

Joint Productions as discourse strategy in alternative medicine sessions

Emanuela Mileva (*Simon Fraser University*)

Doctor-patient encounters can be positioned in two separate domains – that of mainstream medicine and that of psychotherapy. In the present work I argue that alternative medicine therapy occupies a space between the two - it is focused on mind-body integration in which the psychological state of the patient is a significant contributor to the illness. From linguistic perspective, the talk in alternative medicine therapy borrows linguistic characteristics both from mainstream medical visits and psychotherapy sessions.

The study focuses on joint productions as a collaborative meaning making discourse strategy used in alternative medicine sessions. Joint productions are analyzed as a syntactical and semantical continuation of speaker A's utterance (Ferrara 1994). The basis of the analysis is a set of 48 instances of joint productions extracted from four hours speech from session dyads with 9 different patients and 2 practitioners. Four different types are explored based on syntactic form, prosodic signals, received response, and motivation. The analysis shows the ways joint productions demonstrate attuned talk, serve as a device that creates a "collaborative floor" (Eldesky 1981) to which both doctor and patient contribute concurrently, and build meaning in a collaborative fashion.

All these findings suggest first, that the differences in power between doctor and patient in alternative medicine sessions are decreased compared to the differences in mainstream medical visits; second, joint productions tend to appear in order to build good social relations and work toward better understanding and creating trust – something, that is essential for the psychotherapy talk.