



To cite this article:

Cui, Luomei. "Review of *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Crisis*." *The AALITRA Review: A Journal of Literary Translation* 20, (December 2024): 170-171.

aalitra.org.au

Australian Association for Literary Translation

Review of *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Crisis*

LUOMEI CUI
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Christophe Declercq, Koen Kerremans (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Crisis*, London, Routledge, 2023.

O'Brien (2022: 86) defines crisis as “an unexpected event with a sudden or rapid onset that can seriously disrupt the routines of an individual or a collective, posing some level of risk or danger.” This definition highlights the abrupt and potentially perilous nature of crises, emphasizing their ability to upend normalcy and introduce significant uncertainty. Such events also demand immediate attention and response. In recent years, the world has faced a series of crises, including war conflicts, natural disasters, and health emergencies. Notable examples include the global Covid-19 pandemic, the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria, the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All these events have had an impact on people’s lives to some extent. In the crisis, communication plays a role in quickly and accurately conveying critical information to reduce uncertainty and anxiety among those affected. It also facilitates coordinated efforts among affected individuals, communities, and the public.

Given the heightened importance of communication during these crises, the role of translation becomes crucial in addressing those affected individuals across different languages and cultures. O'Brien (2016) also introduces the concept of “crisis translation”. In this context, translation services serve as an essential bridge, facilitating communication between affected people, emergency services, and government agencies, thereby ensuring effective response and support during times of crisis. In the process of information change, each of these situations has highlighted the crucial role of crisis translation in providing life-saving information, ensuring public safety, and facilitating coordinated responses. Under the crisis translation situation, translators and interpreters also play a complex role in representing, and sustaining, narratives and the everyday stories of conflict/crisis-affected populations. *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Crisis* (edited by Christophe Declercq and Koen Kerremans and published in 2023) is one of the series of *Routledge Handbooks in Translation and Interpreting Studies*. This handbook analyses the role of translators and interpreters in crisis situations, examining the impact of crises and demonstrating how crucial translation is in these contexts. This handbook is divided into four sections (policy & practice, professionalization, community, and language strategies and solutions), each exploring different facets in this critical field.

The opening section comprises eight chapters focusing on policy and practice perspectives, illustrated through diverse case studies worldwide. These case studies span across Peru, Brazil, Belgium, Sierra Leone, Australia, Japan, and Hong Kong, showcasing varied approaches to studying policies and practices in different socio-cultural contexts. These different policies and practices can also be implemented in communities with diverse languages, cultures, religions, and ethnicities, whether locally or across regions and countries. Additionally, chapters emphasize the importance of language accessibility in crisis communication, the significance of translation as a tool for risk reduction to enhance multilingual and intercultural crisis communication, and the importance of developing effective crisis translation policies and practices. Moreover, in order to achieve the most effective crisis translation, some

contributions also put forward other solutions including technological and non-technological methods.

Section 2 explores the theme of Professionalisation, comprising six chapters. Case studies from Spain, Afghanistan, and Syria are examined, highlighting the challenging role of translators and interpreters as mediators in translating the narratives of crisis-affected individuals. The contributions address crucial aspects essential for professionalizing language access in crisis contexts, emphasizing the diverse skills required by translators and interpreters under humanitarian negotiations in conflict zones. It covers occupational standards, training, ethical conduct, collaboration with humanitarian organizations, and perceptions of their roles. Furthermore, the section predominantly focuses on interpreting, spanning five chapters, while the final chapter also discusses the professional standing of translators in conflict zones.

The third section including seven chapters mainly looks into the community perspectives of crisis translation and interpreting. Drawing on the cases where interpreters play a crucial role in creating community and fostering belonging among refugees, as well as their crucial function in conflict-affected regions, the contributions examine various community contexts where language needs are influenced by factors such as agency, positionality, and trust, along with the challenges faced by these communities in addressing language needs. Additionally, this section also exemplifies its interdisciplinary approach to crisis response, emphasizing collaboration among diverse fields and areas of expertise.

The final section considers language strategies and solutions in crises. It primarily examines the translation decisions taken when engaging with minority or gender-specific languages in the realm of crisis translation. Chapters demonstrate this frequently necessitates innovative approaches to translating terms and concepts that lack direct equivalents in other languages. Additionally, the concluding chapter also discusses the potential use of automatic speech recognition and machine translation beyond the efforts of translators and interpreters as effective methods for communication under high-pressure situations, ensuring translation quality.

This handbook offers readers a comprehensive overview of contemporary research and practices within this emerging field, underscoring the critical role of translation and interpretation in crisis contexts. It is a valuable resource for scholars and students in the field of translation and interpreting, as it encompasses a diverse array of global case studies. Furthermore, this handbook touches on interdisciplinary studies intersecting with translation studies, including war and conflict, policy, and health crisis services, thereby serving as an indispensable reference for scholars in these domains. Through this book, we hope the humanitarian aid not only within the translator and interpreter, but the technology solutions also can help in the crisis communication.

Bibliography

O'Brien, Sharon. "Crisis translation: A snapshot in time." *INContext: Studies in Translation and Interculturalism*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2022, pp. 84-108.

O'Brien, Sharon. "Training translators for crisis communication: Translators without Borders as an example." In Federico M. Federici (Ed.), *Mediating Emergencies and Conflicts: Frontline Translating and Interpreting*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 85-111.