

The 'What' It Depends On:

Demand-Control Theory in Supervision

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Interpreting is more than
transposing one language to
another...it is throwing a
semantic bridge between two
people from differing cultures
and thought worlds.

Claude Namy, 1977

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"How do you sign...?"

What's going on with you?

- When the person slurred their words?
- In a doctor's office?
- Between a mother and son?
- When you have same question?

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"What would you do if...?"

You are asked to turn the classroom lights off

- It's the first time interpreting for this teacher
- The deaf student already is embarrassed about having an interpreter present
- The light switch is right next to you
- You know the deaf student cannot see well in low-light conditions

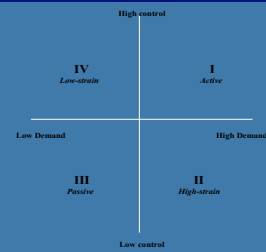
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What is Demand-Control Theory?

- Occupational health theory
 - Robert Karasek and Tores Theorell
 - No job is inherently stressful
- Jobs entail ‘demands’ and ‘controls’
 - Demands: job challenges faced by worker
 - Controls: resources available to worker
- Work dynamics arise from that interaction
 - (e.g., stress, satisfaction, learning)

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D-C Grid



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Demands (challenges of the job)

Requirements of a job; those factors which “act upon” the worker

What is needed to perform the task?

- Knowledge
- Capabilities
- Character traits
- Working conditions

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“What are the demands on an interpreter?”

How the interpreting students at University of TN answered this question...

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Categorizing Interpreting Demands

- **Linguistic**
 - That which is specific to the expressive skills of the deaf/hearing consumers (i.e., style, pace, volume)
- **Environmental**
 - That which is specific to the setting (i.e., professional roles, terminology, physical surroundings)
- **Interpersonal**
 - That which is specific to the interaction of the consumers (i.e., culture, communication, FOI, goals)
- **Intrapersonal**
 - That which is specific to the interpreter (i.e., thoughts, feelings, physical reactions)

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Demands on the Interpreter: Linguistic

- Style of signing/speaking
- Volume
- Pace
- Accents
- Clarity of speech
- Physical position
- Physical limitations

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Demands on the Interpreter: Environmental

- General nature of assignment
- Specific setting of assignment
- Sight lines
- Background noise
- Personnel
- Terminology
- Room temperature
- Chemicals and odors
- Seating arrangements
- Lighting quality
- Visual distractions
- Goal or purpose

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Demands on the Interpreter: Interpersonal

- Dynamics between HC and DC
 - Oppression, dishonesty, unfairness, etc.
- Dynamics between HC and I
 - adherence to expected role norms
- Dynamics between DC and I
 - Parties' understanding of interpreter's role
- Power and authority dynamics
- Communication control, e.g., turn-taking
- Thought worlds

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Demands on the Interpreter: Intrapersonal

- Feelings or ruminations one may have about:
 - one's safety
 - physiological distractions
 - psychological responses or distractions
 - one's interpreting performance
 - liability
 - the people and the dynamics
 - the environment
- Availability of supervision and support
- Anonymity and isolation

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Controls (decision latitude)

Skills or resources that the worker can bring to bear in response to the demands of the job

- Controls may involve:
 - Behavioral actions and interventions
 - Particular translation decisions
 - Internal/attitudinal acknowledgments

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Controls of the Interpreter

- **Pre-assignment controls:** controls that are employed before or in preparation for the formal assignment.
- **Assignment controls:** controls that are employed during the interpreting assignment.
- **Post-assignment controls:** controls that are employed after the assignment is over.

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Pre-assignment Controls

- **Education**
 - Formal (interpreter training program and continuing ed.)
 - Informal (other schooling)
- **Experience**
 - Work-related
 - Personal
- **Direct preparation for the assignment**
 - Contacts (team, HC, DC)
 - Readings, prep materials, Internet

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Assignment Controls

- Acknowledgments
- Self-talk
- Direct interventions
- Adjusted translations
- Prior relationships
- RID Code of Ethics
- Role metaphors

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Post-assignment Controls

- Supervision
 - Formal (with supervisor)
 - Informal (with colleagues)
- Debriefing/venting
 - With support system
- Follow-up
 - With people involved
 - With further education
 - With referring party
- Self-care

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D-C Supervision In Action: Analyzing The Work

Examples

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Benefits of D-C Supervision:

- Provides structure
 - Organizes the analysis of interpreting work
 - Provides a common language for such analysis
- Offers a teaching approach for content areas
 - Stimulates consideration of demands and controls
 - Examples
 - Emergency room (broad content situation)
 - Interpreting for MLS psychiatric patient (specific content)
- Interpreters/students can learn from any setting
- De-personalizes interpreting work

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Benefits of D-C Supervision (cont.):

- Opens practical & realistic dialogue about our work, allowing for objective discussions with:
 - Other interpreting professionals
 - ASL interpreters
 - Spoken language interpreters
 - Other professionals with whom we work
 - Deaf consumers

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