



Linguists working with medical educators: Adding value or speaking in tongues?

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Abstract

There is a well-established tradition of English as Additional Language (EAL) teachers working with health educators to prepare International Medical Graduates (IMG) for medical registration examinations. One aim of this paper is to report on several collaborative projects involving linguists (a discourse analyst and a phonetician) working with medical educators in the health care setting. In particular we focus on the development, implementation and evaluation of communication feedback guidelines for IMG assessment. The setting of this project was education sessions for IMGs run by medical clinical educators at two Victorian hospital sites. Informed by observational fieldnotes, input from participating international medical graduates, and linguistic analysis of video-recorded role-play tasks, we developed Communication Feedback Guidelines (CFGs) and a methodology for their use with mock Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) practice. The CFGs allowed for systematic feedback on genre/generic integrity, discourse semantics, lexicogrammar, and phonological aspects of language as they were realized in the doctor patient interview. Fine-grained linguistic feedback, particularly around intonation and interference from the speaker's L1, was highly valued by the participating IMGs.

The broader aim of this paper is to examine the nature of the collaboration between the multidisciplinary team over the development of this and other

projects. In particular, we will discuss the differences in terminology for health professionals and linguists when describing language in use; the contributions of the different team members, and consider how such collaborations between linguists and health professionals can be sustained beyond the life of projects of this type.

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