

BOOK REVIEW

INTERPRETING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

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The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Crisis, Edited By Christophe Declercq, Koen Kerremans London: Routledge, ISBN 9781032075426, 452 pp. + xvii., \$344.80.

According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), in the past three years, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has skyrocketed to 349.2 million, blanketing over 40 global locations, with Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen among the top ten countries in need of humanitarian aid.

Humanitarian aid refers to the short-term material and logistic assistance to people who need help until the long-term help by the government and other institutions replaces it. These people in need include the homeless, refugees, and victims of natural disasters, wars, and famines. Humanitarian aid is a collaborative and transborder practice, usually between developed countries and the developing countries in crisis, involving linguistically and culturally diverse communities for a mutual purpose and common goal. In this process, translators and interpreters play a vital role in ensuring the adequacy, immediacy, and accuracy of communication in crisis situations. These are often one-off or serial events that endanger the health, safety, or well-being of a community or large groups of people, triggered by calamities, conflicts, disasters, emergencies, or hazards, with cascading effects.

Situated in this context, this timely and comprehensive handbook offers four unique insights into the implementation and delivery of humanitarian assistance over geographically diverse locations. These insights cover (1) policy and practices, (2) professionalisation, (3) community, and (4) language strategies and solutions.

Part I includes eight chapters, highlighting the necessity of language access and accessibility during multilingual and intercultural communication at times of crisis. All their authors advocate an all-hands-on-deck, multi-stakeholder approach to the development of effective policies and practices through top-down directive or grassroots initiatives to support affected communities, regardless of location and size of the crisis. To be more specific, Cadwell discusses Japan's preparedness to engage crisis support translators and interpreters with carved out budgets in White Paper policy documents (Chapter 1). The same spirit is evidenced in Belgium's COVID-19 response policy (Chapter 3), Australia's

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crisis communication management system (Chapter 2), Peru's state-sponsored language support mechanism for indigenous people (Chapter 4), Brazil's language accessibility for sign language users (Chapter 5), Sierra Leone's multilingual terminology resources for disaster and risk reduction (Chapter 6), and distribution missions of other humanitarian organisations. In these operations, it becomes apparent that language access and accessibility could only be adequately achieved with clear policy support, cultural appropriateness, and political awareness (Chapter 8), either through multilingual communication or English as an intermediary language (Chapter 7).

Built on these foundational discussions, Part II dives deeper into related matters concerning professionalisation. Themes and topics discussed include codes of conduct, training, professional ethics, cooperation with NGOs and civil societies, as well as role perceptions and expectations. The central question raised in these chapters concerns the ethics of engaging civilian interpreters in military operations (Chapter 13). In response to this question, the authors express their diverse perspectives and approaches, from international humanitarian law, human rights law, and refugee law (Chapter 9), situational, cultural, and geographic guidance in peacekeeping missions (Chapter 10), self-regulation, empathy and coping strategies for post-traumatic stress and vicarious trauma during the UNHCR Afghan local relief operations (Chapter 11), evacuation and tele-mental health supports in post-war scenarios (Chapter 12), and survival strategies for translation services in Syria (Chapter 14).

While Part II reveals a need for educating and training crisis translators and interpreters, Part III explores the community perspective. In this part, the authors emphasise a community-centred perspective with regard to role expectations and perceptions, contributing to the difficult conversation about translator and interpreter agency in crisis communication. For instance, Moser-Mercer and colleagues advocate an inclusive, durable approach to the education of language mediators in humanitarian settings (Chapter 15), which is reiterated in subsequent chapters in the need for social-cultural guidance (Chapter 16), training in emotional management, professional ethics, and alignment with NGOs' missions (Chapter 17), consideration of the psychological needs of refugees, migrants, minorities, and torture victim survivors in the aftermath of devastating events (Chapters 18 and 20) and the nature of humanitarian organisations (Chapter 19).

The concluding part of this volume pools the practical wisdom from experts and scholars to develop effective strategies and solutions for future events. These include translanguaging strategies in high-stake situations for use with Muslim minorities (Chapter 24), Ukrainian women and trans refugees (Chapter 25), asylum seekers (Chapter 26), and pilot-controller communications (Chapter 26), among others.

This extensive volume offers new directions for interdisciplinary collaboration between translation and interpreting scholars, social workers, migration and refugee attorneys, minority advocates, and human rights lawyers at international, national, and local levels. Its distinctive value lies in the ingenuity of human endeavors in the age of algorithm-dominated technological advancements. The volume is bold and direct, without

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shying away from the blunt reality that our world today is very different from what it was in the past few decades. Migration, by choice or by force, has become a global phenomenon.

In summary, this handbook is an essential guide to translation and interpreting in conflict and crisis settings for advanced students and researchers in translation and interpreting studies and is also of relevance to peace studies, political science, and many other fields.

About the author: Ran Yi is a licensed practitioner and researcher with prior experience as a staff interpreter in organisational and institutional settings. She undertakes practice-informed research and knowledge exchange about interpreters in court, with a particular focus on social justice for migrants and children.