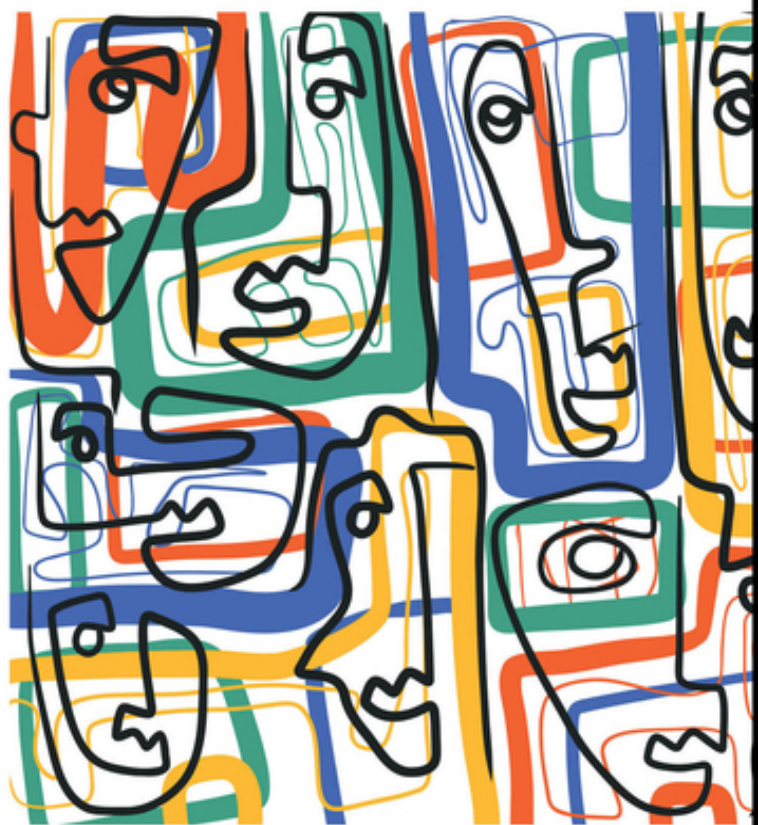


The Handbook of
**Language in
Public Health and
Healthcare**



Edited by

**Pilar Ortega, Glenn Martínez,
Maichou Lor, and A. Susana Ramírez**

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The Handbook of Language in Public Health and Healthcare

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Edited by

Pilar Ortega

Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education
IL, USA

Glenn Martínez

University of Texas at San Antonio
TX, USA

Maichou Lor

University of Wisconsin-Madison
WI, USA

A. Susana Ramírez

University of California-Merced
CA, USA

WILEY Blackwell

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To all my students and patients, for being the best teachers.
Para mis estudiantes y pacientes, por ser quienes mejor nos enseñan.

PO

To Sandra for showing me the meaning of care.

GM

To Mao and Pao Lor.

ML

To my mom.

ASR

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Editor Biographies

Pilar Ortega, MD, MGM, is Vice President, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education and Clinical Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine and Medical Education at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Chicago, Illinois, United States. Dr. Ortega co-founded the National Association of Medical Spanish and the Medical Organization for Latino Advancement and holds a master's degree in graphic medicine.

Glenn Martínez, PhD, MPH, is Dean of the College of Liberal and Fine Arts and Professor of Spanish, Bicultural/Bilingual Studies, and Public Health at the University of Texas at San Antonio in San Antonio, Texas, United States. Dr. Martínez's research focuses on the sociolinguistics and applied linguistics of Spanish-speaking communities in the United States and along the United States–Mexico border.

Maichou Lor, PhD, RN, is Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing in Madison, Wisconsin, United States. Dr. Lor's research focuses on reducing health disparities through improving health communication between clinicians and patients, specifically patients with low health literacy and/or non-English language preference, beginning with the Hmong population. She is a board member of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care.

A. Susana Ramírez, PhD, MPH, is Associate Professor of Public Health Communication at the University of California, Merced, in Merced, California, United States. As an infodemiologist, Dr. Ramírez applies communication science to advance public health goals. She is an internationally recognized expert in media, inequality, and health.

Contributor Biographies

Marco A. Alemán, MD, is Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine and Director of CAMPOS (Comprehensive Advanced Medical Program of Spanish) at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, United States.

Isa Álvarez, BA, is a graduate of the University of Chicago in the History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Science and Medicine (HIPS) with a focus on reproductive health. She is currently a post-baccalaureate pre-medical student at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, United States.

Adriana C. Black Morocoima, MPH, MAT, is Director of Health Affairs, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at both the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Engagement at the University of Illinois in Chicago, Illinois, United States.

David A. Chirikian, MS, BS, is a medical student at California Northstate University in Elk Grove, California, United States.

Wen-Ying Sylvia Chou, PhD, MPH, is Program Director in the Health Communication and Informatics Research Branch of the National Cancer Institute, Rockville, Maryland, United States.

George S. Corpuz, BA, BS, is a medical student at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York, New York, United States.

John D. Cowden, MD, MPH, is Professor of Pediatrics and Director of the Culture and Language Coaching Program at Children's Mercy Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri, United States.

MK Czerwiec, RN, MA, is a nurse, cartoonist, educator, co-founder of the field of graphic medicine, and artist-in-residence in the Department of Medical Humanities & Bioethics at the Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois, United States.

Roxana Delbene, PhD, DMH, MS, has a doctoral degree in Hispanic linguistics from the University of Pittsburgh, a master's degree in narrative medicine from Columbia University, and recently completed a doctorate in medical humanities from Drew University. She is interested in an interdisciplinary approach to the study of health communication that combines the methodological approaches of sociolinguistics with the medical/health humanities.

Lisa C. Diamond, MD, MPH, is Associate Attending Physician in the Immigrant Health and Cancer Disparities Service of the Departments of Medicine and Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and the Hospital Medicine Service of the Department of Medicine at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, New York, United States.

Jason Fan, PhD, is Associate Professor, Deputy Director, and Principal Senior Research Fellow at the Language Testing Research Centre (LTRC), University of Melbourne in Melbourne, Australia.

Naleef Fareed, PhD, MBA, is Associate Professor of Biomedical Informatics in the College of Medicine at the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, United States.

Alicia Fernández, MD, is Professor of Medicine and Associate Dean of Population Health and Health Equity at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) School of Medicine. She is the Founding Director of the UCSF Latinx Center of Excellence and directs the Latinx and Immigrant Health Research Program at the UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations in San Francisco, California, United States.

K. Jill Fleuriot, PhD, is Professor of Anthropology and Associate Dean for Faculty Success in the College of Liberal and Fine Arts at the University of Texas at San Antonio, in San Antonio, Texas, United States.

Anna Gaysynsky, MPH, is Senior Communications Specialist at ICF Next. In that role, she provides support to the Health Communication and Informatics Research Branch of the National Cancer Institute, Rockville, Maryland, United States.

Suad Ghaddar, PhD, is Assistant Professor in the Department of Health and Biomedical Sciences, College of Health Professions, University of Texas Río Grande Valley, in Edinburg, Texas, United States. Her research centers on understanding the causal pathways through which health literacy contributes to health disparities in minoritized Texas-Mexico border communities.

Ryan A. Goble, PhD, is Academic Program Specialist and the Wisconsin Intensive Summer Language Institutes (WISLI) coordinator for the South Asia Summer Language Institute (SASLI) and the Less Commonly Taught Languages Career Fair in the Language Program Office at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Language Institute in Madison, Wisconsin, United States.

Rachael HaileSelasse, MA, is a doctoral student in the Department of Community Health and Prevention at the Dornsife School of Public Health, Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States.

Karol J. Hardin, PhD, is Professor of Spanish in the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures, Director of Spanish for Health Professions, and Affiliated Faculty in the Department of Medical Humanities at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, United States.

Stefanie Harsch, PhD, is a postdoctoral scholar at the University Freiburg, conducts health literacy research and intervention projects worldwide, such as in Afghanistan, Germany, and sub-Saharan Africa. As an adult educator, health educator, and second language trainer, she enjoys working with migrants, adults with low literacy skills, and cancer patients to improve their agency and health.

Katharine J. Head, PhD, is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Studies and Director of the PhD Graduate Program in Health Communication at Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, Indiana, United States.

Kathryn Heley, PhD, MPH, is Cancer Prevention Fellow in the Health Communication and Informatics Research Branch of the National Cancer Institute, Rockville, Maryland, United States.

Elaine Hsieh, PhD, JD, is Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication Studies, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States. An award-winning author, Fulbright Scholar, and National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded researcher, Dr. Hsieh has published extensively to examine the intersections of culture, language, health, and medicine in interpersonal and cross-cultural contexts.

Holly E. Jacobson, PhD, is Associate Professor of Linguistics at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico, United States. Her research focuses on health discourse, intercultural communication in healthcare settings, and health literacy. She has contributed to quantitative and qualitative studies exploring language and health funded by private, state, and federal agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH). She has been an NIH Senior Research Fellow at the National Institutes on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). Dr. Jacobson has geared her research agenda toward advancing our understanding of language as a social determinant of health.

Wioleta Karwacka, PhD, is Translator and Assistant Professor at the Division of Translation Studies, University of Gdańsk, Poland. Her research focuses on medical translation and eco-translation. She has authored articles, book chapters, and conference papers on various aspects of medical translation and medical terminology.

Jennifer Kasper, MD, MPH, is Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Global Health and Social Medicine and Chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee on Global Health at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts, United States. She also serves on the President's Council of Doctors for Global Health.

Ute Knoch, PhD, is Director of the Language Testing Research Centre at the University of Melbourne in Melbourne, Australia.

Victoria Ledford, PhD, is Assistant Professor in the School of Communication and Journalism at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama, United States.

Dalia Magaña, PhD, is Associate Professor of Spanish Linguistics at the University of California, Merced in Merced, California, United States. Her research focuses on improving healthcare communication with Spanish speakers and developing intentional language pedagogy.

Milena A. Melo, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas Río Grande Valley in Edinburg, Texas, United States.

Rose L. Molina, MD, MPH, is Lawrence Director of Professionalism, Humanism, and Health Equity, Medical Language Program Director, and Assistant Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Biology at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts, United States.

Xiaoli Nan, PhD, is a Distinguished Scholar-Teacher and Professor of Communication Science at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, United States, where she directs the Center for Health and Risk Communication.

Carmen Pérez-Muñoz, PhD, is Assistant Teaching Professor in the Department of Spanish at Wake Forest University and Associate Director of the MAESTRO (Medical Applied Education in Spanish through Training, Resources, and Overlearning) Program at Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, United States.

Carla Pezzia, PhD, is Associate Professor of Global Health and Health Disparities in the Department of Biology at the University of Dallas in Dallas, Texas, United States.

Josh Prada, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism in the Center for Language and Cognition at the University of Groningen in Groningen, the Netherlands.

Katherine E. Ridley-Merriweather, PhD, is Communication, Recruitment, and Outreach Manager of the Biospecimen Collection and Banking Core at the Indiana University Simon Comprehensive Cancer Center, Indianapolis, Indiana, United States.

Francine Ríos-Fetchko, BA, is Research Data Analyst at the University of California, San Francisco Latinx Center of Excellence in San Francisco, California, United States.

William J. Robertson, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Memphis in Memphis, Tennessee, United States.

Maricel G. Santos, PhD, is Professor of English at San Francisco State University in San Francisco, California, United States. Dr. Santos explores the role of adult learners as change agents in health equity work. She was a 2008–2013 Fellow with the Research Infrastructure in Minority Institutions (RIMI) program, National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities, National Institutes of Health.

Tiffany M. Shin, MD, is Assistant Professor in the Department of Pediatrics and director of the MAESTRO (Medical Applied Education in Spanish through Training, Resources, and Overlearning) Program at Wake Forest School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, United States.

Priti Singh, PhD, is a postdoctoral scholar at the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, United States.

Suruchi Sood, PhD, is Director of Communication Science at the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, Baltimore, Maryland, United States.

Allison Squires, PhD, RN, FAAN, is Associate Professor and Director of the Global Consortium for Nursing and Midwifery Studies (www.gcnms.org) at New York University's Rory Meyers College of Nursing, New York, United States. Her domestic line of research focuses on improving health services for immigrant populations.

Christine Swoboda, PhD, MS, is a research scientist in the Department of Family and Community Medicine in the College of Medicine at The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, United States.

Mónica B. Vela, MD, is Professor of Medicine in the Department of Medicine and the Department of Medical Education and Director of the Hispanic Center of Excellence at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Chicago, Illinois, United States. She is also Associate Editor at the *Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open*.

Caroline H. Vickers, PhD, is Professor in the Department of English and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies at California State University, San Bernardino, California, United States.

Robyn Woodward-Kron, PhD, is Professor of Healthcare Communication and Director of Research and Research Training in the Department of Medical Education at Melbourne Medical School in Melbourne, Australia.

Alejandra Zapién-Hidalgo, MD, MPH, is Assistant Professor of Family and Community Medicine and Director of the Bilingual Medical Spanish and Distinction Track at the University of Arizona Health Sciences College of Medicine in Tucson, Arizona, United States.

Q. Jane Zhao, MSc, is a medical researcher, health policy PhD student at the University of Toronto, graduate of the Narrative Medicine master's degree from Columbia University, and burgeoning cartoonist based in Toronto, Canada.

At its very core, the delivery of equitable healthcare is centered on the paramount importance of the exchange of correct information via language concordance – including the language nuances, customs, and cultural meanings that add to the subtext of the conversation. This handbook offers a comprehensive analysis with well-written chapters that function as guidepost for such. The authors have done their diligence in identifying gaps with language incongruence and offer thoughtful frameworks on how best to enhance our current healthcare system and how best to prepare the next generation of healthcare workers. Each chapter reviews and distills what has been studied on relevant and important related topics. Collectively, the chapters in this handbook answer the call of a national imperative: As our population demographics continue to change, healthcare workers will be required to think differently in a pluralistic-facing society that is more than ever, multilingual and multicultural.

Antonia Coello Novello, MD, MPH, DrPH

Preface

What happens when an infodemiologist-public health expert, a nurse-scientist, a language professor-dean, and a physician-educator enter a videoconference? In our case, the outcome was this volume, *The Handbook of Language, Public Health and Healthcare*. Bringing together interdisciplinary voices and international perspectives, our collaboration has yielded what we hope will be a useful reference for scholars across the many fields of study that are impacted by and explore the impact of language and health.

The Handbook of Language in Public Health and Healthcare provides a comprehensive overview of the theory, history, and leading research pertaining to language and health. This volume uniquely addresses interprofessional topics related to the theory, linguistic analysis, education, assessment, clinical application, and public health implications of language in health. Authors explore both individual patient-clinician encounters and also look beyond the examination room to explore systemic issues in healthcare, education, and society. Importantly, the book relies on the perspectives of a diverse group of contributing authors and editors, whose collective expertise spans multiple continents and numerous professional domains, including linguistics, sociology, medicine, nursing, interpreting, and translation, among others.

This *Handbook* is organized in five sections. We have divided the book into sections that, first, provide a theoretical framework for the field of language and healthcare (Part I), and then more deeply explore focused ways in which the field has evolved. These areas include interpreting and translation (Part II), patient-clinician language concordance (Part III), the pedagogy of medical language education to enhance language-appropriate care (Part IV), and mass communication (Part V).

In Part I, edited by Glenn Martínez, we begin by providing a broad overview of theory, history, and context of linguistics in public health and healthcare. An introductory chapter by Stefanie Harsch and Maricel Santos traces independent developments in linguistics and public health that have resulted in the intersections of language, population health, and healthcare. Four additional chapters flesh out key theoretical concepts and demonstrate their application to the interdisciplinary understanding of language, health, and healthcare. Chapter 2 focuses on sociolinguistics as a key methodological approach for understanding language in healthcare in Spanish-speaking populations in the United States. Chapter 3 focuses on pragmatics and narrative theory as a methodological source for understanding illness narratives with a focus on Latin America and Spain. In Chapter 4, Milena Melo, Carla Pezzia, William Robertson, and Jill

Fleuriet draw on anthropological linguistic methods to explore health in border regions. Drawing on the theorizations of Bruno Latour, they apply border theory to case studies from the Texas-Mexico borderlands, the Guatemalan Highlands, and Chicago. Finally, Holly Jacobson provides theoretical insights at the intersection of applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and anthropological linguistics, and the relevance of that intersection on public health.

Part II, edited by Maichou Lor, examines language interpretation and translation in public health and healthcare. In this section, we present evidence for the benefits and proper use of strategies to facilitate communication with linguistically diverse populations in language discordant scenarios. The section begins with a discussion on key issues that contribute to language-discordant situations in healthcare settings and an overview of the strategies to address the communication needs of linguistically diverse groups. Each subsequent chapter focuses on a specific strategy. In Chapter 6, Allison Squires provides a brief history of medical interpreting and methods for identifying linguistically diverse patients who would benefit from language assistance in healthcare settings. In Chapter 7, Elain Hsieh presents the different types of medical interpreting and the roles of medical interpreters in healthcare delivery, and synthesizes the impact of distinct types of medical interpreting on patient outcomes. Chapter 8 focuses on the translation of healthcare information to patients. Wioleta Karwacka emphasizes the translation of medical instructions for linguistically diverse patients across the care continuum. The section concludes with a chapter on health literacy. In Chapter 9, Suad Ghaddar provides an overview of health literacy in linguistically diverse patients, including existing clinical health literacy assessments. Efforts to improve health literacy among linguistically diverse populations, including plain language and other interventions, are also reviewed.

In Part III, edited by Pilar Ortega and Glenn Martínez, we focus on language concordance in public health and healthcare. We begin by describing language concordance and the competent use of language skills in healthcare settings. In Chapter 10, Alicia Fernández and Francine Ríos-Fetchko present a conceptual framework for how the term language concordance has historically been applied in healthcare and analyze how researchers currently identify whether a clinical encounter is language-concordant or -discordant. In Chapter 11, Caroline Vickers and Ryan Goble deconstruct what is meant by language concordance and challenge existing perspectives that normalize monolingualism and view multilingualism as foreign or “other.” In Chapter 12, Ute Knoch and Jason Fan discuss tools for assessing clinicians’ communication skills in a language different from that of their medical training, paying special attention to how evaluating language proficiency for clinical contexts differs from general language proficiency tools, how instruments should be validated for this purpose, and standard-setting for passing thresholds. Next, John Cowden further explores the concept of setting standards for clinician practice in multiple languages in Chapter 13, including issues related to existing proficiency examinations, self-assessment options, and considerations for progressive review of skills and maintenance of certification. The section concludes with Chapter 14 in which George Corpuz, David Chirikian, and Lisa Diamond identify current gaps in language concordance work and outline the types of research needed to advance the field.

Part IV of the Handbook, edited by Pilar Ortega, turns to the pedagogy of medical language education. The section begins with a discussion of medical language learners: Who are they, and what are their language education needs? In Chapter 15, Karol Hardin

presents a linguistic perspective on pedagogy for second language acquisition for healthcare purposes and addresses issues in distinguishing learner proficiency level in healthcare language courses. The next chapter addresses individuals with multilingual skills. In Chapter 16, Josh Prada and Robyn Woodward-Kron define the concept of heritage learner and discuss the relevance of this population of learners in the medical language classroom. In addition, this chapter reviews evidence for the incorporation of translanguaging into medical language pedagogy. In Chapter 17, Marco Alemán and Alejandra Zapién-Hidalgo focus on medical Spanish education and the similarities and differences between educational initiatives that target specific competencies in medical Spanish compared to those that target more general cross-linguistic such as caring for minoritized communities of any language and determining one's limitations in a particular language. In Chapter 18, Rose Molina and Jennifer Kasper share examples of medical language programs in multiple languages, with a focus on international partnerships and global impact. Carmen Pérez-Muñoz and Tiffany Shin then present an overview of guidance on teaching clinical skills for communicating with patients who prefer non-dominant languages in Chapter 19. They describe how to create medical language programs that focus on patient needs and are institutionally structured in a way that promotes program sustainability and effectiveness. The section ends with a focus on faculty development. In Chapter 20, Mónica Vela and Adriana Black Morocoima describe issues in faculty development and institutional leadership for developing and teaching medical language courses.

In the fifth and final section of the Handbook, Part V, edited by Susana Ramírez, we move beyond the clinical setting to examine the global health information environment and consider the role played by the mass media in communicating health information to linguistically diverse populations. We begin this section with a historical perspective on mass communication in health. In Chapter 21, Katharine J. Head and Katherine Ridley-Merriweather trace the development of mediated interventions for public health in the context of communicable disease prevention, the shift to considering the influence of the information environment on patients' knowledge and behaviors, through the current focus on information seeking behaviors and misinformation effects. In Chapter 22, Christine Swoboda, Priti Singh, Susana Ramírez, and Naleef Fareed present a conceptual framework to examine critical issues in health information seeking behaviors and outcomes among linguistically diverse populations. In Chapter 23, Suruchi Sood and Rachael HaileSelasse explore the dynamic relationship between linguistic diversity and entertainment-education strategies that promote social and behavioral change. They briefly review the modern histories and definitions of both linguistic diversity and entertainment-education, describing the organic cross-influence between the two disciplines. Intervention examples from the field illustrate current practices and provide overall guidance on ways to integrate linguistic diversity and entertainment-education. Chapter 24 specifically explores the use of graphic medicine (comics) as a strategy for communicating with linguistically diverse populations. MK Czerwiec, Jane Zhao, Isa Álvarez, and Pilar Ortega situate the emergence of graphic medicine within the context of narrative medicine, sharing examples of comics developed for health education and then proposing graphic medicine as a tool to improve public health messaging, patient-clinician communication, and clinician wellness among healthcare students and professionals from linguistically diverse backgrounds. Chapter 25 examines the health implications of social media use. Anna Gaysynsky, Katherine Heley, and Sylvia Chou discuss the importance of studying social media use in linguistically diverse

populations, highlight the potential benefits and harms of social media use for these populations, and outline future directions for research and practice. This section closes with a reflection on communication during times of public health crises. In Chapter 26, Victoria Ledford, Susana Ramírez, and Xiaoli Nan present COVID-19 as a case study highlighting the urgent need for effective communication to linguistically diverse populations especially in situations of public health crises.

In addition to the substantive chapters, we provide a glossary of essential terms in the study and practice of language in public health and healthcare. Most of the glossary terms are used throughout the volume. In some cases, we have included some terms in the glossary that we consider problematic and have intentionally avoided throughout the Handbook. In the glossary, we provide a description and rationale for why we recommend avoiding certain terms or usages and propose alternatives.

The Handbook for Language in Public Health and Healthcare's innovative approach was made possible thanks to the contributions of an interdisciplinary group of scholars with a *depth* and *breadth* of professional and personal perspectives in language, health, and healthcare. In addressing theory, history, and practice as related to patient-clinician communication, education, assessment, research, and mass public health communication about language, we not only discuss issues and gaps but also present actionable strategies that have the potential to improve the health and healthcare of linguistically diverse populations worldwide.

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Part I Theory, History, and Context: Language in Public Health and Healthcare

Introduction to Part I

Glenn Martínez

This section opens a window on multiple interactions and interstices between the scientific study of language, healthcare, and public health. The goal of the section is to demonstrate how a variety of approaches within the fields of linguistics and applied linguistics have interacted with healthcare and public health and to shed light on the ways in which theoretical approaches to language inform and enrich public health and healthcare practices. Many of the themes discussed in this section including health literacy, graphic medicine, the social determinants of health, and language concordance will be treated more fully in later sections of this volume. The present section seeks to highlight the ways in which linguistics and applied linguistics interact with and inform these themes.

The section opens with Chapter 1 by Stefanie Harsch-Oria and Maricel Santos. In this chapter, Harsch-Oria and Santos provide an applied linguistics perspective on language in public health and healthcare with a focus on two key areas of focus: language as a social determinant of health and health literacy. The authors approach these two focus areas from the optic of language teachers in adult education settings. This framing allows the authors to peel back the often unstated assumptions about language that are settled into health literacy and language as a social determinant of health research and practice. The authors conclude by exposing six myths about language and healthcare while at the same time exemplifying the underlying theoretical perspectives of applied linguistic scholarship.

Chapter 2 reviews sociolinguistic studies that shed light on language, public health, and healthcare. After introducing the field of sociolinguistics and its turn from a focus

on distribution to a focus on mobility, Dalia Magaña shows how sociolinguistic research informs efforts to promote health equity with a particular focus on Spanish-speaking communities in the United States. Her approach covers issues related to languages in contact during the clinical encounter, the role of language in COVID-19 health communication, and issues around language access in the wider health delivery system. The chapter concludes by offering practical advice for working against language prestige, promoting local language, and creating more equitable healthcare for minoritized language speakers.

Chapter 3 extends the focus on sociolinguistics to the analysis of illness narratives across multiple genres including oral, written, and graphic. Roxana Delbene draws on theoretical insights from sociolinguistics, literary studies, and graphic medicine to shed light on our understanding of illness narratives as they emerge in their local context and as they circulate in different contexts. She begins by tracing the development of thinking around illness narratives and pointing out different traditions rooted in testimonial narrative and pathography. She proposes a communicative-oriented view of illness narratives that considers the target audience, the message, and the communicative intent in order to glean the intrinsic value of each genre. Her approach draws on the key applied linguistics notion of communicative affordances as a way of grasping the import of illness narratives across traditions.

Chapter 4 provides a linguistic anthropological lens to language, public health, and healthcare to shed light on bordering and debordering practices in health through a multiple case study approach. Melo, Fleuriet, Pezzia, and Robertson contend that language is a key operator in boundary-making and that geopolitical, social, political, and economic borders are made and remade through linguistic practice. Using three case studies focusing on undocumented patients with end-stage renal disease in South Texas, indigenous Maya struggling with addiction in the Guatemala highlands, and LGBTQ patients with anal cancer in Chicago, the authors draw on Bruno Latour's bordering theory to highlight the role of performative, communicative practices in healthcare settings in reinscribing, rejecting and creating boundaries between people, objects and bodily conditions that shape health and healthcare experiences.

Finally, Chapter 5 brings an applied linguistics perspective to key issues in public health and healthcare such as health literacy and plain language. Holly Jacobson traces the history of applied linguistic incursions into public health and outlines the various methodologies that have borne fruit in this endeavor. The chapter highlights the contributions of conversational analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, first and second language acquisition, and text and genre analysis to these efforts. Together, these five chapters lay out key theoretical insights that inform the intersection of language, public health, and healthcare. Applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and anthropological linguistics have a long history of engagement with public health and healthcare. In this section, readers will appreciate this history of engagement and glean the theoretical insights that enrich our understanding of language in public health and healthcare.