

Cultural linguistic strategies in HIV/AIDS discourse in Shona: A survey of Bindura Hospital.

By

Taurai L Chinyanganya

P.Bag 984 •209 Hay Road• Bindura• Zimbabwe
chinyanganyatau@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

This study looked at HIV/AIDS/STI discourse in Shona, a language in which sex is considered a taboo subject. In Shona certain words cannot be said because culture does not allow it. HIV/AIDS being largely a sexual condition, it was hypothesized that health personnel face problems in communicating HIV/AIDS/STI treatment information. The study carried out at Bindura Hospital showed that this was the case but however, health personnel develop linguistic techniques and strategies to pass on and receive information on these touchy subjects. Data were collected, through the use of a questionnaire, from a random sample of 40 health personnel at Bindura Hospital; and established that taboos are catered for through cultural strategies like metaphors, euphemism, allusions and other linguistic options e.g. slang and code switching. This tended to dilute and at times distort messages; which compromised on clarity therefore undermining efforts to curb the spread of the pandemic.

Keywords: *HIV/AIDS, language taboos, linguistic techniques, metaphors, code-switching.*