Topic 2.16. Visit to a Doctor (Role-play)/ Тема 2.16. Визит к врачу (ролевая игра)

A visit to a doctor is the most common scenario in medical communication. For healthcare professionals, the ability to conduct a patient consultation in English is a core professional competence. This lecture presents the structure of a typical doctor–patient consultation, key language patterns for each stage, and sample dialogues that can be used as a basis for role-play practice in the classroom.

Structure of a Medical Consultation

A standard medical consultation follows a logical sequence of stages:

1. **Greeting and identification**
2. **Taking the chief complaint**
3. **History of present illness**
4. **Past medical history**
5. **Physical examination**
6. **Diagnosis and explanation**
7. **Treatment plan and advice**
8. **Closing**

Each stage has characteristic language patterns that the student must master.

Stage 1. Greeting and Identification

The doctor greets the patient, introduces themselves, and confirms the patient's identity.

Doctor:

- "Good morning. My name is Dr. Ivanova. I'll be looking after you today."
- "Could you please confirm your full name and date of birth?"
- "Have you been to our clinic before, or is this your first visit?"

Patient:

- "Good morning, Doctor. My name is Anna Petrova. I was born on the 15th of March, 1992."
- "This is my first visit. My GP referred me here."

Stage 2. Chief Complaint

The doctor asks the patient about the main reason for the visit.

Doctor:

- "What brings you in today?"
- "What seems to be the problem?"
- "How can I help you today?"

Patient:

- "I've been having headaches for the past two weeks."

- "I have a pain in my lower back that won't go away."
- "I've been feeling very tired lately and I don't know why."

Stage 3. History of Present Illness

The doctor gathers detailed information about the current symptoms using the SOCRATES or OPQRST framework:

- **S** — Site: "Where exactly is the pain?"
- **O** — Onset: "When did the pain start? Was it sudden or gradual?"
- **C** — Character: "Can you describe the pain? Is it sharp, dull, burning, or throbbing?"
- **R** — Radiation: "Does the pain spread anywhere else?"
- **A** — Associated symptoms: "Are there any other symptoms — nausea, fever, dizziness?"
- **T** — Timing: "Is the pain constant or does it come and go? Is it worse at any particular time?"
- **E** — Exacerbating/relieving factors: "Does anything make the pain better or worse?"
- **S** — Severity: "On a scale from 0 to 10, how would you rate the pain?"

Stage 4. Past Medical History

The doctor asks about previous illnesses, surgeries, medications, and allergies.

Doctor:

- "Do you have any chronic conditions — diabetes, hypertension, asthma?"
- "Have you ever had any surgery?"
- "Are you taking any medications at the moment, including over-the-counter drugs or supplements?"
- "Do you have any known allergies — to medications, food, or other substances?"
- "Is there any family history of serious illness?"

Patient:

- "I was diagnosed with hypertension three years ago. I take lisinopril 10 mg once a day."
- "I had an appendectomy when I was 18."
- "I'm allergic to penicillin — I get a rash."

Stage 5. Physical Examination

The doctor performs an examination and gives instructions to the patient.

Doctor:

- "I'm going to examine you. Please sit up straight on the examination table."
- "I'm going to check your blood pressure. Please roll up your sleeve."
- "Please take a deep breath in and hold it."
- "Could you lie down on your back? I'm going to press on your abdomen — tell me if it hurts."
- "I'm going to listen to your heart and lungs."
- "Please open your mouth and say 'aaah'."

Patient:

- "It hurts right here when you press."
- "I feel the pain mostly on the right side."

Stage 6. Diagnosis and Explanation

The doctor explains the findings and gives a diagnosis in clear, understandable language.

Doctor:

- "Based on your symptoms and examination, I believe you have acute bronchitis."
- "Your blood pressure is slightly elevated — 145 over 95."
- "The X-ray shows no signs of fracture, which is good news."
- "I'd like to order some blood tests to rule out infection."
- "Your condition is not life-threatening, but it does require treatment."

Patient:

- "Is it serious?"
- "How long will the recovery take?"
- "Will I need surgery?"

Stage 7. Treatment Plan and Advice

The doctor prescribes treatment and gives lifestyle advice.

Doctor:

- "I'm prescribing a course of antibiotics — take one tablet twice a day for seven days, after meals."
- "I recommend that you rest for at least three days and drink plenty of fluids."
- "Avoid strenuous physical activity for the next two weeks."
- "I'm referring you to a cardiologist for further evaluation."
- "Please come back in one week for a follow-up appointment."
- "If your symptoms worsen or you develop a fever, contact the clinic immediately or call an ambulance."

Patient:

- "Are there any side effects I should know about?"
- "Can I continue going to work?"
- "How do I take this medication?"

Stage 8. Closing

The doctor and patient conclude the consultation.

Doctor:

- "Do you have any other questions?"
- "Here is your prescription. You can collect the medication at the pharmacy."
- "Take care of yourself, and don't hesitate to come back if you have any concerns."

Patient:

- "Thank you, Doctor. I appreciate your help."
- "Goodbye."

Sample Role-Play Dialogue

The following dialogue illustrates a complete consultation and can be used for classroom role-play.

Dr. Smirnova: Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Smirnova. What brings you in today?

Patient: Good afternoon, Doctor. I've been having a sore throat and a high temperature for three days.

Dr. Smirnova: I'm sorry to hear that. Can you describe the pain? Is it sharp or more of a burning sensation?

Patient: It's a burning sensation, especially when I swallow.

Dr. Smirnova: Do you have any other symptoms — cough, runny nose, headache?

Patient: Yes, I have a headache and my body aches all over. No cough, though.

Dr. Smirnova: Let me take a look. Please open your mouth and say "aaah." — Your throat is red and swollen, and your tonsils are enlarged. I'm going to check your temperature and lymph nodes. Your temperature is 38.5°C, and the lymph nodes under your jaw are tender. Do you have any allergies?

Patient: No, I don't have any allergies.

Dr. Smirnova: Based on your symptoms, I believe you have acute tonsillitis — a throat infection. I'm going to prescribe a course of antibiotics. Take one tablet three times a day for five days, after meals. Gargle with warm salt water twice a day. Rest, drink warm fluids, and avoid cold drinks. Come back in five days for a follow-up. If you develop a rash or have difficulty breathing, seek medical help immediately. Do you have any questions?

Patient: No, everything is clear. Thank you, Doctor.

Dr. Smirnova: You're welcome. Here is your prescription. Take care and get well soon.

Key Vocabulary for the Role-Play

Term	Meaning / Context
Chief complaint	The main reason for the patient's visit.
Onset	When and how the symptoms began.

Term	Meaning / Context
Radiation (of pain)	Whether pain spreads to other areas.
Exacerbating factor	Something that makes the symptoms worse.
Allergy	An adverse reaction to a specific substance.
Prescription	A written order for medication.
Follow-up appointment	A return visit to check progress.
Referral	Direction to another specialist or facility.
Swallow	To move food or liquid from the mouth to the throat.
Lymph nodes	Small glands that are part of the immune system.

Summary

A medical consultation follows a structured sequence: greeting, chief complaint, history taking, physical examination, diagnosis, treatment plan, and closing. Mastering the English language patterns for each stage enables healthcare professionals to communicate effectively with patients and colleagues in international settings. Role-play practice using realistic dialogues is an effective method for developing these communication skills.