



Title: Interpreter Rendition and the Rule of Law: Disparate Access to the Justice System

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Abstract:

Prior studies on multimodal interaction have largely examined the relationship between gesture and verbal communication across languages. However, there has not been much research done in peculiar situations like police interviews. This paper, like a few others, takes a linguistic approach to explore the communicative resources used when police interview members of deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. It goes beyond describing the challenges deaf people face when they report crime to police, to highlight their implications, and suggests ways for improvement. In carrying out this study project, the paper used ethnography to illicit the views of police officers and language practitioners in South Africa. The results show that the complications involved when an interpreter assists the victim in registering a crime might make the report more difficult to understand and raise doubt about its credibility in court. The study underlines that this process has the potential to compromise the right to a speedy trial and encourages civil litigations. Papers like this are important because they generate debates about how the government respond to issues of language rights, in order to minimise the risks of marginalisation.

Biography:

Dr. Gabriel Babili is a lecturer in the Department of African Languages. He teaches grammar and literature in Sepedi, language translation, and communicative studies. His research interests are somewhat broad, but they follow these three lines: sociolinguistics, language and law (forensic linguistics), and translation. His works primarily focus on the interaction between legal professions (i.e., law enforcement and English second language speakers), multilingualism, and language rights in the justice system in South Africa. He has supervised several students at the postgraduate level, presented at conferences, and published several articles in this field of study