

Living translation when crisis strikes: policy, training, technology, and ethics

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A crisis event such as an earthquake, a disease outbreak, or a mass migration disrupts lives and creates distinctive communicative demands, especially between those in need of assistance and those who can provide assistance. Clear, timely, accurate, and reliable information is essential for the success of this communication. At the same time, increasing cultural and linguistic diversity across the globe intensifies the complexity of the communicative situation. The power of language in crisis settings is extremely significant, yet many problems related to translation in these settings (taken here to include written, oral, and signed modes) persist. For instance, policies on crisis response in many jurisdictions either do not recognise a role for translation or apply unclear or restrictive understandings of translation, valuable grassroots efforts to enable communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries in a crisis can be ad-hoc, underfunded and uncoordinated, and, while technology-oriented solutions to translation problems in crisis settings have been proposed, their potential benefits and harms have yet to be fully interrogated.

Ground-breaking scholarship focusing on interpreting in crises (Bulut and Kurultay 2001, Kurultay and Bulut 2012, Moser-Mercer *et al.* 2014; Tipton 2011) and translation in crises (Federici 2016; Federici and Cadwell 2018; O'Brien *et al.* 2018) has begun to address these issues. Nevertheless, many more questions remain to be answered. Of particular theoretical and practical interest are the ways in which the power of translation in a crisis is affected by the policies that govern the crisis, the training and technological support available to translators, the constraints of responders, and the ethical issues that all agents must confront. In addition, methodologies that could usefully be applied to answer questions such as these are still required.

This panel invites contributions that will set forth the agenda for the growing body of research on crisis translation in the coming years. It is hoped that discussions arising from the panel will provide theoretical, methodological, and practical considerations that will help to guide translation in future crisis settings. Contributions to this panel might address the following subtopics:

- Language policies in response to crises in multilingual scenarios
- Training of professional, proto-professional, and citizen translators and interpreters in crises and of the agents who make use of their services
- Technological aids supporting crisis communication for translators and interpreters
- Distinctive ethical issues that can arise in crisis translation and interpreting scenarios

Contributors can be guided in the first instance by reference to the following key works.

References

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