

Abstract

Background: As a result of the country's significant cultural and linguistic diversity, South African audiologists are faced with several barriers to establishing effective communication during healthcare consultations. Effective communication is fundamental to the quality of all healthcare interactions and has been shown to provide benefits to clients, healthcare professionals (HCPs), and institutions. In general, HCPs and students display feelings of decreased confidence and competence when consulting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients in the absence of effective communication, negatively affecting service delivery and ultimately client outcomes. However, there is a dearth of information when specifically considering the experience of South African audiologists.

Objectives: To describe South African audiologists' experiences of providing services to a CALD population. The sub-aims focused on South African audiologists' use of translators and interpreters, as well as their perceived competence and confidence when providing audiological services to CALD clients.

Method: A mixed-method, sequential explanatory research design was employed. A sample of 67 audiologists completed an online survey. Their mean age was 30.18 years and they had an average working experience of 7.67 years. Most participants (61.2%) worked in urban settings, with only 13.4% working in a rural setting. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five audiologists who completed the online survey.

Results: Findings revealed that as trained interpreters were an absent resource, participants mostly made use of untrained interpreters such as family members of the client. Participants displayed the lowest perceived confidence and competence when providing services to linguistically diverse clients. Decreased competence and confidence were also

reported when working with culturally diverse clients but to a lesser extent. Interpreter utilisation was found to materially improve the perceived competence and confidence levels of participants when providing services to CALD clients. Increased linguistic ability (being bilingual or multi-lingual) had a statistically significant effect on the competence and confidence levels of participants when providing audiological services.

Conclusion: These findings highlight the importance of effective communication between clients and providers in CALD settings. Training institutions, audiologists, and employers all have a significant role to play in ensuring that hearing healthcare services are acceptable and meet the needs of all clients, regardless of their culture and language.

Keywords: Cultural and linguistic diversity, South Africa, audiologist, effective communication, confidence, competence, interpreter