

Decision Making Model

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As an interpreter you are asked to make split-second decisions in scenarios where split-second decisions may not be the best approach. There are times when issues or scenarios arise that need time for discussion, deliberation, and a meaningful decision making process. Throughout my time in the Douglas College interpreting program we have been taught different ways of making decisions. For myself however, there is one decision making model that has become my main process for making choices and decisions while interpreting. Dean and Pollard's (2013) decision making model, *The Demand Control Schema (DC-S)*, has allowed me to setup a basis for how I make decisions throughout the interpreting process.

We have talked a lot about how we make decisions in the moment throughout the interpreting program at Douglas College. While I have stated that Dean and Pollard's (2013) work on the DC-S model is my preferred method of decision making I will also say that their structure often does not come in to play at the moment a decision is required to be made. Rather, the DC-S has allowed me to critique and reflect on the decision I have made in a structured way and then learn from those decisions. Before I begin to explain my own decision making process, allow me to expand on some of the essential elements of Dean and Pollard's (2013) DC-S decision making model.

One of the most important elements of the DC-S is to identify what the main demand is. In other words, what is the biggest issue at hand. It is important to recognize what this demand is in order to move on to the concurrent demands that stem from this main demand. For example, if there is a safety concern in an automotive classroom, in that a student for whom you are interpreting for has missed a crucial procedural step, then our main concern is the safety of the student and all those in proximity to the danger. Once you have this main

demand identified you can move on to the concurrent demands, which fall into four broad categories: environmental, interpersonal, paralinguistic, and intrapersonal. An example of what this might look like can be seen in *Table 1*. *Table 1* is an example situation which we applied the DC-S model in a previous Douglas College course (Palmer, 2018).

Main demand and concurrent demands

Main demand: Students have missed a crucial safety step in hoisting a car in the air and are now at risk of causing harm to themselves and school property.

Concurrent demands:

<u>Environmental</u>	<u>Interpersonal</u>	<u>Paralinguistic</u>	<u>Intrapersonal</u>
Shop is noisy	Group dynamic (i.e. “jokesters”)	Jargon specific to automotive course	Initial obligations
Instructor’s proximity (i.e. located across the room)	Instructor is preoccupied with other students	Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) affecting communication	Personal schema and knowledge on automotives and shop safety

Table 1

Once an interpreter has outlined all of these concurrent demands which fall under the primary, or “main” demand then they can move on to the decision options they may have. Dean and Pollard (2013) call these decisions “controls”. Controls are actions that an interpreter takes in response to the demand(s). Controls tend to rate on a scale of liberal to conservative decisions. The liberal or conservative nature of the decision tends to relate to the involvement of the interpreter. Conservative decisions/controls are typically less involved or intrusive. The interpreter may take the position of being “neutral” and may feel like it is not their place to be a part of the outcome of whatever it is that is happening. On the opposite end

of the spectrum a liberal decision may be made by the interpreter. These liberal decisions are much more involved and can be intrusive in nature. The interpreter may make the decision to abandon their position as the interpreter and become directly involved in the outcome of the situation. The liberal/conservative scale is a spectrum and there is rarely ever a situation where there is only a black or white, liberal or conservative decision to be made. There is a variety and it is important to know where the decision you made lies on this spectrum. In *Figure 1*, a figure used in accordance with Palmer (2018), we can see some of the potential controls that an interpreter may take in the situation outlined in *Table 1*.

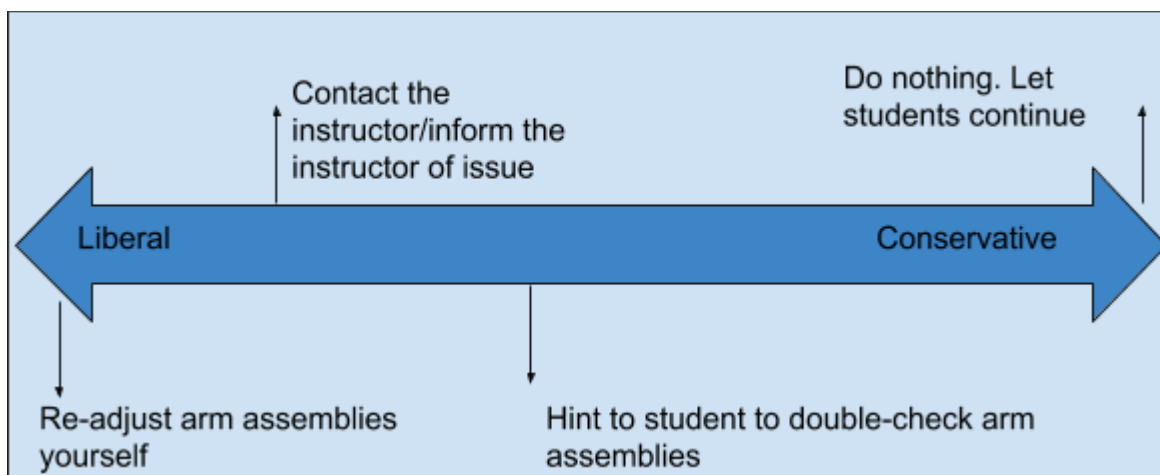


Figure 1: A liberal/conservative spectrum of controls

Another related topic to the decisions we make and the liberal or conservative nature of them is the relational autonomy that we have with those whom we are working. Relational autonomy is the relationship between individuals and their position in society (Witter-Merithew & Nicodemus, 2012). When we talk about relational autonomy in regards to interpreting we are steered towards our position of power as interpreters. We are the ones that hold the power to make these decision and we need to know how these decisions impact

the autonomy of those involved. I have always looked at relational autonomy as a chart/graphic. Looking at *Figure 3* we can see how our decisions to become less or more involved - make more liberal or conservative decisions - impact the relational autonomy of those we are working with. The more liberal choices we make the less autonomy the person we are working with has. The more conservative controls we implement the more autonomy we allow them to have. It is important to not only find a balance but to know when it is appropriate to make decisions that may lessen or increase someone's autonomy.

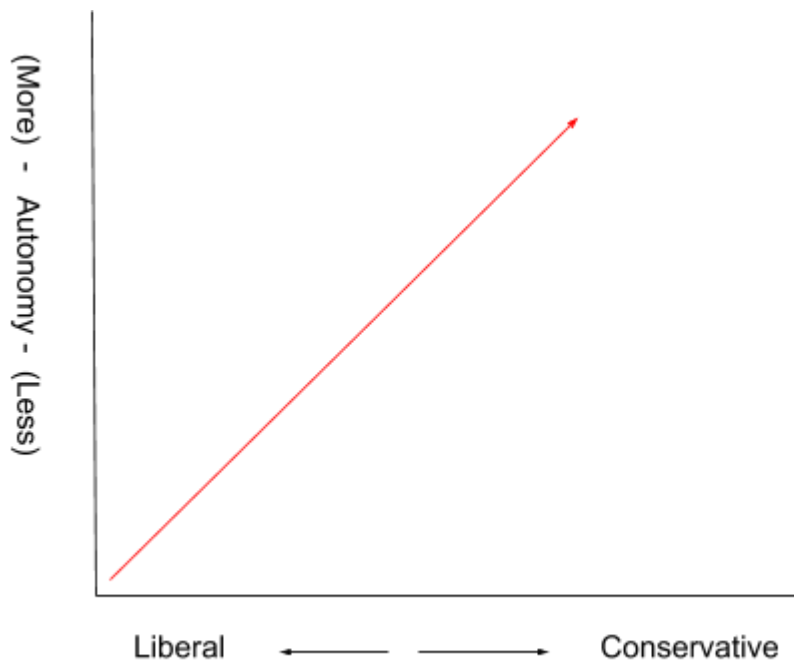


Figure 2: The autonomy of a consumer vs the liberal to conservative controls used by the interpreter

While I have outlined the decision making models above I will refer to a previous statement I made in that I tend to not have any decision making models at front of mind when I am faced with making a quick decision. I have long found that these scenarios that require a

decision making model rarely account for the time needed to run through all your options and possible outcomes. Rather, I use the decision making models to reflect on the decisions I made at that time. I think this is the most beneficial part of having a decision making model: the ability to deconstruct what happened and figure out exactly why we made the decisions we did.

In my experience with difficult and ethically challenging situations I have often made my choices in that exact moment without consciously thinking about the concurrent demands or any positive or negative effects my decisions may have on the individual(s)' autonomy. An important part of an interpreter's decision making process, and my own process as well, is their subconscious knowledge of demanding scenarios. Throughout my time at Douglas College and with my practicum experience I have had to make difficult decisions, as well as less difficult decisions, but decisions nevertheless. My ability to dissect these decisions and find the root of why I made the choices I made help to cement a decision making process within myself that I can carry from scenario to scenario. Therefore, I do use Dean and Pollard's (2013) model of DC-S but as a way of examining and understanding the decision I made at the time and preparing myself for future challenges and decisions I will be required to make as a sign language interpreter.

References

Dean, R. K. & Pollard, R. Q. (2013). *The demand control schema: Interpreting as a practice profession*. North Charleston: CreateSpace Independence Publishing Platform.

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Witter-Merithew, C. S. C., & Nicodemus, C. I. (2012). Toward the International Development of Interpreter Specialization: An Examination of Two Case Studies. *Journal of Interpretation*, 20(1), 8.