what you have learned about the three axes by analyzing a real interpreting scenario.

Review the videos by Jan Nishimura sharing an experience during an interpreting assignment in relation to Asian values. The original video shared this experience as a part of the National Multicultural Interpreting Project (1996-2000). In 2020 Jan reshared this same story with UNC-Project CLIMB, in ASL, including further additional context.

Role-Space in Application, Part II

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After reviewing the Nishimura videos, watch this Role-Space analysis by Jeremy Quiroga including all three axes; participant alignment, interaction management, and presentation of self. This example is provided for you as a model so that you may complete the upcoming Role-Space case analysis activity.

Discussion: Case Analysis, Part I

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NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Role-Space Applied

Now that you have seen an example of how Role-Space can be applied to an interpreting scenario to analyze decision-making, it is your turn to apply what you know about Role-Space to an interpreted interaction.

Watch the video _Examples of a Deaf Interpreters Work, English-ASL-Gestuno Part 2/ Mental Health_. For this assignment, you will apply a Role-Space analysis to the first scenario (0:00-6:30).

To complete this assignment, you will analyze evidence of decision making by the interpreters using each of the three axes in the Role-Space model as outlined by the prompts on the next slide as a guide.

Note: Avoid repeating what someone else has shared unless you are providing a different view of the decisions made.

Discussion: Case Analysis, Part II

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NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

After reviewing the video, in original post, respond to the following four prompts:

1. Where do you see evidence of ***participant alignment***? For example, when does the interpreter (either one) align with the deaf or hearing people? What do they do that indicates the alignment? What do you think the desired outcome was in this decision? Was the decision to align effective?

2. Where do you see evidence of ***interaction management***? For example, what does the interpreter (either one) say or do that manages the interaction? What do you think the desired outcome was in this decision? Was the approach to interaction management effective?

3. Where do you see evidence of ***presentation of self***? For example, what does the interpreter (either one) say or do that indicates that they are the author of what they are saying? What do you think the desired outcome was in this decision? Was the decision to author a message (presentation of self) effective?

4. Do you see evidence of any decisions that one interpreter made that were different than what the other interpreter decided to do? Or were both interpreters placing themselves in the same places along each axis during the whole scenario? If you noticed any differences, what were they? What are your thoughts about these differences?

Discussion: Case Analysis, Part III

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NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Response post directions:

Respond to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Decision-Making: Autonomy, Part I

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Further thinking . . .

Autonomy is the power a person has to take action and influence or control a situation. Specifically, **relational autonomy** is a person's level of autonomy is context dependent. In some situations, people have more autonomy than in other situations.

This is true for interpreters and the people we interpret between.

Interpreters' decisions are influenced by the level of autonomy the participants have on a ***conservative*** (do little/nothing) to ***liberal*** (do more/much) scale. Remember these terms from the previous module?

The more autonomy participants have, the more conservative the interpreter's decisions may be. Less balanced autonomy may lead to more liberal decision-making. Unethical decisions may be related to choosing to be either too liberal or too conservative in a given context.

Decision-Making: Autonomy, Part II

To further unpack decision making and autonomy, watch Deaf Interpreters: The Value of Formative Experience by Jimmy Beldon regarding decision-making for the next assignment. Pay special attention to minutes 10-12 *and* 19-21 when ideas relating to Role-Space are presented.

Discussion: Decision-Making

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NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

After watching Deaf Interpreters: The Value of Formative Experience which addresses decision-making, respond to the following prompts.

1. What examples of Role-Space (i.e. participant alignment, interaction management, and presentation of self) did you see presented?
2. What about the video resonated with you?

Response post directions:

Respond to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Discussion: Case Scenario

NOTE: You have to log into Canvas to complete this assignment

Original post directions:

Select **any 10-minute segment** from the Medicare Application video and analyze evidence of decision-making by the interpreters, using each of the three axes in the role-space model as a guide. Note: When you share your analysis, be sure to contextualize your comments to help us understand the basis of your analysis.

1. Where do you see evidence of participant alignment, interaction management, and presentation of self? Please describe.
2. Do you see evidence of relational autonomy? Please describe.
3. How might understanding relational autonomy and Role-Space support you in the work you are doing with your COL participants?
4. What remaining questions do you have about Role-Space?

Response post directions:

Respond to the post of one of your colleagues by asking clarifying questions, seeking additional information, or expressing an idea that encourages critical thinking and moves the conversation forward.

Post-Test

1. Please explain how your thoughts about an interpreter "stepping out of role" have/have not shifted during this module.
2. Name and briefly describe, in your own words, each of the three axes represented in the Role-Space model.
3. What is meant by relational autonomy and how does this apply to interpreters?

Correct responses: 1. Answers will vary., 2. X Axis of participant alignment, Y Axis of interaction management, Z Axis of presentation of self., 3. Answers will vary.

References

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Additional Role-Space Resources

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Furthering your Role-Space knowledge

- 2013 International Journal of Interpreter Education (IJIE) article by Peter Llewellyn-Jones and Robert Lee Getting to the Core of Role: Defining Interpreters' Role-Space
- 2014 StreetLeverage presentation by Robert G. Lee Interpret + Person: Presentation of Self and Sign Language Interpreters
- 2019 CATIE Center webinar with Eileen Forestal, Robert G. Lee, and Naomi Sheneman Conversation Role-Space and Translation
- 2023 Northeastern University Center of Atypical Language Interpreting (CALI) webinar by Robert G. Lee Role-Space and Interpreting with Deaf People who use Atypical Language
- 2023 PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America article by Robert G. Lee, Elizabeth Winston, and Eileen Forestal Lessons from American Sign Language–English Interpreting

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