# Doctor-Patient Interaction in an L2: Pragmatic Study of a Nigerian Experience

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**Abstract :** This study investigated the use of English in doctor-patient interaction in a university teaching hospital from a southwestern state in Nigeria with the aim of identifying the role of communication in an L2, patterns of communication, discourse strategies, pragmatic acts, and contexts that shape the interaction. Jacob Mey's Pragmatic Acts notion complemented with Emanuel and Emanuel's model of doctor-patient relationship provided the theoretical standpoint. Data comprising 7 audio-recorded doctors-patient interactions were collected from a University Hospital in Oyo state, Nigeria. Interactions involving the use of English language were purposefully selected. These were supplemented with patients' case notes and interviews conducted with doctors. Transcription was patterned alongside modified Arminen's notations of conversation analysis. In the study, interaction in English between doctor and patients has the preponderance of direct-translation, code-mixing and switching, Nigerianism and use of cultural worldviews to express medical experience. Irrespective of these, three patterns communication, namely the paternalistic, interpretive, and deliberative were identified. These were exhibited through varying discourse strategies. The paternalistic model reflected slightly casual conversational conventions and registers. These were achieved through the pragmemic activities of situated speech acts, psychological and physical acts, via patients' quarrel-induced acts, controlled and managed through doctors' shared situation knowledge. All these produced empathising, pacifying, promising and instructing practs. The patients' practs were explaining, provoking, associating and greeting in the paternalistic model. The informative model reveals the use of adjacency pairs, formal turn-taking, precise detailing, institutional talks and dialogic strategies. Through the activities of the speech, prosody and physical acts, the practs of declaring, alerting and informing were utilised by doctors, while the patients exploited adapting, requesting and selecting practs. The negotiating conversational strategy of the deliberative model featured in the speech, prosody and physical acts. In this model, practs of suggesting, teaching, persuading and convincing were utilised by the doctors. The patients deployed the practs of questioning, demanding, considering and deciding. The contextual variables revealed that other patterns (such as phatic and informative) are also used and they coalesced in the hospital within the situational and psychological contexts. However, the paternalistic model was predominantly employed by doctors with over six years in practice, while the interpretive, informative and deliberative models were found among registrar and others below six years of medical practice. Doctors' experience, patients' peculiarities and shared cultural knowledge influenced doctor-patient communication in the study.

**Keywords :** pragmatics, communication pattern, doctor-patient interaction, Nigerian hospital situation
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