

EVALUATING SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION DURING TELEVISION NEWSCAST: A CASE OF KAREN TECHNICAL TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

Sign language interpretation during newscast has faced criticism due to variation of mode of sign language interpretation used by sign language interpreters. This study sought to find out the preferred mode of sign language interpretation in television newscasts among learners at Karen Technical Training Institute for the Deaf (KTTID). The findings are significant because they will inform various television stations in Kenya and government to come up with policy framework to have sign language interpretation conducted in the preferred mode for effective delivery of information. The study was anchored on Robert Karasek's theory of demand control in sign language interpretation. The total study population comprised four hundred and ninety-one students with hearing impairment and fifty-two teachers from Karen Technical Training Institute for the Deaf. Using purposive sampling technique, one hundred and twenty-three students and two teachers were sampled. The study employed a descriptive research design. Questionnaires and interviews were used as instruments for data collection. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from learners with hearing impairment and interview schedule to collect data from teachers. Instrument validity and reliability coefficients to at least 0.75 confidence level were accepted as valid and reliable. Data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study established that Kenya Sign language mode of interpretation is preferred during television newscast. It recommended proper training of sign language interpreters on Kenyan sign language interpretation as opposed to sign exact English with regular monitoring of sign language interpreters in Kenya for quality service.

Key words: Kenya Sign Language (KSL), Newscast Sign Exact English (SEE), Sign language interpretation

Introduction

In both developed and developing countries, the promotion of a more inclusive society has been recognized as critical and vital for nation building (Korpinen, 2009). Many countries are recognizing the importance of removing barriers that may hinder people with disabilities from participating in society, leading to increased access to basic education, vocational training suited to their talents, interests, and abilities, and media-based information.

According to Kenya National Association for the Deaf (KNAD), the modes of sign language interpretation have been affirmed as one of the barriers that inhibit the efficiency of information to person with HI due to the various modality used by sign language interpreters to relay information. The most common ones in Kenya are; Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) format and Sign Exact English (SEE). Similarly, sign language interpreters in television stations employ either design that is not homogenous but based on preference to individuals with hearing impairment (Kilanya, 2010).

Despite their ability to acquire written information, most deaf and deaf blind people in Australia often prefer to access TV content using their native language, which is the Australian Sign language (ASL). One of the reasons is that captions and subtitles, for example, convey written text, but they cannot convey intonation or emotion that is relevant to the media. Australian Sign Language interpretation TV provides richer and equivalent access for users who use sign language as their primary communication system.

According to Adigan (2014) study of incorporating sign language interpreter in television stations in Nigeria, concludes that deaf peoples have a right to receive information through their own cultural and linguistic communication method, which is Nigerian Sign Language (NSL).

Despite the disparity in sign languages around the world, approximately 93 developed and developing countries, including Australia, Algeria, Ghana, South Africa, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Kenya, have been able to incorporate their sign languages into television broadcasts as a means of ensuring deaf access to information (Deaf and Human Rights Report, 2009). This allows the deaf to receive the same information as the hearing without feeling left out. As a result of this incorporation, there has been a polarization in sign language interpretation, with those who prefer to be translated by KSL and others who prefer to be interpreted by SEE.

Kilanya (2010) states that Sign language is independent of any spoken language in a study on the impact of Kenyan Sign Language in English Language acquisition. It has its own set of grammatical rules and sentence elements. Verbs always come before the object in spoken language. In KSL, however, the verb always succeeds in the object. Information should be presented in a language that the deaf population understands and accept. According to KNAD (2001), there are certain orders that can be used while others cannot. The most used being: SVO (S= subject, V= VERB O = OBJECT) SOV (S=SUBJECT, O= OBJECT V= VERB) sand OSV (S= SUBJECT, V= VERB O=OBJECT). The SOV sign order seems to be the most preferred in KSL, as stated by the Zambian National Association of the Deaf (ZNAD) (2001).

Example: SEE: Welcome to the news today.

KSL: NEWS TODAY WELCOME//

According to Akaranga and Okombo (2009), any sign language interpreter should be able to translate any speech to any of the three orders of KSL such as SVO, SOV, and OSV. In TVs, the interpreter should be very creative and fast while changing the English format from the speaker to KSL to suit the person with hearing impairment where the majority depends on KSL as opposed to SEE (Kombo, 2009).

In SEE, the interpreter is required to interpret every word of the statement that corresponds to English structure in that order of the speaker, unlike the KSL, where an interpreter is required to change to any of the three formats discussed of KSL. For instance, in SEE, when one is signing the word < appointed" in the example below, the interpreter should sign the word appoint and add "ed". Also, words like "The" and a" should also be signed in that order. Precisely, the signs should appear in the same format of English without changing anything.

Example: SEE: The president appointed a new cabinet secretary

KSL: CABINET SECRETARY NEW PRESIDENT

Kenya Sign Language, according to Mweri (2014), is a means of interpretation that is mostly employed as a mode of instruction by most HI individuals in the sense that it promotes Deaf culture and identity. However, some people with hearing loss, particularly post-linguists, prefer SEE over KSL interpretation since they believe KSL hinders their English acquisition and language growth due to its complex structure (Kilanya, 2010).

This disparity in TV interpretation preferences forced the current investigation to determine the preferred mode of interpretation among learners and sign language interpreters in television shows. Very few studies have been done in sign language interpretation, and the little has been

done including the ones cited above, none has tried to investigate the preferred mode of interpretation in TVs where this study sought to establish.

Objective of the Study

To establish the preferred mode of sign language interpretation during television newscasts.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design that included both qualitative and quantitative methods. The goal of descriptive research is to describe a population, situation, or phenomena correctly and systematically (Shona, 2019). This is consistent with research that aided in the evaluation of sign language interpretation in newscast. It provided hints for more detailed investigation that aimed to reveal the nature of facts in sign language interpretation in television newscast in Kenya. The study targeted all the 491 learners with hearing impairment at Karen Technical institute for the Deaf (KTTID) and 52 teachers in the school. The school is appropriate in this study since it is the only tertiary institution in the area that admit learners with HI from all socioeconomic backgrounds, both locally and internationally. The school is also located in Nairobi Area, which is a cosmopolitan county with students hailing from 47 different Kenyan counties, resulting in a wide range of viewpoints. Purposive sampling was used in drawing the samples. The sample consisted 123 learners with hearing impairments and two teachers from KTTID. The sample for the learners was guided by Mugenda and Mugenda (2013), which states that when the study population is less than 10,000 a sample size of between 10 and 30% is a good representation of the target population and hence 25% is adequate for analysis. The two teachers were selected being the head of entertainment in the school and thus containing relevant information in the study. Data collection instruments employed were questionnaires for learners and interview schedule for teachers. Content validity was determined by seeking expert review from lecturers conversant with the area of the study in department of special need. Reliability of the questionnaires was established using split half method from a pilot study conducted at St Joseph Mumias Busia County. Using spearman correlation, a correlation coefficient of 0.75 was achieved, indicating a high level of internal consistency of questionnaires. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, where the data was then presented in pie charts in order to answer the research question. Qualitative data from teachers' views on the preferred mode of sign language interpretation was analyzed using quotations.

Results and Discussion

The researcher sought to establish the most preferred mode of interpretation by learners during newscasts. This was important because in any sign language interpretation, an interpreter may use any mode depending on the client preference. However, in newscast this might not be possible to satisfy the choice of all diverse viewers and through this study the researcher intended to know the preferred mode of interpretation in newscasts. Learners stated that the mode of interpretation preferred in newscast was mostly influenced by the mode of interpretation used in schools and home. Figure 1 analyzes the mode of interpretation that learners with HI prefer being interpreted with during television newscast.

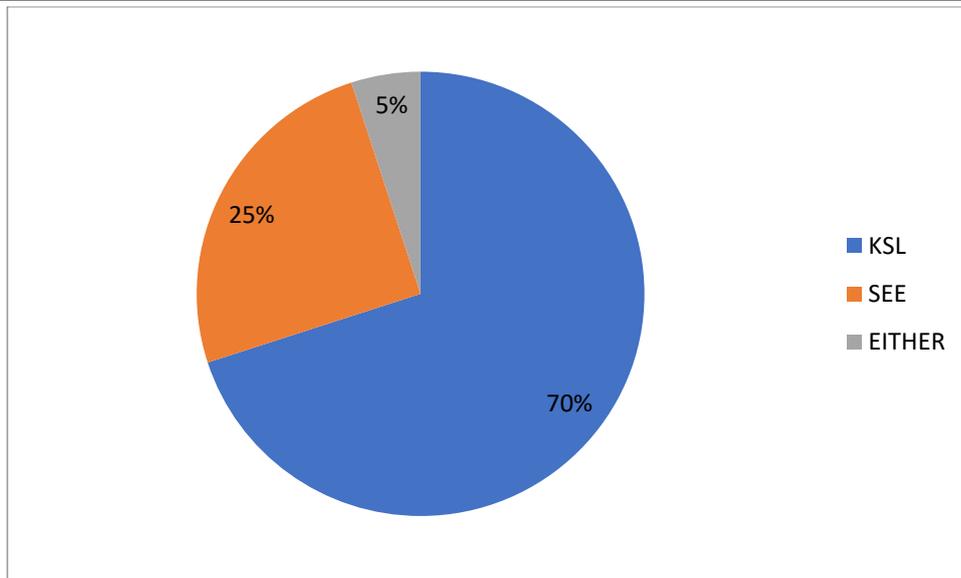


Figure 1: The mode of interpretation that learners with HI prefer being interpreted with during television newscast

Figure 1 indicate that KSL was most preferred by majority of students (70%). The findings of this study are in support of conclusion made by (Kilanya, 2010) that the learner with HI prefer KSL as a mode of communication where learners cited easy grammar and writing effective communication in KSL and use of signs and easy language patterns. Similarly, from the response sampled by the researcher, the mode of communication learners with HI goes hand in hand with the choice of mode of interpretation which is clear in this research.

The Signed Exact English (SEE) was preferred by 25% while those who preferred either mode of interpretation in newscast were 5%. The students who reported that they preferred being interpreted in Sign Exact Language (SEE) and those responded they were comfortable with either KSL or SEE is evident that large number was post lingual. The findings of this study correspond to Owitie (2015) who reported that individual with hearing impairments who acquire deafness while they have already developed language in their life tends to be comfortable being interpreted by either KSL or SEE since they fear losing their first language that they will affect their acquisition and development of natural language which is English.

On the question of the choice of the mode of sign language interpretation during newscasts, the researcher sampled some of the responses from the questionnaires. One of the learners who preferred interpretation through Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) had this to say:

*ME KSL INTERPRETATION LIKE A LOT A LOT// HOME, SCHOOL AND CHURCH
US INTERPRETATION ALWAYS KSL// ME TALK KSL WELL SAME UNDERSTAND
WELL MESSAGE SEND IN KSL.*

*(I like any interpretation done through KSL. At home, school, and church all
interpretation is conducted through KSL. I also sign very well in KSL format, and I
understand well any information interpreted to me in KSL).*

Another learner with almost similar opinion with a same preference of KSL interpretation stated:

*EVERYWHERE BETTER BETTER KSL INTERPRETATION TO THE DEAF/ TV
PROGRAMMES THERE\\ FIRST LANGUAGE TAUGHT THROUGH KSL SAME
INTERPRETAION GOOD IN KSL//*

(All places that require sign language interpretation should be conducted in Kenya sign language to deaf person including programmes broadcasted in televisions. This because our first language we were taught is KSL and any message delivered to us should also be in KSL mode.)

On the same question, the researcher sampled one learner who seemed to have speech and who preferred newscast being interpreted in Sign Exact English (SEE). The student had this to Sign in SEE with a little struggle of exact English and some interference of KSL mixture.

'I prefer being signed well well in SEE because it prevents me being affected with my English acquisition of language. Again, KSL will make me not to interact and understand one another a lot a lot with my friends who are not deaf by speaking broken English'

The researcher sampled one of the questionnaires filled by a respondent who had indicated that he/she was comfortable with any mode of interpretation during newscast.

*ME GOOD BOTH MODES OF INTERPRETATION DURING NEWSCASTS//
PROBLEM ANY HAVE ZERO/ IMPORTANT MOST INTERPRETER SIGN WELL
WELL//*

(I am good in any mode of interpretation either by KSL OR SEE provided a sign language interpreter Sign well)

When the two teachers were asked through an interview schedule which mode of interpretation should be used during newscast, both preferred KSL and they had also similar opinion for using KSL where one stated;

'Kenya Sign Language (KSL) interpretation is structured the same way person with HI is instructed in class and sign while communicating, therefore, to use any other method such as SEE in newscast interpretation will disadvantage the majority who would wish to be interpreted with their first language, they grew up with especially the congenitally deaf. However, for those who acquired deafness later in their life they may prefer being interpreted in SEE probably by believe it will make the acquisition of English to be affected negatively'

From the responses of most learners and the two teachers, it is quite evident that the learners prefer news bulletin being interpreted in KSL as opposed to SEE. Something else that came out quite clearly was that the mode of interpretation had some roots to the onset of the hearing impairment.

Conclusion

The study concluded that learners would wish to be interpreted by Kenyan sign language mode of interpretation in newscasts. Preference of sign language interpretation in television in great levels is dependent on the onset of hearing impairment. The congenitally deaf prefer being interpreted in Kenya Sign Language (KSL) while the post lingual deaf prefers being interpreted mostly in Sign Exact English (SEE) or either SEE or KSL.

Recommendation

The study confirmed that majority of learners would wish to be interpreted by Kenyan sign language mode of interpretation in newscasts. It therefore recommends proper training of sign

language interpreters on Kenyan sign language interpretation as opposed to sign exact English with regular monitoring of sign language interpreters in Kenya for quality service.

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