The Linguistic Challenges Faced by Kenyan Sign Languages Interpreters of the Proceedings of the Kenya National Assembly

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This study set out to investigate the linguistic challenges encountered by the Kenyan Sign Language Interpreters (KSLIs) of the proceedings of the Kenya National Assembly (KNA). Interpreting the proceedings of the KNA is a new dispensation as a result of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Thus it is a pioneering activity in Kenya. The study had the objective of establishing whether the KSL interpreters encounter challenges; whether they are consciously aware of the challenges and what communication strategies they use to solve these challenges. Further, the study aimed at establishing and documenting any linguistic innovations by the KSL interpreters with regard to parliamentary discourse.

The study used the theory of communication strategies which derives from Tarone through Ellen Bialystok in her communication Strategies A Psychological Analysis of Second-Language Use (1990) and provides some examples of communication strategies such as: avoidance, paraphrase, conscious transfer or borrowing, appeal for assistance, and mime.

The research was initiated by the designing of Questionnaire 1, followed by separate face-to-face interview with the four KSL interpreters of the proceedings of the KNA. Questionnaire 1 was distributed immediately after the face-to-face interviews, and responded to immediately or soon thereafter. The recorded face-to-face interview were transcribed and subsequently Questionnaire 2 was designed and distributed by electronic mail. The receipt of responses to Questionnaire 2 was followed by the analysis of the material from the face-to-face interviews, Questionnaire 1 and Questionnaire 2.

The study has established that there were linguistics challenges encountered by the KAL interpreters of the proceedings of the KNA; that these interpreters were aware, if not always consciously, of such challenges; that most of the communication strategies used were as outlined by Bialystok; and that there was minimal innovation in parliamentary discourse glossary by the KSL interpreters themselves.

Chapter One introduces interpreting and the background to the study based on the Constitution of Kenya 2010, defines the research objectives, outlines research hypothesis, posits the significance and rationale of the study as well as the scope and limitations thereof; describes the theoretical framework, provides the literature review and concludes with a summary of the research methodology.

Chapter Two introduces the Kenyan Sign Language Interpreters of the proceedings of the Kenya National Assembly; presents the responses to the data and examines challenges related mainly to training, parliamentary terms, language competency and similar skills.

Chapter Three is the nucleus of this research as it analyses the data collected and works through it on the basis of the theory of communication strategies outlined by Bialystok (1990).

Chapter Four provides summaries of the findings, as well as various aspects connected with the
responses.

Chapter Five contains the summary, conclusion and recommendations for further research as well as other possible areas of focus.

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