

*Beyond “It depends...:”*

The practice profession shift  
in interpreting

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# Understanding “It depends...”

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- Most people don't understand what we do
- Evidence of the reality that there are contextual factors outside of language and culture that impact our work
- We don't have common constructs or language (vocabulary) to talk about these factors in our work except the awkward it depends

# The “It depends...” problem

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- Inefficient
- Anchored in examples, impeding generalizations
- Confusing

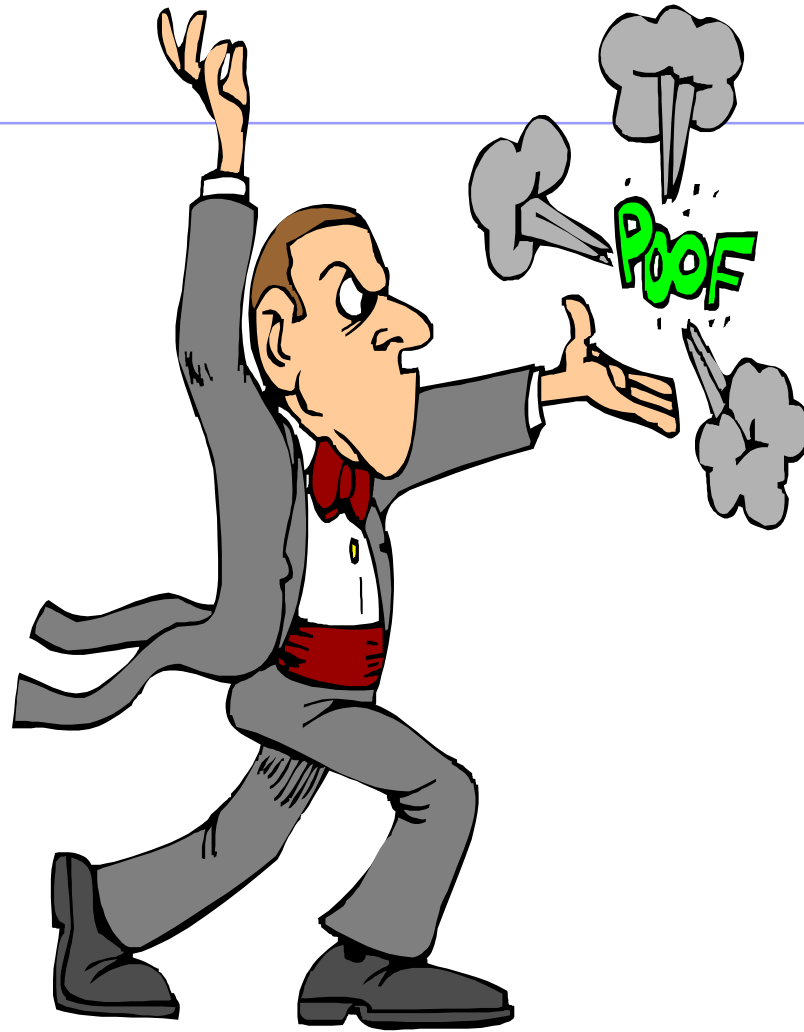
Source / Target Language  
Conduit / Invisibility

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# Role of Invisibility

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# Technical vs. Practice Professions

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- Accountant
- Architect
- Pilot
- Scientist

- Nurse/Doctor
- Social Worker
- Teacher
- Police



# Interpreting is a practice profession

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# PROTOTYPING



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“The opposite of a true statement is a false statement, but the opposite of a profound truth can be another profound truth.”

Niels Bohr

Nobel Prize Winner

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Interpreting as a practice profession:

Two profound truths

# Presentation Format

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- Embrace the practice profession foundation?
- Abandon
- Challenges (Actions)
- Proposed constructs

# Embrace: A Practice Profession

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- Abandon:
  - The notion that “it depends” is a sufficient and effective response to articulating the complexities in interpreting work and decision-making
- Challenge:
  - Learn to identify and articulate those contextual factors that impact interpreting work
    - Educating new professionals before they work in those environments
  - Seek to increase knowledge of those factors, overtly considering them in the execution of decisions

# Embrace: A Practice Profession

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- Abandon:
  - The notion that technical skills are solely what makes an interpreter effective in an assignment
- Challenge:
  - Value interpersonal, social & judgment skills as vital to professional's skill base
  - Seek to increase skills & knowledge beyond the linguistic and cultural realms
  - Evaluate professionals on their knowledge of the varying contexts and on the ability to ethically formulate, justify and execute sound decisions

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# Demand Control Schema (DC-S) as Taxonomy...

...a set of constructs to capture  
experiences within interpreting

# Proposed Construct: Contextual Demands

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## ■ **Environmental**

- That which is specific to the setting (a. goal, b. terminology, c. physical surroundings, d. personnel/clientele)

## ■ **Interpersonal**

- That which is specific to the interactions of the consumers and the interpreter

## ■ **Paralinguistic**

- That which is specific to the expressive qualities of the consumers

## ■ **Intrapersonal**

- That which is specific to the feelings and thoughts of the interpreter



# EIPI creates a scaffold for all “interpreters”

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- Judiciary/ Legal Interpreters
- Medical / Healthcare Interpreters
- Business Interpreters
- Diplomatic Interpreters
- Military/Federal Interpreters

# Current Literature: “Role of the Interpreter”

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- Interpreter as Conduit
- Interpreter as Moderator
- Interpreter as Institutional Gate Keeper
- Interpreter as Co-diagnostician
- Interpreter as Clarifier
- Interpreter as Manager
- Interpreter as Welcomer
- Interpreter as Professional

# Proposed Construct: Controls

Ethical and Effective Decisions

Too Liberal

Therefore  
ineffective  
and/or  
unethical

**Liberal**

**Conservative**

Too Conservative

Therefore  
ineffective  
and/or  
unethical

# The demand: group, can't hear

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- Interrupt and ask speaker to repeat
- Give visual cues that you can't hear
- Tell the client you didn't hear
- Ask the whole group to please speak up
- Ask the person next to you
- Narrate and describe how the person is talking

# Embrace: A Practice Profession

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- Abandon:
  - Deontology – a rule based approach to decision-making – supporting the idea that a one right answer exists and our job is to find it
- Challenge:
  - Understand teleology, the weighing of consequences between decisions in light of our values and principles
  - Reconsider our Codes of Ethics not as a list of required behaviors but as an expression of our values and principles

# Embrace: Demands & Controls

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- Abandon:
  - The passive stance/perception of work, that job demands happen to us
- Challenge:
  - Learn/predict/ask about the demands of a given assignment, reconsidering the possibility demands of given jobs are frequently knowable
  - Think in an overt and strategic manner, to consider more slowly our decisions

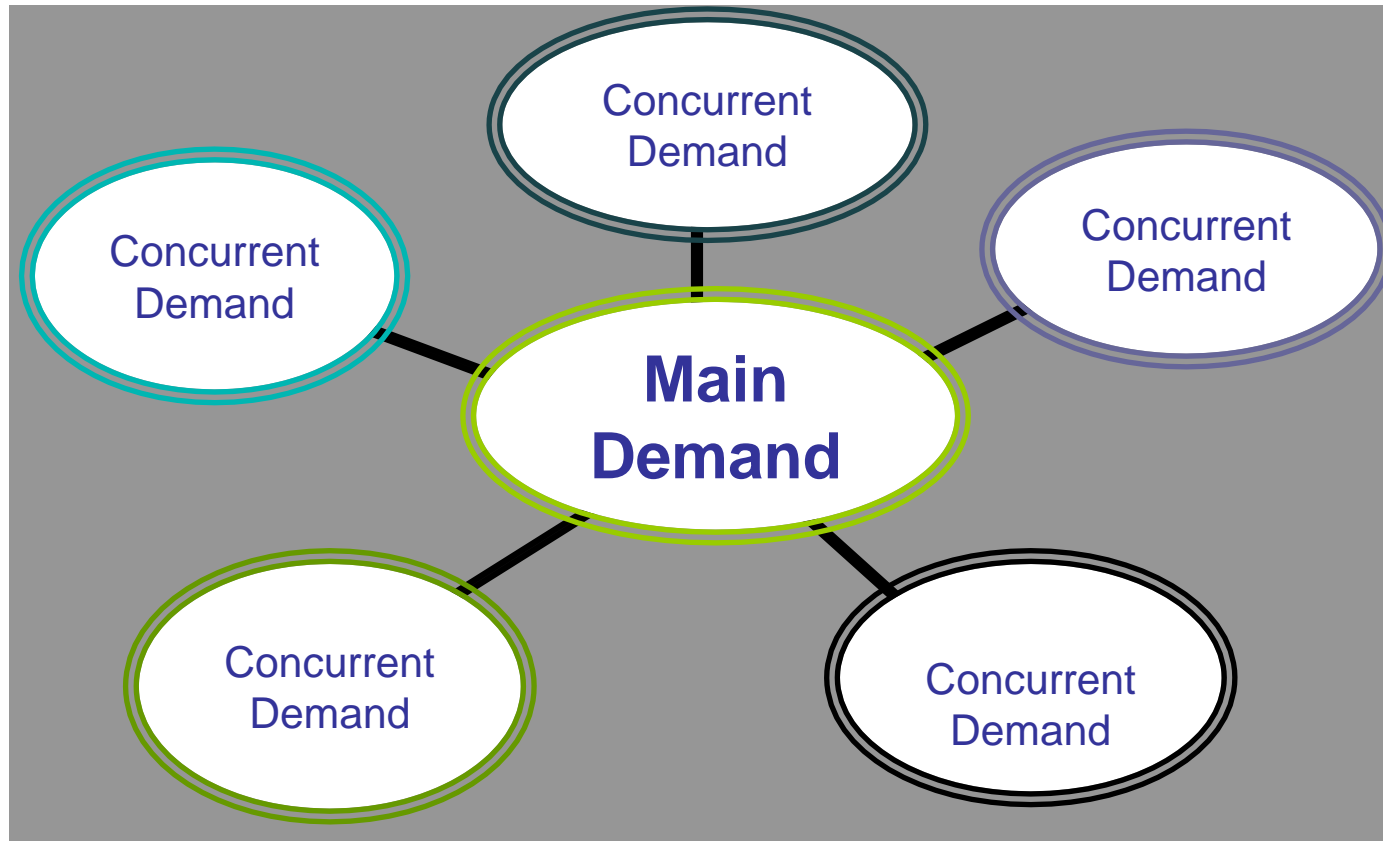
# Embrace: Demands & Controls

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- Abandon:
  - The notion that effectiveness can be understood and evaluated based on an interpreter's action or inaction, outside of the given context
- Challenge:
  - Validate and critique ours and our colleague's work decisions as an interplay of demands and controls (not inherently good/bad but "are")
  - Seek to understand the reason behind ours and our colleagues' behaviors: "What are you responding to?"

# Proposed Construct: Constellations

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Main Demand	Concurrent Demands
<p><b>“What would you do if...”</b></p>	<p><b>“It depends on...”</b></p>
<p>...the hearing speaker moves into the visual space between you and the deaf person?</p>	<p>If this is the first time it has happened...  How long the hearing person stays there...  If the deaf person is likely to intervene...  What the person is saying at the moment it happens...  If you are standing or sitting...  How much attention the deaf person wants drawn to themselves and the interpreting process...</p>
<p>...the deaf person asks you to explain his symptoms to a new doctor who just joined the other doctors in the room?</p>	<p>If the interpreter knows the deaf person well...  If the deaf person’s hands or upper body are constrained by pain or other factors...  How many times the interpreter has already interpreted the symptoms to other medical staff...</p>
<p>...the team interpreter you are working with suggests using a specific sign?</p>	<p>If it is a sign the interpreter already knows...  If it is a sign the deaf person is not familiar with...  If it differs from another sign which already has been established in the assignment...  Which of the two interpreters has the most precedent with the setting or the consumers...</p>

Group of 15  
people, 1 deaf  
person

Talking about  
weekend  
activities

Each person  
is taking a  
turn to talk

**Can't hear  
Speaker**

Mental Health  
Situation

**Speaker is talking  
about attending  
funeral of good  
friend and weeping  
openly**



# Embrace: Professional Responsibility

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- Abandon:
  - Invisibility as priority & the donning of neutrality
- Challenge:
  - Recognize the impact we do have on the lives of our consumers
  - Appreciate our lack of impartiality to what we witness
  - Know and work within the goal of the environment as neutrality
  - Work to know ourselves with honest rigor so that we reduce unintentional impact/harm where possible
    - Interpersonal vs. Intrapersonal Demands

# Embrace: Professional Responsibility

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- Abandon
  - The standard of formulating or justifying ethical behaviors with “What would happen if I weren’t here.” or “I’m just there as the interpreter; that’s not my job.”
- Challenge
  - Link role with responsibility
  - Defining what our responsibilities are, based on the agreed upon values & principles of the profession
  - Educating our consumers about those responsibilities, values and principles

# Embrace: Professional Responsibility

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- Abandon:
  - The notion that “doing nothing” is the most ethical stance
    - Leading to ethical dilemmas
- Challenge:
  - Appreciate that morality requires a discussion of right and wrong and professional ethics requires a discussion of the multiple rights
  - Engage in ethical dialogues that review the moment to moment practice decisions we make and not solely those situations that cause ethical dilemmas

# Proposed Construct: Decision-making Approach

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D

C

C

RD

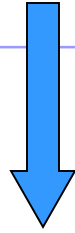
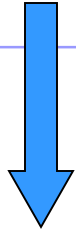
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# Values & Principles in Deontology and Teleology

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# Values & Principles

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D

C

C

RD

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# Professional Development

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- Implications of being a practice profession
  - Educational Methods, Policies, CoE
- Implications of demands and controls
  - EIPI demands of jobs, increasing controls
  - Case conferencing: input from colleagues
- Implications of professional responsibility
  - Standards in values/principles, not behaviors
  - Supervision
    - Setting forth decisions in community of peers

# Definitions & Differences

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- Supervision
- Case Conferencing
- Peer Guidance
- Professional Consultation
- Mentoring

Distilled to: Talking about your work with others for the purposes of improvement (ethics)

# Cokely, 2000

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“The choices that we make, and the actions that follow from those choices, can uphold or deny the dignity of other people, can advocate or violate the rights of other people, can affirm or disavow the humanity of other people. Given the potential consequences of our choices and the resultant actions, it is reasonable to expect that we constantly re-examine those values, principles, and beliefs that underscore and shape the decisions we make and the actions we undertake.”

# Supervision

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# DC-S Skill Sets

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- Identification & articulation of demands
- Identification & articulation of controls
- Building the constellation of demands
- Identification & articulation of consequences & associated values
- Identification of DCCRD

# Thank you!

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