

## **AT THE MERCY OF OTHERS' VOICES: AN ILLUSTRATION OF FREQUENT INTERPRETER LANGUAGE ERRORS IN KENYAN COURTROOMS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper reports on a study of interpreter language errors carried out in a sample of courts in Kenya between January and March 2008. Drawing from data mainly consisting of transcriptions of audio-taped discourse of official proceedings in the sample courts, the paper illustrates the most prevalent language errors made by interpreters in the course of interpreting judicial proceedings. Using a typology of interpreter language errors documented in the literature, the paper identifies and illustrates the occurrence of grammatical, lexical, omission and intrusion and distortion errors as the most frequently occurring in the sample courtrooms, as they accounted for the bulk of the interpreter errors encountered in the data. Illustration and discussion of each of these types of errors show that they reveal the extent to which these errors can alter the intended meaning of the interlocutors in the court set-up, which in turn can lead to a miscarriage of justice, especially where the judicial process depends entirely on the interpreter's capacity to facilitate communication by mediating between languages.