

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to present the conclusions drawn from the results of the analysis of the questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions and then make recommendations for further research.

1.2 CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS

The aims of the study can be restated as follows:

- To examine existing translation practices in the domain of sexual and reproductive health education, i.e. AIDS and sex education projects. In particular, to focus on how health terms with sexual associations are translated from English into Sepedi.
- To locate the findings of this study within two conflicting theoretical approaches to health translation, i.e. an orientation towards cultural as opposed to communicative translation, and to compare their legitimacy. In other words, which of the two approaches could be most effective when translating health texts?
- To test the hypothesis that figurative language can hinder comprehension of AIDS education awareness campaigns.
- To spearhead realistic efforts to develop strategies of educating the masses about sexuality education without offending them.

To fulfil the above aims of the study, a problem was formulated that using figurative language at HIV/AIDS workshops impacts on the understanding of messages. Extensive literature was consulted to provide a background to the relationship between culture and language. Pursuing the aims of the study, the research design had the following major features: Self-administered questionnaires distributed to subjects, focus group discussions and randomly selected interviewees who were exposed to a number of activities.

In accordance with the first aim of study, the results reveal that sensitive terms are translated and spoken figuratively. This renders sex education ineffective as translators and AIDS campaigners feel ashamed to talk about sensitive issues directly. AIDS campaigners shy away from frank discussion of topics that may be distasteful to a mainstream audience.

With regard to the second aim, the results of the study confirm that accuracy and accessibility are the core in translation. Proper communication is the overriding factor in translation. This makes communicative translation a far much better method than idiomatic translation.

As to the third aim, the results also confirm the hypothesis that figurative language does inhibit comprehension of AIDS education campaigns.

Lastly the results reveal that counsellors and translators should not ignore the social context upon which communication takes place. They should take into account the prevailing socio-cultural conventions. They must make sure that the messages they are delivering can be

heard and acted within that context. They should use language which their target audience understands and feels comfortable with.

The overall results of the present research provide convincing evidence of the relevance and importance of communicative translation. In both regions researched, communicative translation emerged as unmistakably the best and most suitable method in making sure that the message reaches the public. Total accuracy and openness are undoubtedly important tools for effective communication. Translators must therefore look beyond the confines of culture-oriented approaches and search for ones that are message-oriented.

Given these findings, it seemed reasonable to conclude by saying that there is a general need to abandon an idiomatic approach in the translation of health materials and to the adoption of communicative translation as an alternative. Topics dealing with sexuality issues, though sensitive, should be spoken about. If these results are valid, it is true that communication cannot always be effective as long as people insist on using figurative language. Any such attempt that does not attempt to abandon this indirect form of communication will inevitably lead to ineffective communication.

I believe that this research, despite criticism from certain quarters, makes an important contribution to providing guidance for a way forward in terms of how counsellors might respond to language issues.

Whatever the limitations of the questionnaires, interviews and discussions employed or the research project as a whole, the findings of this investigation demonstrate that the accurate

transfer of meaning is what matters most. The overall results of this research project indicate that AIDS workshops often fail to reach the wider public due to the type of approach used to convey messages.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Without focusing their attention on the communication of meaning, the expertise of counsellors and translators, as facilitators of communication, cannot succeed. Effective communication is a necessary element if any workshop strives to minimise the impact of AIDS. There needs to be a transparent approach that is communicative. The findings of the study show that barriers to effective communication result from insufficient and confusing information.

In the light of the above, the researcher wishes to make some recommendations, which, if taken into consideration, might bring some positive changes to the current approach. Translators and language experts should:

- abandon their current approach and adopt new approaches through which a wide range of people will be able to realise the full meanings of texts. This means embarking on aggressive education and communication programmes to maximise effective communication.
- provide accurate information on sex education with the specific content of message tailored to the targeted population. This implies ensuring that the audience does not

have to fabricate information from what is implied. There is no need to tease audience's minds by using innuendo if counsellors are really serious about tackling the AIDS disease.

- break new ground by daring to speak about unspoken issues about sex and to expose sanctions imposed upon sex education as irrational and unjustified.
- encourage one another to employ linguistic resources without fear of remorse. This means ensuring that plain everyday facts of life are spoken about with practical simplicity regardless of circumstances. They should ensure that there is no possibility of misunderstanding the message that expressions seek to convey.
- commit themselves to the pursuit of accurate, precise and appropriate knowledge by expressing themselves with a greater clarity, smoothness, precision and economy of words even if this occasionally conflicts with general ethical concerns.

6.4 INDICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study has highlighted a number of researchable aspects that could be pursued further by those involved in the fight against AIDS. The results from the two regions prove beyond reasonable doubt that the rate of AIDS infection is, to a certain extent, exacerbated by misguided education programmes. There is therefore an urgent need to address this problem by introducing a method of communication which is geared towards ensuring maximum comprehensibility of messages. This research, which has implications stretching far beyond the Northern Province, can serve as a point of departure for more intensive analyses. Further research is needed to look at ways and means of dealing with taboo language.