

Civic and Community Engagement Reflection

For our community engagement project, we translated patient forms from English to Swahili. The forms we translated are used by the Charlottesville Free Clinic, which provides free medical and dental care to uninsured adults. By translating these forms, we aimed to improve the quality of healthcare available to Swahili-speaking immigrants in the Charlottesville community. The project was implemented by assigning each member a page from the patient forms to translate.

I was tasked with translating a patient health questionnaire. The questionnaire included multiple questions regarding the patient's mental health. When translating the title and questions on the document, I used the dictionary in my Swahili textbook as well as online sources to look up words that I did not know. In a few cases, I used Google Translate to translate words but I double-checked these translations with other sources.

The main challenge I faced when translating this questionnaire was the amount of words I could not directly translate to Swahili. I tried to find what many of these words were in Swahili by looking at different sources but sometimes these sources gave different translations for the same word. In these cases, I was able to overcome this problem by asking a Swahili-speaking friend which of the translations made the most sense. It was also difficult to determine what noun class many of the nouns I translated belonged to. Most of the time, I was able to overcome this problem by using online sources to figure out what noun class these nouns were in.

This project allowed me to learn more Swahili vocabulary, including words that are commonly used in healthcare. Translating this document has also helped me better understand the struggles Swahili-speaking immigrants in the Charlottesville community face. The language barrier many of these immigrants face may prevent them from obtaining healthcare, even when that healthcare is free. This understanding has led me to develop a greater appreciation for the importance of language and how it can be used to help underserved communities.