



SEMMELWEIS MEDICAL LINGUISTICS CONFERENCE 2025

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

23-24 May 2025
Budapest

INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN HEALTHCARE COMMUNICATION
RESEARCH

Institute of Languages for Specific Purposes
Semmelweis University





FRANCISCO ALONSO-ALMEIDA, FRANCISCO J. ÁLVAREZ-GIL

Corresponding author: francisco.alonso@ulpgc.es

Discourse, Communication & Society Research Group (DiCoS), Departamento de Filología Moderna, Traducción e Interpretación, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

A GENDERED ANALYSIS OF INTERPERSONAL GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR IN HISTORICAL MEDICAL WRITING

Keywords:

interpersonal grammatical metaphor, medical discourse, gender, historical linguistics, corpus analysis, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Abstract:

Medical technical discourse has long been a site of negotiation between authoritative knowledge and patient engagement, with interpersonal grammatical metaphor (IGM) playing a key role in shaping communicative strategies (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Although considerable study has investigated grammatical metaphor in scientific literature, limited studies have addressed its interpersonal uses in historical medical discourse (Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2011), especially from a gendered viewpoint. This study fills this gap by examining IGM in 18th- and 19th-century medical texts inside the Corpus of Women's Instructive Texts in English (CoWITE) and a corresponding comparable compilation of male-authored medical texts, used as a reference corpus.

This study used Systemic Functional Linguistics as an analytical framework to examine how male and female authors employed IGM to establish authority and convey modality in technical specialised texts in written interaction (Martin & White, 2005). The analysis is expected to reveal significant gender differences: female-authored texts use more metaphorical realisations of obligation and possibility (e.g., "it is necessary to consider" vs. "one must consider"), implying a greater emphasis on involvement and indirect persuasion (Wodak, 1997) to avoid potential criticism in a male-dominated discipline. Male-authored texts, on the other hand, tend to favour less hedged statements, maintaining the disparity in medical authority.

The findings seek to add to our knowledge of interpersonal positioning in historical medical discourse by indicating that gender influenced the linguistic strategies used to engage with patients and fellow practitioners. This study has implications for both historical sociolinguistics and the evolution of professional medical communication and wants to demonstrate the long-term impact of gendered discourse patterns on medical authority and reader- and user-centered discourse.

References:

- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Taavitsainen, I., & Pahta, P. (2011). *Medical Writing in Early Modern English*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wodak, R. (1997). *Disorders of Discourse*. Longman.