

TGIF

THE NTU LINGUIST CHATROOM

“Do you smoke?”: On patients’ ‘less-than-direct’ responses and doctors’ countermeasures

The correlation between smoking and various sorts of life-threatening conditions is medically well-established and widely accepted, even amongst chronic smokers. In Singapore, smoking prohibition began in 1970 and has progressively extended its reach to ban smoking in almost all public places, ostensibly to achieve the aims of a smoke-free nation. Hence, there is a palpable sense of censure, both sociologically and medically, for being a smoker in Singapore.

During a medical consultation, asking if the patient smokes, or if s/he is a smoker, is highly commonplace, as such information is critical for the doctor to effectively do diagnosis and assess medical risk. Yet, patients who do smoke often orient to such a question as doing more than simply history-taking, and can work to resist the perceived upcoming censure of this line of questioning.

Using conversation analytic methods, we examine the various interactional practices that patients employ to either resist the implicature of the “smoking question”, or to obfuscate the degree of how much one is smoking. Correspondingly, doctors have to also counter such responses with appropriate interactional strategies to make an adequate medical diagnosis. Such findings alert us to how simple medical history-taking also has to be sensitive to the societal/sociological context within which such consultations are taking place.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Lim Ni Eng is currently Assistant Professor in the School of Humanities, NTU, and part of the Medical Humanities Research Cluster in the school. He received his doctoral degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The scope of his disciplinary training includes interactional linguistics, conversation analysis, multimodal discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics. His ongoing interest is on the interactional, socio-cultural and cognitive operations at work in everyday and institutional talk. Ni Eng’s current research agenda is in medical communication, funded by a

Ministry of Education AcRF Tier 2 grant, looking at how doctors and patients interact within the medical settings of Urology, Ophthalmology and Palliative Care.

WEBINAR ●

Date: 13 November 2020
Time: 1.30pm-2.30pm

ZOOM INFORMATION ●

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