

Using Communication Strategies for Food Science, Food Security and Nutrition

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Abstract

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is commonly defined as an area of research and clinical practice that addresses the requirements of individuals with significant and complex communication needs (Beukelman & Light, 2020). However, there is a growing recognition of the use of AAC as a tool to support individuals with temporary limitations to their communication ability or who may have communication vulnerability (Shane et al., 2012). This may include individuals with limited language proficiency and individuals who may face barriers to communication due to situational or contextual factors (Bastable & Dada, 2020; Blackstone & Pressman, 2016). The use of AAC has also shown positive effects on individuals who are at risk of communication vulnerability such as individuals with low literacy (Bastable & Dada, 2020; Mbanda et al., 2021). AAC can thus be viewed as a mechanism to assist in knowledge translation and dissemination. Thereby, promoting greater inclusivity and participation of stakeholders in research in sectors such as food security, food science and nutrition. Not only by adapting the readability of information but, by using alternative methods for providing material for persons with low literacy.

The process of knowledge translation includes adapting and translating information, such as scientific results, surveys, questionnaires and instructions to ensure the information is accessible and that it can easily be interpreted and understood by low literacy users. The process firstly involves reducing the reading levels of materials to an English Grade 4 level. Secondly, creating or using visual aids such as illustrations, images, animations, videos and other forms of pictorial support, by considering feedback from the stakeholders involved (Mbanda et al., 2021). Thirdly, continuous consulted with the authors to confirm that the information is correct and accurate. Finally, translation of the material and ensuring that the final document is disseminated on various accessible platforms such as on social media outlets. Accessible formats of the disseminated information should also be available for example for users using screen readers.

Therefore, AAC can make a significant contribution to facilitating communication and knowledge dissemination of information for individuals with low literacy, which is essential for sustainable development and empowerment.

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY: SHAKILA DADA

Shakila Dada is Director of the University of Pretoria's Centre for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (CAAC). Her research seeks to systematically describe and understand the communication and participation patterns of people with complex communication needs. She focuses on the way in which graphic symbol-based augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems can be used to facilitate understanding language and facilitate participation in society. She has been recently exploring the application of AAC strategies as they apply to enhancing understanding and participation in research for persons with low literacy.