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Research Objective

Our goal is to observe **linguistic exchanges** to investigate **communication competencies**, in order to understand the process of **shared decision making**.

Linguistics

Linguistics is the scientific study of language.

Descriptive Linguistics is the methodology of observing, analyzing and describing how language is used in a particular speech community.

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that deals with how people use language to construct meaning in specific contexts.

Shared Decision Making (SDM)

SDM is a process of collaboration among health care providers and patients

Relationship-centered SDM acknowledges multiple stakeholder relationships

- Patients
- Clinicians
- Caregivers and Family Members

There is a focus on the performance of **Communication Competencies**

- Information Exchange
- Collaboration Skills

Here we discuss a data-driven exchange based upon our observations in order to examine **Collaboration Skills**

Language and Shared Decision Making

The application of a **linguistic perspective** can produce insights about **Collaboration Skills**

Scenario: Youssef is recovering from a brain injury. Lily, his wife and caregiver, is concerned that he is refusing to eat at home. In a therapy session with Ana, his occupational therapist, the three of them address the issue. Youssef is sitting up with his lunch tray in front of him, and Ana wants Youssef to practice eating by himself.

Microdecision: To decide upon one food item on the tray to eat.

Ana: *Let's talk about your lunch. What do you have here?*
 Youssef: *No idea.*
 Ana: *Well, what do you see in front of you?*
 Youssef: *Food.*

Youssef does not appear to be collaborating in the conversation. This can be characterized by the **Cooperative Principle**, which provides maxims for effective communication:

The Cooperative Principle (Grice's Maxims):

1. **Maxim of Quantity**
Be as informative as you can
2. **Maxim of Quality**
Be as truthful as you can
3. **Maxim of Relation**
Be as relevant as you can
4. **Maxim of Manner**
Be as clear as you can

- His first response challenges the **Maxim of Quality**.
- His second response challenges the **Maxim of Quantity**.

Ana: *I would like you to pick something to eat.*
 Youssef: *[No response]*
 Ana: *Can you pick something for me?*
 Youssef: *[No response]*
 Lily: *Pick something up, Hon!*

Ana and Lily use different approaches to convince Youssef to participate.

Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson)

Positive Face -
desire for interaction and solidarity with others

Negative Face -
desire for autonomy and freedom

Ana appeals to **negative face**:

- Indirect speech, deferential and polite
- Gives Youssef more freedom
- Increases social distance

Lily appeals to **positive face**:

- Direct speech
- "Hon" emphasizes relationship
- Decreases social distance

Lily: *Do you want the yogurt cup? The soup? What about the sarnie?*
 Youssef: *I'll try the sarnie.*

Lily (born in the US), uses a British slang term for "sandwich" when speaking to Youssef, who was born in the UK.

- **Accommodation** is when speakers change aspects of their speech to align with the speech of their conversation partners
- Emphasizes closeness and increases solidarity, if successful

Conclusions

Pragmatic theory provides insights on **Collaboration Skills** in the shared resolution of a **Microdecision**.

The Cooperative Principle characterizes **appropriately collaborative speech**. When Youssef does not follow its conventions, he may be signaling his refusal to participate, or he may be unable to follow them as a result of his cognitive impairment.

The concepts of **Negative Face** and **Positive Face** illustrate two contrasting strategies for appeals to cooperation. These strategies:

- are directly reflected by **language choices** (direct/indirect syntactic form, terms of endearment, linguistic accommodation)
- increase or decrease **social distance**
- depend upon the nature of **interpersonal relationships**

Relevance to Practice

We seek to describe **Communication Competencies** of effective **Shared Decision Making**, and the complications that arise with a participant with impaired speech ability. We emphasize a **multifaceted skillset** and the importance of **interpersonal relationships**.

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References

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