

Title of the paper: To be or not to be... a patient – and its consequences for the promotion of personal agency in a medical discussion forum

In this presentation, I will address identity constructions in terms of category as well as in terms of the construction of agency in 18 threads (9000 words) on a Spanish public forum concerning diabetes with an active participation by healthcare professionals.

First, I will focus on which identity categories are made relevant by the question writers in (the pre-expansion to) the first pair part of the question-answer adjacency pair, and which of these are exploited by the answerers in the second pair part. Indeed, question writers may identify themselves as (relatives of) diabetics or may not specify their personal relation to diabetes. Moreover, they may bring in other categories of self-identification (gender, age, personality,...). I will then look into which of these categories are made consequential in the second pair part (typically realised by the healthcare professional, selected by the question writer). I will show that no health-related identity category is suggested if it has not first been mentioned by the patient. On the other hand, not all identity features mentioned by the patient are taken up by the professionals.

Second, I will look into how these identity categories relate to the degree to which the agency of the question writer is developed (or not) by the healthcare professionals (cf. proposal in Antaki & Crompton 2015). More particularly, I will show how the healthcare professionals use mainly suggestions to construct not only the agency of the patients but also that of the relatives as crucial partners in the diabetic's treatment.