

Perspective Article

Facilitating Accommodation of Learners with Disabilities in Summative Assessment of Literacy in Tanzania through Mobile Application (Empowering Learners in a Digital World)

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Abstract

Lack of proficiency in using languages (except sign languages) among people with hearing impairment poses difficulties for them to comprehend health-related information and thus, having low health literacy. To bridge this gap, health care providers adopt various communication practices to reach people with hearing impairment (HI), some of which prove success while others prove failure. Consequently, reflection on health literacy communications becomes paramount for the sustainability of health education for people with HI. The present study reflects on communication practices during Covid-19 pandemic control in Tanzania contexts in relation to people with hearing impairment. The study adopted a qualitative research approach in which the data were collected through interviews from five (5) people with HI obtained through a snowball sampling technique, and

three (3) health care providers who were purposively sampled. Findings showed that adopted communication practices (writing on papers, lip-reading, and using family members as interpreters) were perceived as less effective by people with hearing impairment. Instead, people with HI preferred communication from other sources that used sign language. Therefore, calls for healthcare providers' pre-service and in-service training programs to impart skills for communicating properly with HI to all healthcare providers.

Keywords: Language literacy; Mobile application; Assessment; Accommodation; Health literacy; Communication practices; Hearing impairment; Covid-19; Culture of people with hearing impairment; Sign Language

Overview

Summative Assessment of Language Literacy in Tanzania is administered in the form of a Paper-and-pencil assessment. This kind of assessment hardly accommodates learners with disabilities such as visually impaired ones because it does not allow adjustment of the font size to suit the reader's needs. As a result, such students might end up being judged as failures in such assessment while their failure is attributed to the nature of assessment rather than their lack of competence in language literacy. Therefore, to improve the existing situation, the present study investigated the contribution of mobile applications to accommodating learners with diverse needs in taking language literacy assessments. We adopted qualitative action research using interviews, focus group discussion, observation, and reflection as data collection methods from 10 standard VII students and 1 language teacher. We analyzed data deductively through coding, categorizing, and relating data to available

conceptual constructs. Findings show that mobile application makes language assessment more accommodating because of its flexibility in terms of presentation, response delivery, and locations and time given. The study calls for the National examination Council in Tanzania to consider the integration of technology in language literacy assessment to maximize the learning opportunities for learners with disabilities. Also, teacher education should empower teachers on the use of technology in their classrooms.

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