

**Drawing on your experience of the language doctors use in their day-to-day practice and teaching, reflect on the ways it can promote or impede feelings of inclusivity and belonging in patients and students.**

From a young age, I have accompanied my parents' appointments as not only a daughter but a translator. I have witnessed first-hand how the language doctors employ in their day-to-day practice can significantly influence feelings of inclusivity and belonging in patients. This essay highlights the different ways in which doctors have approached my parents, both promoting and impeding their feelings of inclusivity. I will further explore how teaching can be incorporated to improve healthcare outcomes for patients.

'How could your mum not know English after living here for so long?', the doctor questioned me as I sat next to my mum during one of her appointments. I vividly remember feeling angry at his judgement, yet I remained silent. My mother, comprehending his statement, could only respond with a smile, unable to articulate a reply. As immigrants, my parents hold deep gratitude for the NHS and even when they face disrespect, they persistently maintain their respect for healthcare professionals. During most appointments I have attended, there was always a constant reminder for my parents that they should feel shame for not knowing the language. Recently, my dad had a knee surgery and they had stated that a Tamil translator would be present during this process. Despite my academic commitments, I made it a priority to be present during this procedure. I was taken aback when they stated there was no Tamil translator available on the day due to a scheduling issue. This incident left me pondering the potential consequences had I not been there to assist. Reflecting on this, it became apparent that medical practitioners are often inadequately prepared to navigate such circumstances.

One particular moment that stuck out to me was my mother's appointment with a physiotherapist. Unlike previous experiences where healthcare professionals addressed me while discussing my parents' conditions, this physiotherapist engaged directly with my mother, maintaining eye contact with her throughout whilst I translated. Afterwards, to explain to my mother about the compression of nerves, she used a 3D model of the back muscles and used her hands to explain to my mother about her condition. Throughout the five sessions with the physiotherapist, my mother would look forward to her appointments and began to take a more proactive approach to her health. My mother smiled but this time it was a genuine, thankful smile. In retrospect, it was the subtle gestures- the eye contact, the warm smile, the expressive hand movements, and the integration of visual aids that fostered a sense of belonging and trust in the profession.

As a medical student, I am grateful to have sessions on how to communicate effectively towards patients. During my Women’s Health iBSc, I encountered lectures on employing mindful language when communicating with pregnant women, which I found interesting as it was something I hadn’t considered before. Likewise, it would be useful if there were similar lectures on methods to use to approach patients where English may not be their first language. Such training would bridge the gap in healthcare professionals' preparation, enabling them to offer inclusive care to linguistically diverse patients. Practical measures, such as informing the administrative team of language barriers in advance, could ensure that future appointments and communications are appropriately translated. Additionally, medical professionals should proactively ensure the presence of a translator to facilitate informed consent from non-English-speaking patients.

The table below shows a summary of how the body language used can impede or promote feelings of inclusivity.

<b>Impede feelings of inclusivity</b>	<b>Promote feelings of inclusivity</b>
Looking only at the translator	Hand gestures
Making judgemental comments that can make the patient feel shamed	Use of models
Speaking quickly and using difficult terminology	Smiling and maintaining eye contact with the patient
Assuming that the patient will always be accompanied with a translator	Slowly speaking and ensuring to enunciate words clearly

Reflecting on my experiences, it shows how language can be utilised to not only help patients feel included, but also promote patients to be more proactive about their health. By incorporating a language-based education into the curriculum, it would help facilitate effective communication and bridge the gap between patients and healthcare professionals. Implementing this will allow individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds to feel empowered and allow the language used to be a unifying force rather than a barrier.