

Policy and Practice and the Implications on Education of Students who are Deaf: A Case of Two Harare Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Grounded within critical applied linguistics and specifically within the domain of critical language awareness, this paper investigates the challenges and limitations faced by students who are deaf in progressing to higher and tertiary education. An insight of these challenges is drawn from views and opinions discerned from observations of the teaching and learning process of deaf students in secondary schools in Harare. Owing to the diversity of our research objectives, data collection was triangulated through documentary analysis of selected policies, observations and interviews in order to obtain information on challenges affecting the students who are deaf. Data is presented and analysed using a descriptive approach. The analysis of data shows that deaf students face myriad challenges that include lack of bilingual education for the deaf and proper framework for inclusive education which consequently results in students failing their ordinary level examinations in key subjects like mathematics and English. The researchers, therefore, recommend the ministry of primary and secondary education to improve the teaching and learning facilities in consideration of students who are deaf as well as effective implementation of inclusive education policy in a bid to develop the quality of education for these students.

Keywords: Deaf; Sign language; Inclusive education policy; Bilingual education; Inclusive education; Critical applied linguistics

INTRODUCTION

The research investigates the challenges and limitations faced by students who are deaf in progressing to higher and tertiary education. In order to assess the extent to which the language provisions relating to Zimbabwe Sign Language (ZSL) teaching and learning in secondary education are being implemented the current research evaluates the Zimbabwean language policy framework in education. Therefore, this research mirrors policy to practice. The limited number of students who are deaf in universities, polytechnics and teacher training colleges has prompted the researchers to investigate the situation by interrogating the challenges these students encounter in progressing to institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe. Consequently, this paper aims to assess the adequacy of the provision of the policy documents in guaranteeing the Linguistic Human Rights (henceforth LHRs) of students who are deaf. According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, LHRs are viewed in relation to the mother tongue(s) as consisting of the right to

identify with it/them, and to education and public services through the medium of it/them. Mother tongues are here defined as the languages one has learned first and identifies with Skutnabb-Kangas. What is more, the paper interrogates the role of government in promoting the LHRs of the deaf in Zimbabwean education [1].

The current research stems from the observation of the status currently accorded to ZSL. Hence, the need to examine the policy position of ZSL and practice in consideration of the Millennium Development Goal #2 (MDG's) of achieving universal access to primary education and the educational, linguistic human rights of the Deaf (MDG's report, 2015:24). However, although the MDGs target was 2015, this goal is still being carried forward through the development agenda for transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development (the MDG's report, 2015). Accordingly, with a view of understanding the gap between policy and practice in the teaching and learning of students who are deaf, this research intends to answer the following questions:

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- What are the language-related challenges that are encountered by deaf students in selected Harare secondary schools?
- How does the education and language policy of Zimbabwe promote LHRs of students who are deaf?

Since research should be guided by the needs and interests of the communities studied as opposed to producing research simply for the sake of academic appetite (Holmes and Meyerhoff) the current research is worthy undertaking as part of critical applied linguistics. What is more, by investigating the LHRs of the deaf students and issues to do with language policy vis-a-vis practice in the educational domain with a specific focus on the deaf community in Zimbabwe. The current study could also illuminate the further understanding of critical language awareness. This area is one of the least researched in SL studies in Zimbabwe.

The study was carried out at two Harare secondary schools. The targeted schools accommodate the deaf. Kusters, Meulder and O'Brien, observed that many authors used deaf for individuals and Deaf for socio-cultural entities like Deaf community and or established theoretical concepts, such as Deaf culture (e.g, Hualand). Following this, they argue that the convention deaf does not mean oral/medical but rather biologically corporally deaf. The d/Deaf distinction creates or perpetuates a dichotomy between deaf and Deaf people (even when trying to be inclusive by writing d/Deaf, and has caused practices and experiences of exclusion [2].

The documents analysed in the study include; the constitution of Zimbabwe (amendment number 20) act, the 1987 education act as amended in 2006 and the secretary circular number 1, 2, 3 and the 2013 constitution of Zimbabwe officially recognises sixteen languages, including ZSL. The latest official recognition of SL has renewed calls to ensure that research, supporting policy acts, and planning activities are accorded to those previously marginalised languages in order to revitalise them (Mutswanga and Sithole, Kadenge and Mugari). For that reason, the government of Zimbabwe through the ministry of primary and secondary education has formulated policy stipulations which culminate into language policies and informs the language policy of Zimbabwe (e.g. 2002, 2006, 2007 and 2013 constitution of Zimbabwe), however, no clear details are given concerning the implementation of these policies on the learning and teaching of students who are deaf. Hence, an analysis of these policy documents is of paramount significance because it enlightens the researchers on language policies and practices in regard to the teaching and learning of students who are deaf.

Therefore, the current study is anchored within the thrust of contributing to policy, practice and implementation in relation to the minority and disadvantaged members of the society, in this case, the deaf students. What is more, the paper is envisaged to stir debate on empowering students who are deaf in attaining the best possible education.

Problem statement

The adage statistics do not lie applies to the situation of deaf people in Zimbabwe in relation to the number of students enrolled in institutes of high learning. It is apparent from

statistics that there is a small number of deaf people who are receiving education in Zimbabwe. For instance, another glaring disparity in regards to the education of deaf people is the notably small number of students who are deaf in Zimbabwe's higher and tertiary institutes [3]. Therefore, due to these notable disparities, deaf people resort to vending, as this is the only way they can sustain their life. Hlatywayo and Matende observes that there are over 200,000 persons who are Deaf in Zimbabwe, with most of them migrating to Harare in search of work opportunities such as street vending of airtime and phone accessories. A quick snip survey of the streets of Harare shows that it is filled with airtime vendors who are deaf; the majority of them failed dismally informal education. However, although this is a national initiative meant to empower the deaf (by employing them as airtime vendors), it is the opinion of the current researchers that deaf people are marginalised and ZSL has been relegated to the periphery in various domains of use which include inter alia education, health, and legal. Hence, this paper focuses on the challenges of deaf people in regards to education. What is more, it is the argument of this paper that the deaf people have the potential to reach the highest level of education if they are empowered through relevant education approaches. Hence, more still needs to be done in order to empower the deaf so that they can also fit into the various income generating sectors within the broad economic spectra of Zimbabwe.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is qualitative in nature; thus allowing for a holistic and contextual analysis of the problem. Gilham notes that qualitative research allows the researcher to investigate situations where little is known about what is going on and explore the complexities that are beyond the scope of more controlled approaches. Also, qualitative research allows the investigation of the informal realities that can only be perceived from the inside of a community.

It should be noted that one of the researchers is a sign language interpreter and teaches sign language at the university level. He identifies himself with the deaf culture and uses SL to communicate with the deaf and is familiar with deaf informants engaged in this research hence, there were no complications with regards to dealing with them as participants in the research [4]. Therefore, as suggested by Singleton, Martin and Morgan, our research is oriented towards deaf-friendly community-engaged research. Echoing the same sentiments, Padden adopted a definition of community that included both deaf people and hearing people who actively support the goals of the community and work with deaf people to achieve them. Purposive sampling was used to select and identify participants for the study. Bogdan and Biklen note that a purposive sample is one in which research objects are chosen on the basis of the purpose of the research.

Owing to the diversity of our research objectives, data collection was triangulated through documentary analysis of selected policies, observations and interviews in order to obtain information on challenges affecting students who are deaf in secondary education. Policy documents inform us about

expectations from the government on the use and the status of ZSL in the education domain. Ndlovu defines documentary analysis as a relatively unobstructed form of research, which does not necessarily require the researcher to approach the respondent directly [5]. Rather the researcher can trace the respondent's steps, actions, agendas and ideologies through the documents they left behind. Furthermore, the analysis of these documents enabled the researchers to collect data on the nexus between policy and practice within the schools that cater to students who are deaf.

The observations of lessons and interviews were carried out at two Harare based schools which offer secondary education for the Deaf. The researchers used semi-structured interviews to interview the participants in this study. This method of interviewing was selected because of its potential to open the interview task in a manner that will make both the researcher and participants discuss various challenges faced within the education of students who are deaf. Interviews were directed to responsible administrators of these schools and teachers of students who are deaf. In respecting the familiar adage of people with disabilities, nothing for us without us, we interviewed students who are deaf. According to Kusters et al., research must be endorsed by deaf/sign communities before, during and after the research. In order to make sure that this research is an accurate representation of ZSL, the research should be for Deaf, and with Deaf people. This is also envisaged to provide critical information that will feed into the discussion of our findings. We were able to ensure the application of this principle at an optimal level through one of the researchers who is a hearing member of the deaf community, working and communicating fluently with other ZSL users.

The researchers interviewed 6 deaf students, 6 teachers of deaf students and 6 school administrators from all schools. This provided a stable data source which is based on the engagement of relevant stakeholders. Data were collected from students with ages ranging between 15 and 17 years. The number of male and female informants was broadly balanced, and the ratio was 1:1. Semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to interact and share with deaf people, teachers of the deaf and school administrators about their views and ideas about deaf education [6]. The data that was collected from deaf students were recorded as field notes, and it was filmed then translated from ZSL to English and transcribed for purposes of data analysis and interpretation. As mentioned earlier, one of the researchers is proficient in ZSL and teaches ZSL to undergraduate students; consequently, he personally conducted interviews with deaf students. The interviews contributed to insights on the emic perspectives of the approaches used within the learning environment of students who are deaf, the challenges and the possible improvements in the learning and teaching process. Interviews occupied a pivotal position in this study ahead of other data collection methods, because they offered opportunities for follow-up of ideas, probing of responses, investigation of motives and feelings which cannot be achieved by relying solely on observations and documents.

However, data collection is strengthened by complementarity; hence the researchers also observed lessons in progress in order

to have a real-time understanding of the learning processes. According to Kothari, not only is participant observation a scientific tool for data collection, but it is also a complex research method because it often requires the researcher to play a number of roles and use a number of techniques, inclusive of their five senses, to collect data. For lessons observation, this study focused mainly at O level classes. Two classes from each school were selected with the aim of carrying out an in-depth study. Observations helped the researchers to observe lessons in progress in a way to understand the learning and teaching process [7]. Observational methods go some way towards addressing the disparity between what people say and what they do. Field notes were taken while the researcher observes, as this is recommended by Bernard.

RESULTS

The education act of 1987

After independence, the first document to be crafted in order to guide language practices in education was the education act of 1987. The act identified; Shona, Ndebele and English as subjects to be taught while ZSL was to be given the priority as the medium of instruction for deaf students. Thus ZSL is recognised in this document not as a subject but as a medium of instruction for deaf students. The education act falls short of taking into consideration the need to explicitly consider the case of the deaf students by stating the language they should use in official domains. The syntax of the clause is not binding mainly because of the use of the non-binding modal verb shall instead of must. The clause in question states that SL shall be the priority language for the deaf and hard of hearing. Thus it is a merely permissible decision which has the potential to violate the rights of students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Education Linguistic Human Rights (ELHRs). The clause, in this case, avoids stating in direct terms that ZSL must be the medium of instruction. It is vague as to whether ZSL should be the medium of instruction without being a subject [8]. Implementation is also unlikely because there are no guidelines as to how the language should be taught when it should be taught and by who. Bambgose regards language policies in Africa as mere pronouncements, given the absence of the provision for implementation.

Ministry of education, sports, arts and culture policy circular

The secretary's circular number 3 of 2002 curriculum is equipped towards implementing the national goals of:

- 2.8 promoting the practice of inclusive education through flexible accommodation of special needs among learners.
- 2.9 providing special needs which include the acquisition of survival and appropriate acquisition skills like-sign language, mobility, self-care, braille-literacy and social skills for learners with special needs. The education system expects pupils to develop skills and competencies in language and communication.

ZSL is recognised in this document, and there is recognition of the need to promote inclusive education through consideration of the special needs of pupils as shown in the bolded words in 2.8 and 2.9 above. The need for acquisition of ZSL and social skills and competencies for the deaf as people with special needs is also recognised. However, the secretary’s circular number 3 of 2002, does not clearly state procedures to be followed within the inclusive system of education. According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar, for most deaf children, sign language is the only language that they can express themselves fully. It is impossible for them to express themselves in any spoken language, except when writing. Most children who speak may also find it difficult to use ZSL. The stipulations of the secretary circular number 3 of 2002 curriculum do not clarify the language to be used in a mixed class with both hearing and deaf students. It is totally silent on the use of ZSL as a medium of instruction and sole means of communication for the deaf where writing is not involved. The stipulations do not clarify the required linguistic skills of the teachers who are responsible for teaching deaf students [9]. This is a key factor for ensuring the flexible accommodation of special needs among students; in this case, the teacher is expected to be highly proficient in ZSL to cater to the deaf students.

The 2013 constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment No. 20) act

The 2013 constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment No. 20) act section (6) 1 stipulates that there are 16 officially recognised languages, ZSL included. This is a positive shift which if implemented, would eventually lead to the use of ZSL in education. However, not much detail is given regarding implementation as with previous policies. Shohamy insightfully observes that the mere act of declaring certain languages as official does not carry with it much meaning in terms of actual practice in all domains.

As Mugari and Kadenge rightly observe in section (6) 1, all other languages are in uppercase. Still, SL is the only one written in lower case, and this raises questions regarding negative attitude towards SL compared to its oral counterparts. Mugari and Kadenge concluded that those responsible for writing the

document were not convinced that ZSL is a language just like any other variety listed in the document. This may explain why the language is not taken seriously, even in the education sector. In chapter 1 (6) 4 the notion of speech community or ethnic identification in regards to SL is undermined because all the other indigenous languages have ethnic or regional identities encoded within their names. This reflects the marginalisation of ZSL by policymakers in preference to other languages that have ethnic or regional identities encoded within their names (Mugari and Kadenge).

The syntax used in the current constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment Number 20) act, section (6) 4 to communicate critical information is also a cause for concern because it does not use strong and binding vocabulary that ensures the enforcement of the act. In section (6) 4 of the constitution of Zimbabwe, it is noted that the state must promote and advance the use of all languages used in Zimbabwe including sign language and must create conditions for the development of those languages. The surface structure of this statement seems to insinuate an ongoing process which renders the policy to be theoretical and with the potential to remain on paper [10].

It is worth mentioning and quite commendable that obligatory terms which are binding be used in this clause. However, to facilitate the implications of recent constitutional changes, the 2013 constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment 20) act should have clearly stated conditions which are necessary for the development of these languages. It is also interesting to note that section 22 (3) of the 2013 constitution of Zimbabwe (Amendment 20) act states that the state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must encourage the use and development of communication suitable for persons with physical or mental disabilities, but nothing is specified concerning the implementation procedures [11].

Tables 1-3 presents information that emanated from interviews from stakeholders in the education of deaf students. These include responses from the deaf students, school administrators and teachers.

Table 1: Responses from deaf students.

Students	Responses
Deaf student A	We spend a lot of time at school learning how to speak Shona and English, and this is very bad for deaf people, our teachers use spoken language when teaching because they don’t know how to sign perfectly
Deaf student B	We write the same exam with hearing people and this is very difficult for us deaf students because exams will be in written English language
Deaf student C	Teachers walk around whilst teaching us in a classroom with too much light, and this is not good because we will not be able to lip-read and to maintain visual contact, teachers also write on the chalkboard whilst speaking important information, and this will only benefit the hearing students

Deaf student D	We learn together with hearing students and teachers favor them hence discriminating deaf students
Deaf student E	Teachers teach us Shona and English, but our own language (ZSL) is not taught as a subject, this is very disheartening, teachers only explain using signed English which is difficult to understand, teachers know nothing about deaf culture

Table 2: Responses from school administrators.

Administrators	Responses
Deputy headmistress A	We don't have grammar books and ZSL dictionaries to give deaf students, that's why teachers opt to teach students using English which has enough materials
Headmaster B	One of the major challenges is lack of ZSL teachers who are competent, the majority of teachers know the basics of ZSL, they only do a course of sign language at teachers college, and this will not equip them with sign language skills The new curriculum is silent about deaf education, ZSL must be taught as a subject at teachers colleges and Universities, and this will help in developing teachers who can teach deaf students
Headmaster C	Students who are profoundly deaf need at least 10 years of secondary education for them to get full knowledge which is equivalent to that of hearing students for them to get admission to university education
Head of department D	Inclusive education is the major problem for deaf students because it is not easy for teachers to use both ZSL and English at the same time as a medium of instruction

Table 3: Responses from teachers of deaf students.

Teachers	Responses
Teacher A	It is difficult for us to use English, Shona and sign at the same time when teaching hearing and deaf students There is no single profoundly deaf person who has reached university education except for a few partially deaf
Teacher B	I am not sure, but we are encouraged to use English when teaching our students, we must use ZSL, but it is difficult because they are some concepts not easy to explain when using ZSL The government should employ sign language interpreters in education to assist teachers of students who are deaf
Teacher C	We teach both hearing and deaf students together, but this is difficult because deaf students need more time to understand something simple, and this makes the teaching profession hard for me What is more, deaf students are highly emotional
Teacher D	We are living in a globalised world, and we teach all our students using the English language ZSL is strenuous to learn, therefore, communicating with deaf students is very difficult

Means of communication in the inclusive classroom context

The classroom practices observed, showed that there was an inclusive approach, where students who are partially deaf learn alongside students who are not deaf. In the observed classrooms, the teachers use lip reading as a means of communicating with students who are partially deaf. The students who are partially deaf and have no speech sit in front of the classroom in order to facilitate the clear vision of the teacher since they rely on lip reading, however, we noted that this has some practical challenges. For instance, the teacher is not always in one position whilst speaking to the students [12]. On the other hand, in the class observed only 15 of the 80 students had hearing aids or amplification, meaning only 18, 75% of the partially deaf students can hear what the teacher is saying. This is a major disadvantage to the learner who does not have a privilege to communicate with the teacher. The teachers use English as a medium of instruction and at times, force students who are partially deaf to speak. This is mainly because of the fact that the government introduced a policy of inclusive education centered on teaching all children under one roof despite different forms of disabilities (Hlatywayo and Matende). Although the inclusive approach is beneficial to the student since it nurtures a sense of belonging to the larger community, it concurrently disadvantages the partially deaf based on the language of communication.

DISCUSSION

The researchers observed that while the partially deaf students were mixed with the hearing students, the profoundly deaf are mixed with students who are mentally disabled, visually impaired and those with down syndrome disorder. The teachers pointed out that these students learn better in that environment. One of the school authorities pointed out that students who are profoundly deaf need at least ten years of secondary education for them to acquire the body of knowledge equivalent to that of hearing students for them to gain admission to institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe. The researchers noted that the idea behind inclusive education is to manage service delivery and hence the adoption of the special class model. However, this inclusive education model does not take into account the diversity of needs associated with the students in a particular class. For instance, the profoundly deaf students require a different language for communication in the classroom. This seems to be a serious challenge, which needs attention. Profoundly deaf students seem to be left behind in terms of education development because of the learning conditions. The challenges are confirmed by the fact that no single profoundly deaf person from this school has reached university education. This was approved by the school authority who stated that there is no single profoundly deaf person who has reached university education except for the few partially

deaf. We also observed that SL is partially used as a medium of instruction, and it is not taught as a subject. This is a major setback since SL is the medium of instruction hence the need for it to be taught as a subject just as other languages are taught to their users. The teaching of SL as a subject benefits the development and understanding of SL not only by deaf students but all learners. This is because it will allow the breaking of communication barriers between the deaf and the hearing persons. The inclusion of SL as a taught subject would, however, enhance its sustainability amongst the deaf people [13].

Speech training at the expense of value addition education

The interviews with students who are deaf and teachers revealed that a great deal of their time in school is spent in speech training. The consequences of this are perilous; students who are deaf come out of schools without the expected body of knowledge. It is the view of the researchers that if students who are deaf are educated through ZSL, the limitations to learning will be minimised. This is in line with the concept of mother tongue education practice, which seems more relevant in the context of the students who are deaf (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, Khan), when imparted in a foreign language, causes difficulties in learning and understanding, leading to their failure in subjects or drop out from the schools, which is a big loss to a country, nation and even to humanity at large. According to Swanwick and Marschark, teachers of deaf students are not using SL as a teaching language, but only as a means of communication with students. The spoken language be it English, Shona or Ndebele is a limitation to the students who are deaf in Zimbabwe. The researchers note that this inequality amongst the learners can be balanced if there is equitable distribution of resources in Zimbabwe. Another possibility is coming up with a systematic programme to teach parents ZSL. In fact, it is more plausible to make ZSL a compulsory subject in schools as this equips many people because we live in a society together with the deaf.

Insensitive education curriculum and methods

Information gathered through interviews with deaf students, and school administrators show that insensitive education curriculum for students with hearing impairments is one of the challenges that deter these students from progressing to institutions of higher learning. More so the 2017 new curriculum is totally silent about sign language. Thus the researchers concluded that a lack of an examination-oriented curriculum for the deaf, failure by the relevant ministry to recognise and make ZSL an examinable subject as the greatest challenges that hinder students who are deaf to progress to higher institutions of learning in Zimbabwe. The UNESCO committee of 1953 states that the best medium for teaching a child is through the mother tongue, which children understand better and express themselves freely. The researchers also

observed that deaf children write the same exam as their hearing counterparts, posing serious challenges to the deaf. Worldwide it is believed that the average written English of a person who is deaf and is at the secondary level, is that of hearing grade four, this is because ZSL linguistic, grammatical structure is totally different to English grammar and lack of language acquisition support system. Providing deaf SL tutors to children and families would avoid a delay in the acquisition of a first language and strengthen educational quality [14]. The teachers responsible for teaching deaf students suggested the need for enough overhead projectors, internet, televisions, bulletin boards, computers and other assistive devices which will make secondary education sensitive to the special needs of the deaf and make the learning process flexible for both teachers and deaf students. The interviews also revealed that an unstructured and unsupportive environment impedes the teaching and learning environment of deaf students in secondary education. The students interviewed in this study described the learning environment as not free from distractions. They cited the too much light and lack of constant visual contact with the teacher, making it impossible to lip-read the teacher. The students noted that the teachers also wrote on the board while talking, which hindered them from obtaining information from the teachers' facial expressions through lip reading. Lip reading also has the challenge that it demands maximum effort and concentration. According to Doyle and Dye, only 30%-40% of all words can actually be seen on the lips, 60%-70% is rather like guesswork. Moreover, some groups of consonants have the same lip-pattern for example /m/, /p/ and /b/ are bilabial consonants. Thus, it is difficult to distinguish between the words because phonetic differences require hearing to tease apart different consonants insisting that deaf students should lip-read making things more difficult for them. To this extent, interviews with deaf students revealed that the school environment is not supportive of deaf education as required by constitutional provisions.

Attitudinal barriers

The findings also show that negative attitudes towards the deaf are one of the significant challenges. The deaf students reported that teachers forced them to lip read, and they give preferential treatment to students without hearing impairments at the expense of deaf children. Communication is a real barrier to learning and inclusion in schools, as there is little understanding of Deafness. This is coupled with negative attitudes from non-deaf students towards deaf children [15]. Deaf students have been labelled anti-social when they reacted violently to the taunts of non-deaf peers. Conama observed that it is often argued that public attitudes, and the willingness of users to speak or sign the languages in public, are crucial factors to the survival and sustainability of languages, as exemplified by the statement that if the language is seen as an essential part of one's identity, individuals are more likely to speak it and be interested in its survival.

CONCLUSION

The researchers, therefore, conclude that there are communication challenges in the classroom for students who

are deaf, available resources are inadequate and less appropriate to enable successful teaching and to learn in Harare schools that accommodate students who are deaf. The above-mentioned barriers contribute in students who are deaf failing their ordinary level examinations, especially in cardinal subjects like Maths and English. The researchers are of the opinion that ZSL should be one of the cardinal subjects to be considered as an entry requirement for higher and tertiary education for students who are deaf. The researchers conclude that there is a lack of policy implementation on promoting students who are deaf and there is need for equitable provision of resources to enable successful education in deaf schools of Harare. Individual education teachers should be taught ZSL in teacher training colleges. The current research, therefore, recommends the ministry of primary and secondary education to amend the teaching and learning facilities in consideration of students who are deaf as well as to effectively implement the educational policy in a bid to develop the quality of education for these students. One way of dealing with this challenge is to increase the time available for learning since the students have to grapple with lip-reading, and this might be time-consuming. The ministry can also consider introducing the use of ZSL teaching assistants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers recommend the ministry of primary and secondary education in Zimbabwe to consider the involvement of applied linguists in deaf education and users of sign language as educators of the deaf. Intensive language support and intervention services for deaf children and their hearing families is a glaring void in the educational process for the deaf children in Zimbabwe. There is a lack of qualified teachers who are proficient in sign language in education settings; for this reason, deaf adults and sign language interpreters should be trained as educators and educational interpreters. Although the researchers have highlighted the communication-related challenges faced by students who are deaf, there is a need for a new approach in trying to facilitate sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A researcher should adhere to strict ethical standards while collecting data for research. This is done to ensure the promotion of participants so that researchers do not cause harm to different stakeholders involved in the study. Although the current research does not have any potential to cause harm, the researchers obtained permission from the secretary for primary and secondary education and the provincial education director of Harare province to carry out research. This was done to ensure that the appropriate measures were in place as per the requirements of the institutions and participants involved in the research. The school authorities acted in loco parentis. Participants were informed of the choice they had between to participate or not in the research. Taking into consideration the need to be sensitive, the researchers made it a point that the deaf participants were informed of the research objectives in ZSL. In order to ensure the quality of the translation was up to

standard, the researchers asked a native of ZSL to check the translations. The researchers informed the participants that data would be exclusively used for the current research, not for any other matters, and anonymity will be observed to protect brands for personalities. To protect the identities of the individuals participating in the study, the participants were given alphabet letters as name labels.

Pursuant with the objectives of this study we analyse documents relating to the education and communication in regards to deaf students, this is followed by a discussion of the real-time challenges faced by deaf students that we identified from the interviews with stakeholders.

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