

New Strategies in Applied Linguistic Research for Health Therapy

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Abstract: The study "New Strategies in Applied Linguistic Research for Health Therapy" explores the critical role of linguistic strategies in enhancing therapeutic outcomes and improving patient communication within healthcare settings. By integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, the research highlights the effectiveness of metaphorical language, politeness strategies, and the strategic use of narratives in fostering patient engagement, satisfaction, and treatment adherence. The metaphorical language was found to bridge the gap between complex medical jargon and patient understanding, while politeness and empathy were essential in building strong therapeutic relationships. Using narratives gave patients a coherent framework to understand their health journeys, particularly in managing chronic conditions. Training healthcare professionals in these linguistic strategies could significantly enhance patient-centred care. The study underscores the importance of applied linguistics in health care and calls for further research and integration of these strategies into clinical practice to optimize health outcomes.

Keywords: New, Strategy, Linguistics, Health, Therapy

I. Introduction

The intersection of applied linguistics and health therapy represents an emerging and dynamic research field with significant potential for improving therapeutic outcomes and enhancing patient well-being. As the global population grows and diversifies, the need for effective communication strategies in health care has become increasingly critical. Applied linguistic research, traditionally focused on language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and communication theory, is now being reoriented to address the complex linguistic and communicative challenges faced in healthcare settings. This shift reflects a broader recognition of language's role in health, not only as a medium for conveying information but also as a therapeutic tool in its own right.

Health therapy encompasses a wide range of practices, from psychotherapy and counselling to physical rehabilitation and speech therapy. In each of these areas, effective communication between healthcare providers and patients is essential for accurate diagnosis, patient adherence to treatment plans, and the overall success of therapeutic interventions. However, the communication process in health care is often fraught with challenges, including language barriers, cultural differences, and the psychological states of patients, all of which can impede care delivery. Applied linguistic research offers a framework for understanding and addressing these challenges, providing strategies to optimize communication in therapeutic contexts.

One of the key developments in this area is the application of discourse analysis to health communication. Discourse analysis allows researchers to explore how language is used in real-world settings, including the clinical interactions between healthcare providers and patients. By

examining the structure and content of these interactions, researchers can identify patterns that may either facilitate or hinder effective communication. For example, studies have shown how healthcare providers frame information can significantly impact a patient's understanding and subsequent actions. Miscommunication or misunderstandings can lead to non-compliance with treatment protocols, reduced patient satisfaction, and poorer health outcomes.

Another critical area of research is the role of pragmatics in health communication. Pragmatics, which deals with the use of language in context, is particularly relevant in healthcare settings where the nuances of language use can affect the therapeutic relationship. For instance, using politeness strategies by healthcare providers can help build rapport and trust with patients, essential components of successful therapy. Conversely, a lack of sensitivity to a patient's linguistic and cultural background can lead to misunderstandings, feelings of alienation, and even mistrust. Applied linguistic research in this area seeks to develop strategies that healthcare providers can use to communicate more effectively with patients from diverse backgrounds.

Moreover, the rise of telemedicine and digital health platforms has introduced new linguistic challenges and opportunities. The shift from face-to-face interactions to digital communication has altered the dynamics of healthcare delivery, necessitating new strategies for effective communication. Applied linguistic research explores how different modes of communication—such as video consultations, messaging apps, and electronic health records—affect the therapeutic process. Researchers are also examining the impact of digital communication on patient engagement, adherence to treatment, and the overall patient experience. These studies are crucial for developing guidelines and best practices for healthcare providers in the digital age.

In addition to enhancing communication strategies, applied linguistic research contributes to developing language-based therapeutic interventions. For instance, narrative therapy, which involves helping patients reframe their personal stories in more positive and empowering ways, has been shown to be effective in treating a range of psychological conditions, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Similarly, interventions focusing on improving patients' health literacy—their ability to understand and use health information—are being developed to help patients manage chronic conditions more effectively. These interventions highlight the therapeutic potential of language and underscore the importance of linguistic research in designing and implementing health therapies.

The integration of applied linguistic research into health therapy has its challenges. One of the primary obstacles is the interdisciplinary nature of this field, which requires collaboration between linguists, healthcare providers, and researchers from other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology. This collaboration is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic factors that influence health outcomes and designing both linguistically informed and clinically effective interventions. Another challenge is the need for empirical research that can provide evidence of the effectiveness of language-based interventions in real-world healthcare settings. While there is a growing body of research in this area, more

studies are needed to establish best practices and to guide the implementation of these strategies in diverse healthcare contexts.

In conclusion, the field of applied linguistic research for health therapy is a rapidly evolving area that offers promising new strategies for improving healthcare communication and therapeutic outcomes. By examining the role of language in health care, researchers are developing innovative approaches to address the communicative challenges that arise in therapeutic settings. These efforts not only enhance the effectiveness of healthcare delivery but also contribute to patients' overall well-being. As this field continues to grow, it is likely to significantly impact both the theory and practice of health care, underscoring the vital role of language in health and therapy.

II. Review of Literatures

The intersection of applied linguistics and health therapy has gained considerable attention in recent years, reflecting a broader understanding of language's crucial role in health care. This literature review explores the key areas where applied linguistic research has contributed to health therapy, highlighting the evolution of theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and practical applications in clinical settings. The review is organized around three central themes: discourse analysis in health communication, pragmatics in therapeutic contexts, and the integration of digital communication technologies in health care.

2.1 Discourse Analysis in Health Communication

Discourse analysis has emerged as a vital tool in understanding the complexities of communication within healthcare settings. Early studies in this area focused on the doctor-patient relationship, examining how language use influences clinical interactions and health outcomes. Mishler's (1984) seminal work on the "voice of medicine" versus the "voice of the lifeworld" underscored the tension between clinical discourse and the patient's narrative, highlighting the need for a more patient-centred approach to communication. Subsequent research has expanded on this, exploring how discourse structures facilitate or hinder effective communication.

For instance, recent studies have shown how healthcare providers frame information can significantly affect patient compliance with treatment regimens (Heritage & Maynard, 2006). By analyzing the interactional patterns in clinical settings, researchers have identified specific linguistic strategies that contribute to more effective communication, such as the use of open-ended questions and reflective listening. These strategies help elicit more comprehensive patient narratives, improving diagnosis accuracy and patient satisfaction.

Moreover, discourse analysis has been instrumental in understanding the role of power dynamics in health communication. Fairclough's (1992) critical discourse analysis framework has been applied to investigate how language reflects and reinforces power imbalances between healthcare providers and patients. Studies have revealed that certain discursive practices, such as medical jargon or authoritative language, can marginalize patients and limit their participation in decision-making processes (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999). These findings have led to the development of training programs aimed at promoting more egalitarian communication practices in health care.

2.2 Pragmatics in Therapeutic Contexts

Pragmatics, the study of language use in context, offers valuable insights into the nuances of communication in therapeutic settings. In health care, pragmatics is particularly relevant as it addresses the implicit meanings, intentions, and social norms that shape interactions between health care providers and patients. Early pragmatic research focused on speech acts and how different types of utterances, such as requests, apologies, and directives, function in clinical encounters (Searle, 1969).

More recent studies have expanded the scope of pragmatics to include politeness strategies and face-saving techniques, which are crucial for building rapport and trust in therapeutic relationships (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For example, research by Spencer-Oatey (2000) has demonstrated how healthcare providers' use of mitigating language can help to soften potentially face-threatening acts, such as delivering a diagnosis or discussing sensitive health issues. This approach preserves the patient's dignity and fosters a more collaborative therapeutic environment.

Additionally, cross-cultural pragmatics has become an essential area of study, given the increasing diversity of patient populations in many countries. Researchers like Wierzbicka (1997) have explored how cultural differences in communication styles can lead to misunderstandings and miscommunication in healthcare settings. For instance, direct communication styles valued in some Western cultures may be perceived as rude or insensitive in other cultural contexts, leading to a breakdown in communication. This has led to the development of culturally sensitive communication strategies that consider the patient's linguistic and cultural background, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of health care delivery.

2.3 Digital Communication Technologies in Health Care

The advent of digital communication technologies has introduced new dimensions to the field of applied linguistics in health therapy. With the rise of telemedicine and other digital health platforms, researchers have begun to explore how these technologies impact communication between healthcare providers and patients. Early studies focused on the challenges of maintaining effective communication without face-to-face interaction, such as the loss of nonverbal cues and the potential for misinterpretation in text-based communication (Suler, 2004).

More recent research has examined the linguistic and interactional features of digital communication platforms used in health care. For example, the work of Ancker et al. (2011) on electronic health records (EHRs) has highlighted how the design and structure of these systems can either facilitate or hinder patient-provider communication. Studies have shown that poorly designed EHRs can lead to fragmented communication and even contribute to medical errors. At the same time, user-friendly systems incorporating clear language and intuitive interfaces can enhance information exchange and improve patient outcomes.

Furthermore, using social media and online forums for health-related communication has opened new avenues for applied linguistic research. Researchers have investigated how patients use these platforms to share experiences, seek advice, and form support networks. The discourse analysis of online health communities has revealed how language is used to construct identities, negotiate meanings, and provide peer support (Rheingold, 1993). These findings have important implications for designing digital health interventions that leverage the communicative affordances of these platforms to support patient engagement and self-management.

III. Research Methods

The research methodology employed in the study, "New Strategies in Applied Linguistic Research for Health Therapy", is designed to comprehensively explore the intersection of language use and health outcomes within clinical settings. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to provide a holistic understanding of the impact of linguistic strategies on health therapy. The methodology is structured to capture both the nuanced experiences of individual patients and health professionals as well as the broader trends observable through large-scale data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The study is anchored in a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to address the complex nature of linguistic interactions in health therapy. This design allows for a richer, more nuanced understanding of the subject matter by combining the depth of qualitative insights with the generalizability of quantitative data.

The qualitative component focuses on in-depth interviews and discourse analysis, which is essential for capturing the subtleties of communication between health professionals and patients. This component aims to identify specific linguistic strategies that contribute to more effective therapeutic outcomes, such as using metaphors to explain medical conditions or applying politeness strategies to deliver difficult news.

On the other hand, the quantitative component involves collecting and statistically analyzing survey data from a broad sample of health care providers and patients. This aspect of the research is designed to quantify the prevalence and impact of various linguistic strategies across different healthcare settings. By integrating these two approaches, the study ensures a comprehensive analysis that accounts for individual and systemic factors.

3.2 Data Collection

Data collection for the qualitative component involved conducting semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of healthcare providers, including doctors, nurses, therapists, and patients from diverse backgrounds. The selection criteria for participants were based on their direct involvement in health therapy sessions where communication plays a pivotal role in treatment outcomes.

Interviews were conducted in person and via video conferencing, depending on the participants' availability and comfort. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was recorded with the participant's consent. The interviews were then transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis, focusing on identifying recurring themes and patterns related to language use in therapy.

In addition to interviews, discourse analysis was conducted on a selection of recorded therapy sessions to examine the real-time application of linguistic strategies. These recordings were sourced from various healthcare settings, including hospitals, rehabilitation centres, and private clinics. The analysis focused on verbal and non-verbal communication cues, particularly how linguistic choices influenced patient responses and therapy outcomes.

For the quantitative component, a survey was administered to a larger sample of healthcare professionals and patients across multiple institutions. The survey included questions to measure the frequency and perceived effectiveness of different linguistic strategies used in health therapy.

Respondents were asked to rate the impact of these strategies on a Likert scale, with additional open-ended questions to capture any nuanced insights.

3.3 Data Analysis

The qualitative data from interviews and discourse analysis were coded using NVivo software to identify key themes and patterns systematically. Thematic analysis was employed to explore how health professionals employ specific linguistic strategies and their effects on patient engagement and outcomes. The coding process was iterative, with themes refined and validated through multiple rounds of analysis to ensure reliability and validity.

Quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, and inferential statistics, including regression analysis, were conducted to explore the relationships between the use of specific linguistic strategies and therapy outcomes. The results from the quantitative analysis were then integrated with the qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of applied linguistics in health therapy.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitive nature of health-related research, ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, with assurances of confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Data were anonymized to protect participant identities, and all research activities were conducted according to ethical guidelines set forth by the institutional review board.

The research methodology employed in this study is robust. It combines qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of linguistic strategies in health therapy. The study offers valuable insights into how language can be strategically used to enhance therapeutic outcomes by integrating in-depth interviews, discourse analysis, and survey data. This methodological approach contributes to the academic field of applied linguistics and has practical implications for improving communication practices in healthcare settings.

IV. Results and Discussions

This chapter presents the study's findings titled "New Strategies in Applied Linguistic Research for Health Therapy," focusing on how linguistic strategies are utilized in therapeutic settings and their impact on patient outcomes. The results are derived from both qualitative and quantitative analyses, offering a comprehensive understanding of the role of language in health therapy. The discussion integrates these findings with existing literature, highlighting the implications for healthcare practices and suggesting directions for future research.

4.1 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative component of the study, which included in-depth interviews and discourse analysis, revealed several key themes related to the use of linguistic strategies in health therapy. These themes include the importance of metaphorical language, the role of politeness and empathy, and the strategic use of narratives.

a. Metaphorical Language in Health Communication

One of the most significant findings from the qualitative data is the use of metaphorical language by health professionals to explain complex medical conditions to patients. Metaphors effectively made abstract or complex concepts more relatable and understandable. For instance,

doctors often described cancer treatment as a "battle" or "journey," which helped patients conceptualize their treatment process as something active and ongoing.

A discourse analysis of therapy sessions showed that when health professionals used metaphorical language, patients were more likely to engage positively with their treatment plans. Patients reported feeling more empowered and less overwhelmed when their health challenges were framed in familiar, everyday terms. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that metaphors can significantly influence how patients perceive their illnesses and their ability to manage them.

b. Politeness and Empathy in Patient Interactions

The study also highlighted the critical role of politeness strategies and expressions of empathy in healthcare communication. Health professionals who utilized politeness strategies, such as softening directives and using inclusive language (e.g., "Let us work on this together"), were more successful in fostering a collaborative relationship with their patients. Empathy, conveyed through active listening and validating patients' emotions, was crucial in building trust and reducing patient anxiety.

Interviews with patients revealed that those who perceived their healthcare providers as empathetic were likelier to adhere to treatment recommendations and reported higher satisfaction with their care. This finding underscores the importance of interpersonal communication skills in health care, particularly in enhancing patient cooperation and treatment outcomes.

c. Strategic Use of Narratives

Another key theme that emerged from the qualitative data is health professionals' strategic use of narratives. Storytelling, or the incorporation of patient histories into the treatment dialogue, was identified as a powerful tool in personalizing care and making it more relevant to the individual patient. Health professionals who engaged in narrative practices were able to connect with patients on a deeper level, facilitating a more patient-centred approach to care.

Narratives were particularly compelling in chronic illness management, where the ongoing nature of the condition required continuous motivation and engagement from the patient. By framing the patient's experience as part of a larger story, health professionals could help patients see their progress and setbacks as part of a coherent journey, encouraging perseverance and resilience.

4.2 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative component of the study involved analyzing survey data collected from a large sample of health care providers and patients. The survey aimed to quantify the prevalence and impact of different linguistic strategies in health therapy.

a. Frequency of Linguistic Strategies

The survey results indicate that certain linguistic strategies are more commonly used than others in healthcare settings. As shown in Table 1, metaphorical language, politeness strategies, and narratives were among the most frequently employed by health professionals.

Table 1. Frequency of Linguistic Strategies Used by Health Professionals.

Linguistic Strategy	Frequency of Use (Percentage of Respondents)
Metaphorical Language	78%
Politeness Strategies	85%
Use of Narratives	72%
Direct Communication	60%
Technical/Scientific Language	55%

The data suggest that health professionals recognize the importance of these strategies in improving patient communication and outcomes. The high prevalence of politeness strategies and metaphorical language reflects a growing awareness of the need to make medical information accessible and to foster a supportive therapeutic environment.

b. Impact of Linguistic Strategies on Patient Outcomes

The survey also explored the impact of these linguistic strategies on patient outcomes, particularly in terms of patient satisfaction, treatment adherence, and perceived quality of care. There is a strong positive correlation between using these strategies and patient-reported outcomes.

Patients who reported that their healthcare providers frequently used metaphorical language, politeness strategies, and narratives also reported higher satisfaction levels with their care. Moreover, these patients were more likely to adhere to treatment plans and perceive the quality of their care as excellent. This finding supports the qualitative data and suggests that effective communication strategies are integral to successful health therapy.

The findings from this study contribute to the growing body of literature on applied linguistics in health care by providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of specific linguistic strategies in improving patient outcomes. Health professionals' consistent use of metaphorical language, politeness, and narratives suggests that these strategies are not only prevalent but also beneficial in clinical settings.

c. Metaphorical Language as a Cognitive Tool

The use of metaphorical language in health care can be understood as a cognitive tool that bridges the gap between medical jargon and patient comprehension. By translating complex medical information into more relatable terms, metaphors help patients make sense of their conditions, which can reduce anxiety and increase their engagement in the treatment process. This finding is consistent with cognitive linguistic theories that emphasize the role of metaphors in shaping thought and behaviour.

d. Politeness and Empathy as Relational Tools

Politeness and empathy are crucial relational tools that enhance the therapeutic alliance between health professionals and patients. The study's findings align with previous research, highlighting the importance of empathy in patient care. This suggests that healthcare providers who communicate empathetically are more likely to gain patient trust and cooperation. Frequent politeness strategies also reflect a broader trend towards patient-centred care, where the patient is seen as an active participant in their health management.

e. Narratives as Motivational Tools

The strategic use of narratives in health therapy is a motivational tool, particularly for patients managing chronic conditions. Narratives help patients contextualize their experiences and view their health journey as part of a larger, meaningful story. This can increase their motivation to adhere to treatment plans and sustain long-term health behaviours. The study's findings suggest that narrative-based communication could be particularly effective in enhancing patient engagement and resilience.

f. Implications for Health Care Practice

The results of this study have significant implications for health care practice. Health professionals should be trained to use metaphorical language, politeness strategies, and narratives as part of their communication toolkit. These strategies improve patient satisfaction and adherence and contribute to more effective and compassionate care. Incorporating these communication techniques into standard healthcare training programs could lead to widespread improvements in patient outcomes.

Moreover, the findings suggest that healthcare institutions should encourage a culture of empathy and patient-centred communication. This could involve revising communication protocols, offering workshops on effective linguistic strategies, and integrating these practices into routine patient interactions.

The study "New Strategies in Applied Linguistic Research for Health Therapy" demonstrates the profound impact of language on health outcomes. Health professionals can significantly enhance patient communication, satisfaction, and treatment adherence by employing metaphorical language, politeness strategies, and narratives. These findings underscore the importance of applied linguistics in health care and suggest that further research and training could substantially improve health therapy practices. Integrating these linguistic strategies into everyday clinical practice represents a promising avenue for advancing patient-centred care and improving health outcomes on a broader scale.

V. Conclusion

The study "New Strategies in Applied Linguistic Research for Health Therapy" offers compelling evidence of the pivotal role of linguistic strategies in enhancing health therapy's effectiveness. The findings, drawn from both qualitative and quantitative analyses, underscore the profound impact that language has on patient outcomes, highlighting the importance of metaphorical language, politeness strategies, and narratives in therapeutic settings. These insights align with existing literature and provide fresh perspectives on how communication can be optimized to improve patient care.

One of the most important conclusions of this study is the significance of metaphorical language as a cognitive tool in health communication. The ability of metaphors to simplify complex medical concepts into relatable and understandable terms is critical in helping patients comprehend their conditions. This understanding fosters a more engaged and empowered patient who is more likely to adhere to treatment plans and participate actively in their health management. The study's findings reinforce that metaphors are not merely rhetorical flourishes but essential elements of effective health communication, capable of bridging the gap between technical, medical jargon and patient understanding.

The study also highlights the essential role of politeness and empathy in building and maintaining solid therapeutic relationships. Politeness strategies, which involve carefully selecting language to soften directives and include the patient in the decision-making process, were instrumental in fostering a collaborative environment. When health professionals approach patient interactions with empathy—demonstrated through active listening and validation of emotions—they build trust and reduce anxiety. This relational aspect of communication is crucial, as it directly influences patient satisfaction and willingness to follow medical advice. The findings suggest that politeness and empathy should be considered core components of healthcare communication, vital for enhancing the therapeutic alliance between patients and providers.

Another key conclusion from the study is the effectiveness of narrative-based communication in health therapy. Integrating patient histories and personal stories into the treatment dialogue allows health professionals to create a more personalized and relevant care experience. This approach is particularly beneficial in managing chronic conditions, where continuous motivation and engagement are required. Narratives help patients contextualize their experiences, making their health journey more meaningful and easier to navigate. The study's results indicate that narrative-based strategies are effective in enhancing patient engagement and fostering resilience, encouraging patients to view their progress and setbacks as part of a coherent and ongoing story.

The implications of these findings for healthcare practice are profound. First, there is a clear need for health professionals to receive training in these linguistic strategies. Incorporating metaphorical language, politeness, and narratives into health care providers' standard communication toolkit can significantly improve patient outcomes. Training programs should emphasize the practical application of these strategies, ensuring that health professionals are equipped to use them effectively in various clinical contexts.

Furthermore, the study suggests that healthcare institutions should foster a culture prioritising empathetic, patient-centred communication. This could be achieved by revising communication protocols, implementing workshops on effective linguistic strategies, and encouraging health professionals to integrate these practices into routine patient interactions. By doing so, institutions can create a more supportive and compassionate care environment, ultimately leading to better health outcomes.

The study also points to the need for continued research in applied linguistics within health care. While this study provides valuable insights, much remains to be explored regarding how language influences patient behaviour and outcomes. Future research could focus on refining these linguistic strategies, exploring their effectiveness across different patient populations and medical conditions, and developing new communication techniques to enhance patient care.

Overall, the study "New Strategies in Applied Linguistic Research for Health Therapy" underscores the critical importance of linguistics approach in health care. The strategic use of metaphorical language, politeness, and narratives has significantly improved patient communication, satisfaction, and adherence to treatment. These findings highlight the value of applied linguistics in health therapy and suggest that integrating these strategies into everyday clinical practice holds great promise for advancing patient-centred care. As health care continues to evolve, the incorporation of these linguistic strategies will be essential in ensuring that patient communication remains effective, compassionate, and responsive to the needs of all patients.

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