

Research Project

Life (Beyond) Writing: Illness Narratives

Third-party funded project

Project title Life (Beyond) Writing: Illness Narratives

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Department

Project Website <http://illness-narratives.unibas.ch/>

Project start 01.10.2009

Probable end 30.09.2012

Status Completed

This research project explores the social and cultural meanings of illness narratives and analyses their role and function in the literary, linguistic, and medical field. Thus, illness narratives will be approached from the three different disciplines, literary studies, linguistics, and medicine.

Life writing (autobiographical) texts are omnipresent in our lives and play a crucial role in doctor-patient communication, in literature, and in everyday linguistic situations. The importance of narrative in the medical field has become acknowledged, but most doctors are not trained to be susceptible to specific linguistic and literary uses in their patients' stories. Thus, it is necessary to integrate literary and linguistic issues into the curriculum at medical schools to approach illness more holistically. In addition, numerous recent illness narratives by patients/writers provide new insights that go beyond the biomedical dimension of an illness, and with their aesthetic impact express additional aspects of a human experience such as illness. A linguistic analysis of narratives by Swiss medical students on a case history and comparative corpora from English and American students will offer crucial information on the ways in which future doctors interpret a patient's narrative and reflect their own situation.

The results of both the linguistic and literary analyses will be used to improve current and develop future training for communicative skills for both medical students and practicing doctors and thus has a direct applied impact for the *medical humanities*. Furthermore, the students will improve their narrative competence and learn to pay heed to otherwise hidden, yet crucial information on a more encompassing context of illness. The interrelation between the three disciplines will thus be manifold in that both fields of linguistics and literature will work on data derived from the field of medicine and will let their results flow back into the field of medicine.

Keywords autobiography, narrative, illness, identity, narrative medicine, medical humanities, metaphor research, gender, doctor-patient interaction, expert-lay person interaction

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Add publication

Published results

103894, Gygax, Franziska, The aesthetics of illness : narratives as empowerment, 978-3-8233-6372-9, American Aesthetics, Publication: Book Item (Buchkap., Lexikonartikel, jur. Kommentierung, Beiträge in Sammelbänden etc.)

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