Global Research, Education and Innovation in Assistive Technology (GREAT) Summit

Tawasol
David Banes and EA Draffan UK and Qatar

3-4 August 2017
Geneva, Switzerland

GS 05

Tawasol is a freely distributable bilingual Arabic / English symbol dictionary of frequently used words in spoken and written communication represented by images and pictograms. Based upon crowd sourced design and Arabic language and values, the symbols are freely usable and can be adapted to meet the needs of other language communities and needs. http://tawasolsymbols.org/en/home/

Tawasol Open Symbols in Arabic and English

Tawasol represents a culturally appropriate symbol set for Arabic language AAC users.

The symbols are produced through the democratic involvement of stakeholders including end users in the selection and design process

What is the impact for AT users and other stakeholders?

For Arabic AAC users this represents the first time that a symbol set has been created based not only upon their communication needs, but also reflecting their community and experience. Similarly AAC professionals now have a set of symbols that will offer familiarity for users and hence increase the likelihood of success in communication. Companies developing AAC solutions for Arabic communities can reduce costs and enhance quality of solution as a result

Implications for Products, Provision, Personnel or Policy?

Products

By virtue of open licence, Tawasol supports the development of AAC apps and software that are suitable for Arabic speakers. By allowing commercial use we increase the range of AAC options available

Provision

The Symbols are freely usable and can be adapted and shared by users, parents and therapists to expand and enhance the provision of AAC users.

Personnel

The symbols are designed through the democratic participation of stakeholders including end users. By doing so we saw a shift in role for AAC users from being consulted to being decision makers

Policy

The symbols demonstrate how, through collaborative working, culturally appropriate symbols can be developed for a range of communities

Implications for other aspects of the Global Research Agenda

The Tawasol open symbol set has two significant opportunities for global implementation. First the voting tools used to gather stakeholder votes can be made available for use in a range of user directed projects. Second the design principles can be applied to other communities to build symbol sets that reflect diverse traditions, culture and language.

Tawasol is actively seeking partners and funders to expand the availability of such symbol sets into new communities.

Strategies to share and build global capacity based on this work

Training and dissemination in a range of countries including Pakistan, Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia to date.

Contact details for global liaison

David Banes

david@davebanesaccess.org

EA Draffan

ead@ecs.soton.ac.uk