

ABSTRACT

While low English language proficiencies create significant barriers to communication, cultural dimensions in Thai medical tourism make cross-cultural conflict resolution (CCCR) even more problematic. The objective of this research is to test a new educational intervention for medical tourism aimed at improving conflict resolution skills. Thirty, weekly, ninety-minute, in-service medical-English and interpersonal counseling lessons were conducted at Piyavate hospital, Bangkok. The counseling language selected, Non-violent Communication (NVC), also known as compassionate communication (Rosenberg 2003), is a well established and known negotiation-communication routine. This study proposes and tests NVC as a discourse genre for cross-cultural, medical encounters. Grammatical-semantic features of NVC are analyzed using functional linguistics (Halliday 1994) and Appraisal-Theory (Martin and Rose 2003). NVC and its discourse pragmatics provide the benchmarks for analyzing the Piyavate hospital recordings and the CCCR and NVC skills of the medical staff. To examine cross-cultural conflict resolution skills via NVC, this study differentiates NVC and culturally affected discourse. The NVC 'baseline study' of Marshal Rosenberg's works establishes the grammatical and semantic features of NVC. Five discourse features were selected for NVC and culturally affected discourse (CAD) analysis. The five features, focused on aspects of the negotiation process are: affect, evaluation, inter-textuality, appreciation and speech function. Descriptive of the thirty weeks of intervention, the framed analysis tracks the process of Thai staff acquiring new discourse skills and highlights the cross-cultural features which pose the most significant barriers to communication. The findings reveal that Thai doctors and nurses struggle most with specific cross-cultural communication barriers and that those habitual cultural features take longer to overcome with interpersonal counseling skill training. This integrative approach via combined medical English and conflict-resolution training suggests ways that interpersonal counseling may be integrated into Thai, medical English training and professional development.