

I, you and it – the discourse of healing doctor-patient relationships in narrative-based publications from specialised medical journals

Zabielska, Magdalena* and Magda Żelazowska-Sobczyk** (*Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, **University of Warsaw)

This poster presentation offers preliminary results of a study of the doctor-patient relationship at the level of professional medical text. To this aim, two basic modes of interaction proposed by 20th century philosopher Martin Buber (1958) have been drawn upon, i.e. I-You and I-It. Although the modes were not originally contextualised by Buber in broadly understood healthcare, they have been successfully applied therein, primarily to research on healing relationships established in direct encounters between doctors and patients (Scott et al. 2008; 2009, see also Messinger and Chin-Yee 2016). In this presentation, however, they are referred to in written communication, where the I-It mode is typical of the asymmetrical power relation between the treated and the treating whereas the I-You mode stands for the encounter between two valid communication participants seen as whole persons who may assume different roles and thus convey different perspectives and positionings (Davies and Harre 1990). With regard to specialist medical publications, the first one would be drawn upon in regular generic texts like research papers or case reports, with their typical biomedical character of regarding the patient as a passive recipient of treatment and illness as a direct consequence of the diseased body; the other one would be reflected in various narrative-based publications, i.e. doctors' and patients' accounts. Additionally, the paper refers to different takes on Buber's (1958) idea resulting in varied types of healing relationships, as proposed by Scott and colleagues (2008; 2009). All the above-mentioned cases will be illustrated with appropriate excerpts from publications derived from British and American professional medical journals. Therefore, this presentation offers a more holistic reflection on different discursive constructions of the doctor-patient relationship at the level of text.

References

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