

Patterns of Empathy in Two Online Fora for Diabetes and for Eating Disorders

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Linguistic empathy represents a dynamic interpersonal system of language that varies according to the communicative setting. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that there are different patterns (or styles) of empathy construction specific of each type of interaction. In the present study, we examine the empathic strategies deployed by participants in two online support groups: a recovery forum from an eating disorder (ED) and a forum for diabetes. The sample from the ED forum includes 50 threads, with a total of 82.562 words. For the diabetes forum, the sample comprises 18 threads, and a total number of 40.932 words. The results indicate that in the ED forum the most common empathy moves are primary emotional reactions and taking the other's perspective (cognitive empathy). In the diabetes forum, instead, the most frequent strategy was sharing the illness practices as proof of affiliation with the recipient. This contrast in the kind of empathy moves used in each community is related to the different experience of diabetes and EDs.

Biographical note

Carolina Figueras Bates is associate professor of Spanish Philology at the University of Barcelona. She is author of the book entitled *Pragmática de la puntuación* (Octaedro, 2001), and the editor, with Adrián Cabedo, of *Perspectives on Evidentiality in Spanish: Explorations across Genres* (John Benjamins, 2018). Her research interests are focused on the linguistic expression of empathy in discourse, communication in online support groups, and illness narratives.

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