

Personal Reflection – March 21, 2022

Mifano Halisi - Real Life Examples

I was talking to my dear friend Sister Janet M.M. who lives and works in Tanzania. As we converse, Janet will often slip into Swahili when it makes more sense. She was describing the responses of a large group of women to her questions, in a seminar she was leading. Jan said, “I appreciated the *mifano halisi* they offered.” I had to call time out and ask: “Mifano halisi?” “Real life examples”, she replied. I knew *Mifano (examples)*, but I had never heard the word *halisi*.

Immediately I thought of our efforts to be relevant, to reach learners of different cultures and contexts, to present new content in the language of learners. *Mifano halisi!*

I know how hard it is to design learning tasks that relate to the life of each person, each learner in a large group. I am thrown back on the vital importance of the learning needs and resource assessment (LNRA). Without that strenuous research, no *mifano halisi* is possible.

When I was teaching in Tanganyika, in the fifties, the British high school text for Mathematics used examples of a *train coming into the station at so many miles an hour...* the young Tanzanian women not only had to deal with quadratic equations, but also with trains coming into the station. No *mifano halisi!*

What is one thing you can do before a course or workshop or seminar, to strengthen your LNRA to make it more inclusive, closer to the context and lives of your learners? One thing! Visit one of them at work or at home; Zoom with one or two, laugh together, tell them about yourself. Invite selfies! Hey, let’s see what you can come up with to faithfully use *mifano halisi!*

--Jane Vella