

Chapter 1

Introduction: A state of emergency for crisis communication

Federico M. Federici

In an interconnected and globalised world it is difficult to distinguish the end of one emergency from the beginning of the next, so much so that Mihata postulated in the late 1990s that the world now lives in a state of emergency (Mihata 1997). Even though not all regions and populations are necessarily simultaneously affected by an emergency, it is not absurd to theorize the existence of a permanent *sense of a state of emergency* in the ways in which the world is *represented* in the 21st century – especially given the growth of the 24/7 news channels and new rolling news cycle in the late 1980s (Silvia 2001; Zelizer and Allan 2010: 86). In fact, complexity theorists and sociologists have long *perceived* the state of permanent emergency of the modern societies (Luhmann 1990). It would however be absurd to consider that a world forced into globalized economies would then completely discard any form of awareness of global events. The immediacy of news reports on world emergencies is plausibly one of the very features of an interconnected world that has been brought communicatively and culturally closer. It is also an emotive closeness for many. Susan Sontag (2003: 16) observes that ‘being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience’. The fact that such calamities and their ensuing emergencies take place in other countries, another cultures, and to speakers of other languages is often underestimated. Yet, this 21st-century phenomenon of accentuated global awareness and, at times, of far-reaching humanitarian solidarity is not by any means an entirely new phenomenon (news agencies that boomed in the late 19th century also clamoured for knowledge (Bielsa 2007:135-137) with the same sense of urgency. The scale of the phenomenon has changed and is indicative of the features of interconnectedness that characterize our modernity. Indeed, as interconnected as the current world is, it has been noted that the world often remains as culturally distant as it has always been (Cronin 2006).

This introduction does not aspire to offer a satisfactory definition of emergencies, nor of crisis communication (a superordinate term to discuss all forms of communication in extreme conditions, a broader concept I borrow from O’Brien’s contribution in this volume). The introduction aspires to remind the readers of the many questions we should be asking about the relationship between international response and intercultural communication, or lack

thereof. It intends to encourage readers of this volume to expand on these questions from original methodological, as much as, ethical perspectives and on the related multidisciplinary settings that should investigate the complexity of emergency management by including considerations on language barriers. Far from intending to be comprehensive, this introduction merely aims to discuss the urgent need to establish a concerted and multidisciplinary debate on the role of intercultural communication in international multilingual missions that respond to emergencies across the world. Hence, it is subdivided into sections as follows: I offer a set of reflections that review the lacunae in the literature on translation and interpreting in the gap between common notions of resilience, preparedness, planning for crisis response and the absence of considerations about intercultural communication in crisis and emergencies even within translation research. I then outline the concept behind this collection, prior to introducing the thread that weaves together the chapters from very different voices and angles, which coherently come together in this volume.

Emergencies and crisis research in translation

Translator and interpreter trainers have responded with ad-hoc solutions over the last 3-4 decades (or arguably from the Nuremberg trials) to the unprecedented need for linguistic mediation. In legal emergencies involving interpreting of trials, the notion of response to finding large numbers of skilled legal interpreters in a short amount of time has begun to be investigated (see Braun and Taylor 2012; Hertog and van Gucht 2008). Other forms of crisis communication and uses of translation and interpreting in emergencies desperately need to attract more research to investigate the many open issues. Professional initiatives have grown in the last ten years with significant project taking shapes (as in the project ‘Words of Relief’ by Translator Without Borders (TwB), discussed by O’Brien in this volume). The web page of Words of Relief articulate the scenario in which emergency response operates in the 21st century:

Words of Relief is a translation crisis relief network intended to improve communications when the crisis-response aid workers and affected populations do not speak the same language. It is a tool to be used prior to a crisis (when there is a warning of impending crisis), during the first 72 hours, and then in the three months following the initial crisis.

Some core issues with crisis communication are central to this perspective: there is a need to be ready; there are instruments to become readier; there are ways of supporting responses to crises in multilingual environment. There is growing awareness in the humanitarian response about the role of communication. One humanitarian organization, the Communicating with Disaster-Affected Community Network sees ‘Communicating with disaster affected communities is a growing field of humanitarian response that helps to meet the information and communication needs of people affected by crisis’ (CDAC).’ Communicating to and with communities affected by emergencies, and among humanitarian entities during emergencies, is growing in prominence. In the strategic framework of the TwB initiative a clear indication is provided of the proportions that the multilingual scenarios immediately assume:

The network focuses on three key components:

- translating key crisis and disaster messages into 15 world languages before crises occur (the pilot will focus on Swahili and Somali);
- building a spider network of diaspora who can translate from one of the 15 world languages into regional languages and who are trained to assist right away; and,
- creating a crowdsourced, online (and mobile) application that connects the translation team with aid workers and data aggregators who need immediate help.

The most important elements beyond the significant solidarity and empathy implied in this humanitarian approach correspond to the many studies on emergency planning and crisis management – these terms are differently defined in many disciplines, but the core elements are the temporal dimensions that include preparedness to respond. Any response is a complex combination of new ideas to deal with unprecedented issues and the application of defined mechanisms of reaction that guarantee a prompt response. In relation to planning, preparedness, training, resilience and crisis management as they are considered among international and national bodies, the issue of intercultural communication seems to remain as the notable absentee. Networks of practitioners and researchers from multiple background to date have not succeeded in addressing this lacuna – the link between research endeavours and the broader picture of disaster management and emergency studies has not yet established a connection

with those involved in intercultural communication. In order to address it we need to question what we should study, why, and how.

The aspirations of this volume reflect to a small extent these bigger multidisciplinary questions. The book concept emerged from the observation that most sciences and many modelling techniques especially in advanced computing have been used in the last three decades to contribute to the management of coordinated responses in disasters and emergencies. These models often focused on unpredictable agents (people) ignoring or downplaying the distance that languages make in crisis management. Among translation and interpreting specialists the interest is emerging. However, whereas research in interpreting and translation in conflict (be they war or post-war conflicts) and in ideological settings of opposition has been steadily growing for over a decade, very few studies exist on the matter of translation and interpreting in emergencies. The agencies of translators and interpreters, from the political and ideological, to the ethical in conflict settings have been successfully and richly explored from several angles –all of which relevant (see Apter 2001; Baker 2006; Dragovic-Drouet 2007; Footitt and Kelly 2012a, 2012b; Footitt and Tobia 2013; Inghilleri 2008, 2009; Inghilleri and Harding 2010; Harding 2011; Kelly and C. Baker 2013; Palmer 2007; Rafael 2007, 2009; Stahuljak 2000, 2009; Takeda 2008) and from personal accounts of interpreters in war zones (see Goldfarb 2005; Hari 2008); one from a peace and relief mission negotiator (Edwards 2002). O'Brien's contribution in this volume shows how, to date, the most extensive works explicitly focused on the use of translation in crises emerged after the 2010 Haiti Earthquake (see Hester, Shaw and Biewald 2010; Lewis 2010; Lewis *et al.* 2011; Sutherlin 2013; Morrow *et al.* 2011; Munro 2013) and of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake (Cadwell 2014; Kaigo 2012; Mizuno 2012; Naito 2012).

In the last five years, new studies on the relevance of computer-aided solutions for translation in humanitarian contexts have emerged (in particular Hester, Shaw and Biewald 2010; Lewis 2010; Lewis *et al.* 2011). Ground-breaking work focusing on education and training challenges when supporting populations living the aftermath of emergencies has been conducted by the InZone research group, which is based at the University of Geneva in Switzerland under the directorship of Barbara Moser Mercer. However, compared to other areas, in terms of studies entirely focused on translating, interpreting, and forms of cultural mediation in emergencies there appears to be a dearth of research. Paradoxically, the lack of research seems to be almost in invert proportion to the increase in operations and activities in which interpreters and translators take the lead (as in the example of the project 'Words of Relief' lead by Translators without Borders) and the growing awareness of communication as

core obstacle to effective humanitarian operations among the main actors. A few papers have paved the way towards intensifying the shift of focus onto translating and interpreting in emergencies (see Moser Mercer *et al.* 2014). There is an urgency to conduct research on the vast array of issues correlated to any discussion on emergencies and crises of a humanitarian nature – these do not exclude conflicts or the aftermath thereof, but ought to expand the range of their focus onto issues of preparedness and planning. The role of language mediation in a wide range of emergencies, the challenges of coordinating rescue teams, the challenges of supporting any logistical aspects of international responses to calamities come with many complex questions to answer, which deserve urgent and immediate attention from a wider community of researchers in translation and interpreting. Indeed, professionally and ethically these operational scenarios are what Maier calls ‘limit situations’ (2007: 264), a definition she offered discussing translators in conflict. In this sense, two chapters of this book also discuss the issue of representation and prejudice towards interpreters embedded in the discourse of their former military commanders. Such long-established depictions of language professionals undeniably continue to hamper any potential inclusion of linguists in the operational planning, in preparedness activities, and in the review of emergencies responses that would in turn also support changes to training modes, increase regular training, and diminish the use of ad-hoc solutions (as those detailed in Footitt and C. Baker 2013).

One of the manifestations of the feeling of interconnectedness is in the immediacy of world reactions to emergencies. There are immediate response and rescue teams that arrive in areas of natural disasters and there are other forms of responses to conflict, which are by their very existence far more convoluted in nature and type.

Planning and logistics

In social sciences, study areas such as emergency planning and preparedness represent important areas to discuss strategic and tactical decisions at a higher level and with attention to analysing data collected on previous responses. This higher-level scrutiny leads to enhancements in many aspects of planning and response; it includes complex computer-assisted modelling, and has benefitted concerted multi-agent responses to disasters. In other words, studies of real natural and social phenomena connected with emergencies and the responses they prompt have generated an essential area of objective and quantitative evaluation and reflection, which in turn has led to improvements to responses on the field. Reports of practitioners underline the issue of communication (among relief operators, affected

communities, and all the parties involved) affect the significance and results of humanitarian activities. Yet the discourse on language barriers (an overused term here adopted for expediency) and the issues of intercultural communication in emergencies stands out for its almost complete absence (with some exceptions, Bulut and Kurultay 2001; Casadei and Franceschetti 2009).

For instance, studies on national contexts such as Preston *et al.* (2011) have considered the ways in which the discourse on preparing for emergencies educated UK audiences to a new form of planning for a resilient society after the bombings of 7 July 2005 in London. Their work highlights the controversial position of racial and cultural differences in the discourse on security as communicated by a government to its citizens; it also directly links a heightened attention to the response and logistics of emergencies. Their view of public education campaigns on security as speech acts, in Austin's terms (1962), that perform a discourse on security, which needs many agents and actors (state, society, individuals) to work on establishing mechanisms of coordinated response. This study shows how discursively some linguistic and cultural elements can be studied at least to consider ways in which preparedness is postulated by authorities and institutions. The performance of these speech acts by specific state actors in the public preparedness campaign targeted audiences with the intent of creating the conditions by which society is considered to be 'threatened'. Similar discursive efforts should be directed toward lobbying national and international authorities so that a positive discourse on considering linguistic differences and cultural distance can be adopted to further help to plan responses to emergencies (to both natural crisis and those resulting of conflicts). If all argument fails, effective communication is both a life-saving and more prosaically a budget-saving option to maximize the political value of being involved in international humanitarian operations and being part of this new form of international solidarity. However, securitisation theory has been critiqued for its concentration on speech acts and actors (primarily state actors) rather than considering the audience for security (Taureek 2006). The use of discourse here is undisputedly one 'bound up with ideology [...] a set of beliefs and values which inform an individual's or institution's view of the world and assist their interpretation of events, facts and other aspects of experience' (Mason 2009: 86). The discourse on security recognizes though a constant among variables: it is possible to perfect response mechanisms adopted in the past.

Whether or not a globalised world is a multicultural world is highly debatable from the perspective of studies in intercultural communication (and not only). Emergency, or crisis, contexts vary immensely, but they are all becoming more and more visible in terms of their

international dimension. This is a constant factor; hence, in the resilience and preparedness perspective, a known factor is one that could be managed in planning. With international responses (be they civil or military), the need for translators and interpreters to mediate international responses to emergencies is common. The definition of an emergency rests on its unprecedented and unexpected nature (an earthquake is not predictable; a factory exploding is not predictable) despite highly sophisticated risk modelling studies and technologies. Yet the term emergencies overlooks the intercultural nature of most 21st century emergencies, such as the mass exodus of asylum seekers from Syria to Europe or phenomena of economic migrations, and hides ideology-based political choices. An example is the misappropriation of the term ‘emergency’ (*emergenza*) in the Italian press with regard to the mass movement of people to Italy in the last 4 years, which did indeed bring Italian rescue and support services to the brink of collapse in 2015. The year 2014 and the year 2015 have seen an exponential growth in the phenomenon, which is unprecedented in scale, but not in nature: the arrival of political, social, and economic migrants to the Italian peninsula is a phenomenon that has been present since the 1990s. In our interconnected societies in which a global sense of emergency can be constantly perceived through media outlets reporting on emergencies from around the world, it is also arguably true that, the term ‘emergency’, by its very definition, describes a single event of crisis and not a chronic state. Emergency is not a word to describe the status quo; it is a term for the tipping point, for that moment when an immediate and urgent response of other agents are needed in coming to the aid of those afflicted by a largely unpredictable and sudden change to the status quo. By adopting the term ‘emergency’ to describe an unresolved issue, which has continued for decades in Italy, politicians are deflecting responsibility for their lack of planning and resolution back onto the initial sources of mass migration – war, destitution, social inequalities, and terrorism. An emergency may have an unexpected starting date but it is also considered for its *duration* over time. Resolution, reconstruction, recovery, and return to a form of ordinary life take different amounts of time, yet the initial event causing the emergency is often limited in duration. An emergency of 25 years is a macroscopic political oversight achieved by 30 years of poor administration in Italy, it should have supported by plans for humanitarian solutions. Although it goes without saying recent events have created a situation more akin to an emergency within Italy’s emergency services due to its scale, both political and media usage of the term to describe the chronic situation over the last 25 years have rendered the term banal, using it as a scapegoat for political inaction on the emotive issue of immigration. Such exceptions render even more prominent the significance of planning responses to emergencies.

The contributors in this volume dare ask why translators and interpreters face this ontological paradox in mediating emergencies and conflict. On the one hand, emergencies can be considered as stable and relatively predictable contexts in which urgent responses are expected (any emergency department in a large hospital); or medium- to long-term responses, such as the constantly growing numbers of displaced people from Syria to countries around the world. These movements of large masses of people are not however entirely unexpected (in the way that is the arrival of a victim of a car crash in an emergency department is not expected). On the other hand, some emergencies are expected because of the surrounding nature of a location (the Arctic) or as a corollary of new social instability (the displacement of people following wars in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan). The linkages between all of the contributions in this volume are immediately obvious. The post-war and in-war environments in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine – the list continues to grow – have increased new forms of mediated emergencies. Either those involved in the action, on the field or the battlefield, or those reporting and representing the crises needed unprecedented access to translation and linguistic mediations. The mediation though continues in a different geographical area or at a time after the event. The justification of inaction in terms of linguistic mediation in these predictable situations is hence either the result of bad planning, or resembles a rather feeble political construction in an attempt to deflect responsibility for planning the real multicultural and multilingual effects of what is accepted in triumphal tones as the extraordinarily positive force of globalisation.

The narrative of disasters, emergencies, and crises in media discourse simplifies the complexity of communication on the ground; the question is why has this discourse been left unexplored for so many years? Is it in the narrative of emergencies?

The narrative of crisis, used in Baker's sense (2006; 2010), corresponds to some extent to the narrative of conflict inasmuch as news makers reshape them into simplified and schematic forms. As the narrative of emergencies presents several similarities with the sense of urgency and need that pepper the narratives of conflicts, it could be easy to confuse the two forms of crisis communication. The contributions of this volume enter a new path to show how there is an underlying narrative of solidarity (not necessarily morally and ethically acceptable in its most controversial postcolonial tones) in the discourse on crisis communication in emergencies. The so-called international community appropriates a narrative of unity in support of those in need, which is never totally uncontroversial, but shows cohesion and unity among 'unconventional' allies working towards a common goal. Fewer dominant-dominated, and 'us and then' narratives belong to the discourse on emergencies. The prevailing narratives

could however often be singled out as post-colonial – or the helpers and the helpless – as in the subtexts of some institutional documents. A single narrative of emergency would be too reductive, as there are many sub-narratives for the planning and preparedness phase, for the response phase, and for the long-term reconstruction phases that are distant and very diverse from each other –whilst maintaining some constant elements that allow work to continue towards, if not achieving, a level of preparedness. In many ways, it clearly emerges that individual identities in emergencies, especially of those in the field, are unified by the notion of solidarity and humanity. In turn, the dynamics of the aftermath remain closer to the complex identity of any individual at a time of peace, in which many see and grab opportunities (one of the most negative clichés about those who emerge from the anonymity of the ‘population in emergency’ and serve as translators to the rescuers, is explored in Gaunt’s chapter in this volume). This complexity of the individual’s identity is mirrored in the complexity of any discourse on emergencies. Hence negotiation and mediation of goods and of identities for those suddenly catapulted into the in-between role of translator or interpreter in the emergency (with little or no training to do so; with inspiring exception, as explored in Dogan’s chapter), are still those centred on individuals, their needs, and their immediate cultural and social contexts that have an impact on their linguistic mediations.

Whereas the results of decades of studies focused on translation and conflict are now becoming apparent, many methodological and ontological questions remain in discussing the role of translation and interpreting in emergencies. Which part of the mediation should we study? Which type of emergency should be considered? Is there any use in categorizing different forms of emergencies? Which technological collaboration with modelling scientists should involve specialists in technology-supported translation and interpreting? Which data should be collected? But also, which data could be ethically and practically collected? How could it be analysed? Some multidisciplinary projects such as the Humanitarian Innovation Project that focuses on one specific emergency, the mass migratory fluxes and the legal issue of assisting refugees and asylum seekers are moving towards the direction of considering the cultural barrier –certainly it is an important point of departure for those who have direct experience in assisting refugees (Ackerly 2015). These however remain marginal appendices. No mention to planning and the data on the roles of mediators that we need to understand and distinguish so as to engage in supporting linguistic planning for emergencies and crisis, with archetypes that could consider the Turkish model as a very important starting point.

Arguably, there is a growing need to consider translation and interpreting as part of the logistics and planning work that can be done when international bodies and NGOs alike put

together their response plans to crisis. The literature on resilience and emergencies response abounds; the international plans abounds. Most of the literature underlines the issue of communicating effectively in times of emergency and human crises. It is time to distinguish *communication problems* from *intercultural communication problems*; the distinction will allow studies to engage with planning solutions at the level of training linguists for crisis scenarios or at the level of creating enabling technologies that would support the communication needs of field operators at the appropriate time. In a work considering the discourses on connectivity and resilience, Kaufmann (2013: 68) argues that ‘the sudden rise of something unforeseen requiring immediate attention is the result of an increasingly interconnected, contingent and unpredictable world’; a crisis in an interconnected world has resounding effects far away from its epicentre. And its epicentre begins to be more and more multilingual and the difficulties in communication exponentially grow as the positive response and support grow. In a way, this paradox of humanitarian operations sits alongside Kaufmann’s definition of the current concept of ‘emergence’ in a world of interconnected technologies.

Connectivity, however, has not only created questionable dependencies and exclusions within society and created new forms of control and remote control on an empirical level, the presence of radical contingency, induced by connectivity, may also be exploited as an argument for an intensification of security measures.

Mobile phone connectivity and its usage in responses has been a tool to harness many different forms of data and provide practical and immediate solutions on the field. The use of smartphone technologies, and more or less automated translation services, was considered and adopted in the community of computer scientists and among translation researchers (see O’Brien’s discussion). Yet inroads remains to be made in considering how these technologies create and control the process of communication by means of data that stops communication by overloading the infrastructures, as well as data that could be harnessed and analysed to understand *when* and *what* is most likely to go wrong in the communication process in crisis contexts. The immediacy that current technologies offer could thus greatly enhance the planning phase. Rather than recommendations for the future, the interconnected nature of emergency response has created more and more complex models of logistics and planning to be prepared to respond to all the emergencies that represent a breach of our security. Be it a natural or human-induced ecological emergency or conflict, planning the response that follow will benefit from a greater understanding of the role, function, and training to the linguistic and

cultural challenges that it also presents. Kaufmann continues (ibid) that ‘the evolutionary reasoning of resilience, security becomes a process of adaptation, of dealing with insecurity’.

The *World Disasters Report 2013* identifies areas of activity that include linguistic mediation (of sorts) into the planning: ‘the Global Disaster Preparedness Center, established by the American Red Cross and the IFRC, is piloting a platform to allow Red Cross Red Crescent societies to localize apps, with translation, content changes, image swapping and branding’ (2014: 61). These are steps in the direction of using existing technologies with an added-on translation; for translation researchers this discourse echoes the debates on computer-aided translation tools of two decades ago, where translation was regularly part of an *a posteriori* process, until processes of simultaneous localization of contents prevailed in translations for technologies. This lacuna in the perspective in which translation and interpreting are perceived may refer to the act of coping with the epistemological challenge of not knowing the future needs at a linguistic level, because it is impossible to anticipate the next zone of emergency. Yet with exceptions being few and far between, the inclusion of *mediators* – here broadly intending translators, interpreters, and experts in intercultural communication in general – lags behind at the planning stage. Humanitarian relief by the international community is playing a larger role or at least is gaining a more prominent visibility lately. The study of the complexity of such operation pertains to many disciplines; modelling has been constantly growing in importance and the supply chain and logistic operations are a particular concern for NGOs (see Beamon and Kotleba 2006:1-2) operating in international scenarios. Yet, planning for accurate, efficient, and life-saving linguistic mediation is often a marginal concern that on-field operators solve with ad-hoc solutions. There is a vast discrepancy between the meticulous planning of many other aspects and the impromptu response in terms of linguistic mediation that seems to be always part of the recommendations for better future communication protocols. It is a concern for the future, yet the inclusion of translation in logistics and planning is never a recommended action. On the spot, ad-hoc, pragmatic choices in response to unexpected situations may lead individuals to exploit their language competences, by taking their opportunity of later using ‘their posts as a doorway into a longer-term career as professional interpreters and translators’ (Kelly and C. Baker 2013: 4), as happened to those language mediators in war zones. However, in humanitarian responses to disasters, the most common, emerging areas of support comes from organizations of volunteers – such as Translators Without Borders – rather than by concerted planning.

One can find an example of small scale support to individuals’ personal crises that reflect an approach of institutional preparedness in relation to translation and interpreting needs

in the British governmental portal, www.gov.uk. For instance, the portal run by the British Department of International Development (DfID) lists (vetted?) translators and interpreters in key countries, in which British nationals may need the assistance of language mediators. At a policy level, the same department also disseminates fact sheets and information leaflets regarding the British government's policy and position regarding international affairs and international crisis in developing areas. DfID explains how it has regularly engaged in considering responses to calamities, disasters, and emergencies with holistic approaches that *maximise* resources whilst supporting the largest possible number of people. In 2012, the DfID published a strategy paper that shows a shift of focus on resilience (DfID 2012a); it highlights the inevitable difficulties of conducting appropriate research in the emergencies and suggests an evidence-based approach to respond to crisis. The document significantly shows a distinct discourse regarding response: it emphasizes the role that so-called developing countries have in taking control over and enhancing their own resilience to disasters and calamities. This department concentrates on the double benefits of planning 'Embedding disaster resilience means ensuring investment decisions are informed by disaster risks and that programmes are designed or adapted to be resilient to one-off, regular or on-going disasters' (DfID 2012b: 1) and unsurprisingly elements of cultural specificity or linguistic mediation to achieve the goals are missing. Together with this shift, the paper also mentions the urgency of giving a voice to the people directly affected by crises (2012a) so as to creating responses that are more effective than in the past. Yet, the Department adopts a discourse that reflects its on-going quest for agreed minimum standards to be used in planning responses to crisis (DfID 2012b). The DfID strategy paper (2012a: 12) underlines the issues that face anybody working in this context, which start with the most significant of them all: collecting usable data without interfering with the operational context:

There are also important practical and methodological challenges facing those seeking to increase the quality and quantity of research in this area. The rarity and unpredictability of extreme hazards, as well as the unique contextual factors that influence their impact, can make it difficult to establish research programmes in the immediate aftermath of crises and to generate findings that can be of general use in the future. The ability to undertake research in the immediate aftermath of disasters can be constrained by the time it takes for funding to be made available and the logistical arrangements in place.

The existence of the constraints is not enough to justify the scarcity of sources and of far-reaching research projects in this context. With the InZone centre, whose projects are driven by work in three main areas:

1. Multilingual communication in the field: Needs and challenges
2. Professional ethics in humanitarian interpreting
3. Virtual and blended learning in complex contexts (InZone.unige.ch)

only a few isolated studies have begun to focus on broader issues of multilingual and intercultural communication in situations and zones of crisis and emergencies; it is important to notice that work only focusing on translation in this sense is even further behind.

Time to catch up

This volume comes from colleagues' acknowledgment that there is a delay in engaging with the issues of crisis communication in multilingual emergencies, and it is time to broaden the questions asked and even if faltering at the start, it is crucial to pick up the pace of research projects in this area. Scholars and researchers contributing to this collection address urgent issues regarding response management and preparedness with the advantage to lean on the results from other disciplinary areas. Hence, there is an urgency to engage with a broader set of researchers, to construct research networks that challenge existing political and academic debates, as well as the ad-hoc pragmatic approaches in the field, that seem to predominate and have created a lacuna in considering the linguistic elements of the cultural interactions in emergencies.

An original set of studies here offers a sample of the wealth of research that can be conducted into the potential impact of a more efficient integration of interpreting or translation-mediated communication in emergencies or in logistical planning and psychological training of interpreters and translators in emergencies. After all, NGOs with established and stable structures, such as International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies perceive the increased linguistic needs in humanitarian responses as a growing challenge, which currently defies a concerted exploitation to the full of the available technologies that give voice to those in need when an emergency erupts.

In the discourse, even in the style of the contributions that follow, readers will find a strong, underlying sense of urgency in dealing with the topics discussed in the chapters

included in this collection. All contributors met in a set of encounters, discussions, debates, and conferences with the common shared goal of increasing our understanding of the role that linguistic and cultural mediations have on societies in the 21st century. Increased demand of mediation does not correspond to an increased offer of expertise and specialism. Nor does it entail a drive to pay for the costs of expert mediations, such linguistic and cultural negotiations are thus carried out more regularly and even more intensively by professional linguists, as much as by non-professional linguists and even expert practitioners with other backgrounds (e.g. second-generation doctors, nurses, police forces, and teachers). Even those documents (DfID 2012a) that appear to be more ‘enlightened’ than previous approaches in one dimension –for instance coordinating responses by feedback mechanisms that allow the voice of those affected by the crisis to be heard– do not hide a discourse of superiority, or the approach ‘us and them’, which I previously mentioned. Be it a cost-saving exercise or an act of committed research, an increase of questions on which data should be considered with regard to the role of intercultural communication in the response to emergencies needs to come to the foreground. In the discourse of the policy makers, continuing for illustration purposes only with the UK strategy document, it is clear that even the humanitarian ethos comes under the scrutiny for its economic costs and for the subtext of being the result of an active choice of those who find themselves to be situated in a disaster:

More routine use of high quality data and evidence to inform decision-making at all levels, from decisions about individual projects and operations to decisions about global approaches. This will help ensure that resources are targeted more precisely and allow us to track the outcomes and impacts of our work, deepening accountability to *disaster-prone* communities and to British tax-payers. (my emphasis, 2012:6)

In the grandiose narrative of the strategy document aimed at UK audiences, there is a reminder that the discourse on emergencies often risks being embedded in the logic of a petty cash accountant (and the notion of economic ‘accountability’ thereof). There is an even starker reminder that a colonial narrative whereby *our* humanitarian responses are misused by *them*, the people who need them, is a risk in official policy making and research from the perspective of cultural mediators and experts in intercultural communication could better inform policy making in this area.

Contributions at a glance

In its inception, the book was conceived as an initial, focused response to growing, yet scattered discussions focused on the role of non-professional, professional, and volunteer translators and interpreters who negotiate on a daily basis crisis communication in emergencies. In crisis communication, whether mediators are attempting to communicate in-between cultures or explicitly committed to the ethos of one side of the multilingual communication, it is perhaps less relevant. In emergencies, goals are often more clearly shared among parties than in the position of linguists in wartime and conflict – some aspects of whose activities are considered by three contributions in this volume. Glancing over the broken road of communication in a crisis or in an emergency, different scenarios, reactions, and case studies emerge. There seems to be a clear overlap in considering the communicator's role as that of a party inclined in *collaborating in the linguistic exchange* with the other mediated, interpreted, and translated parties who bring highly specialised but very diverse skill sets to any humanitarian operations. Instances of broken communications are the focus areas that scholars and researchers from different backgrounds and disciplines studied as the events happened and present the results of their initial observations in this volume.

There is firm evidence that a continuity of processes and protocols in employing polyglot scholars and intellectuals to run mediations and conflict negotiations creates a link with the past (topics explored in Federici & Tessicini 2014). There is even stronger evidence to suggest that much deeper, more extensive, and more intensive research is needed in order to understand the social role of translators (Tyulenev 2014) in societies that are hyper-connected and in which old conflicts persist and new clashes emerge continuously (Cronin 2013). There is equally strong evidence to consider the role of machine translation and other technologies in support of polyglots who operate in emergency contexts (Lewis 2011). Hence, the contributions in this collection discuss contexts in which intercultural mediations occur within recognizable patterns of disruption of the status quo be they for unpredictable natural reasons or little predictable human conflicts. The initial evidence seems to suggest that we could identify recurrent features, which currently lead us to believe that they indicate new, radical shifts in the social position of the mediator. These shifts are occurring faster than ever and in many senses other stakeholders in crisis communication and in emergency research are still lagging behind the realisation that a heightened awareness of the role of planned, logistically organized, and trained linguistic awareness is as important as many other factors in planning responses to international emergencies. Delisle and Woodsworth encapsulate the role of interpreters (and translators) in an observation that deeply influenced my growing interest in

the urgency of studying the mediation of emergencies, ‘Whether they chose the profession or were chosen by it, interpreters have helped shape history’ (2012: 249). The aim behind the work of the contributors to this volume may be succinctly described as an attempt to make sure that fewer linguists are randomly chosen and more will become able to be involved in planning their role or supporting the choices of other linguists in operating ethically, with a professional awareness, and ideally training in emergencies. Understanding who these cultural mediators are and how they operate in their contexts of emergencies, whose networks inform key decisions in our current age, are the first steps that will shape future questions in advancing our knowledge of what role cultural mediation can have in building international plans for concerted humanitarian responses to emergencies.

Rather than pre-empting the readers’ own intellectual exploration of the volume, it suffices here to explain its subdivision into two sections. The first section explores some of the key areas that current and predominantly *future* research into the linguistic mediation of emergencies need to investigate more consistently and systematically. By trying to address and overcome some of the methodological obstacles common to any research in the area of medical emergencies (Chapter 2, by Cox and Lázaro Gutiérrez), disaster response (Chapter 3, by Dogan), humanitarian crisis and testing training responses (Chapter 4, O’Brien), and emergency responses in predictably dangerous areas (Chapter 5, Razumovskaya & Olga Bartashova). Emergencies are a stable context with frenetic dynamics, as emergency rooms in hospital demonstrate: the personnel involved are prepared to deal with any sort of emergency without knowing in advance the specifics of what they are going to face. Yet medical personnel use their training, work at their best through procedures, and anticipate some of the unexpected situations that crises and emergencies throw at them. On a larger scale, NGOs and government prepare plans to respond to emergencies in a similar way; procedures and mechanics of responses can be reviewed and enhanced, but more modelling on vast scale (as in computer models of emergency responses) should also consider linguistic factors. Existing models of resilience and linguists equipped with the skills and the training to respond procedurally to the emergencies can be embedded in existing training programmes, with adjustment to the scale of deployment (see Dogan’s contribution in this volume) could be tested in different national and international contexts. Emergencies due to natural calamities are indeed more common in form and shape in some areas that are significant from a geo-political perspective for their resources (see Razumovskaya’s and Bartashova’s contribution to this volume); there is hence the scope for testing and enhancing existing models.

The second section considers those situations in which the presence of mediation and a mediator is more evident and their role understandably visible and tangible. Focusing on evident limitations of live interpreting (Chapter 6, by Al Shehari), or on manipulated translations in media (Chapter 7, by Skorokhod), and on war biographies and autobiographies from a clearly ideologically-biased position (Chapter 8, by Gaunt), the contributors remind us of the linguistic challenges of mediating unpredictable situations of conflict and predictable influences of biased forms of intercultural communication. The general public's response to this visibly broken frontline mediation, enforces the unwanted cliché and stereotypes of the visible act of mediation, which Inghilleri and Harding regarded as boiling down to the simplistic dichotomy of being 'loyal to one side and opposed to another' (2010: 167). Meier (2007: 265) recommends that

given the increasing need for translators and interpreters world wide, and the challenges and dangers faced by many translators and interpreters, it is incumbent on translators and translation scholars not only to advocate for the rights of translators but to accept the responsibility of acknowledging and addressing the presence of conflict as an integral part of much translation practice.

It is fair to add that translators and translation scholars should also advocate for research-based evidence so as to highlight true needs in disaster management and emergency planning to include considerations of the intercultural dimension implicit in multilingual communication, as happens in crisis communication. Increasingly, the presence of intercultural mediators must become an integral part of any form of planning responses for future emergencies to enable societies to become more prepared and resilient, and for international humanitarian efforts to achieve ever more results than they already do.

References

- Ackerly, Gavin. 2015. Humanitarian symbiotic innovation. Theory and practice. *Humanitarian Innovation Project 2015 conference*. <http://www.oxhip.org/resources/hip2015-conference-papers/> Accessed 19 Oct 2015.
- Apter, Emily. 2001. Balkan Babel: Translation zones, military zones. *Public Culture* 13(1): 65–80.
- Austin, John L. 1962. *How to do things with words?* Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Baker, Mona. 2006. *Translation and conflict: A narrative account*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Baker, Mona. 2010. Reframing conflict in translation. In *Critical readings in translation studies*, ed. Mona Baker, 113–129. London/New York: Routledge.
- Bauman, Zygmunt and Carlo Bordoni. 2014. *State of Crisis*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beamon, Benita M., and Stephen A. Kotleba. 2006. Inventory modelling for complex emergencies in humanitarian relief operations. *International Journal of Logistics Research and Applications* 9(1): 1–18.
- Bielsa, Esperança. 2007. Translation in global news agencies. *Target* 19(1): 135–155. In Braun, Sabine, and J. Taylor. 2012. *Videoconference and remote interpreting in legal proceedings*. Antwerp/Oxford: Intersentia. <http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk/805380/>. Accessed 19 Oct 2015.
- Cadwell, Patrick. 2014. Translation and interpreting needs in the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. *Proceedings of the FIT XXth World Congress*, ed. Wolfram Baur, B. Eichner, S. Kalina, N. Kessler, F. Mayer, J. Orsted, 752–60. BDÜ Fachverlag.
- Casadei, Simone, and Massimiliano Franceschetti (eds.). 2009. *Il mediatore culturale in sei Paesi europei (Italia, Francia, Germania, Grecia, Regno Unito, Spagna). Ambiti di intervento, percorsi di accesso e competenze*. Rome: Strumenti ISFOL.
- Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network. 2014. Mission statement. Available at: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/>. Accessed 19 Oct 2015.
- Cronin, Michael. 2006. *Translation and identity*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Cronin, Michael. 2013. *Translation in the Digital Age*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Delisle, Jean, and Judith Woodsworth (eds.). 2012. *Translators through history*, 2nd ed. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Department for International Development. 2012a. *Promoting innovation and evidence-based approaches to building resilience and responding to humanitarian crises: A DFID strategy paper*. London: Department for International Development. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67438/prom-innov-evi-bas-appr-build-res-resp-humcris.pdf. Accessed 19 Oct 2015.
- Department for International Development. 2012b. *Minimum standards for embedding disaster resilience in DFID country offices*. London: Department for International Development. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/191840/Minimum_standards_for_embedding_Disaster_Resilience.pdf. Accessed 19 Oct 2015.
- Dragovic-Drouet, Mila. 2007. The practice of translation and interpreting during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (1991–1999). In *Translating and interpreting conflict*, ed. Myriam Salama-Carr, 29–40. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi.
- Edwards, Victoria. 2002. The role of communication in peace and relief mission negotiations. *Translation Journal*, 6(2). <http://translationjournal.net/journal/20interpr.htm>. Accessed 19 Oct 2015.

- Federici, Federico M., and Dario Tessicini (eds.). 2014. *Translators, interpreters, and cultural negotiators. Mediating & communicating power from the Middle Ages to the modern era*. Houndmills/Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Footitt, Hilary, and Michael Kelly (eds.). 2012a. *Languages at war. Policies and practices of language contacts in conflict*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Footitt, Hilary, and Michael Kelly (eds.). 2012b. *Languages and the military. Alliances, occupation and peace building*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Footitt, Hilary, and Simona Tobia. 2013. *WarTalk. Foreign languages and the British war effort in Europe, 1940–47*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goldfarb, Michael. 2005. *Ahmad's war, Ahmad's peace*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers.
- Harding, Sue-Ann. 2011. Translation and the circulation of competing narratives from the wars in Chechnya: A case study from the 2004 Beslan hostage disaster. *Meta: Journal des Traducteurs* 56(1): 42–62.
- Hari, Daoud. 2008. *The translator: A tribesman's memoir of Darfur*. New York: Random House.
- Hertog, Erik. 2002. Language as a human right: The challenges for legal interpreting. In *Interpreting in the 21st century: Challenges and opportunities*, ed. Giuliana Garzone and Maurizio Viezzi, 145–157. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Hertog, Erik, and Jan van Gucht (eds.). 2008. *Status quaestionis. Questionnaire on the provision of legal interpreting and translation in the EU*, AGIS project JLS/2006/AGIS/052. Antwerp/Oxford: Intersentia. <https://lirias.kuleuven.be/bitstream/123456789/385604/1/Status+Quaestionis+Def.pdf>. Accessed 19 Oct 2015.
- Hester, Vaughn, Aaron Shaw, and Lukas Biewald. 2010. Scalable crisis relief: Crowdsourced SMS translation and categorization with mission 4636. *Proceedings of the First ACM Symposium on Computing for Development (ACM DEV'10)*, 1–7. New York: ACM.
- IFRC. 2013. *World Disasters Report: Focus on technology and the future of humanitarian action*, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Available at: <http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/134658/WDR%202013%20complete.pdf>. Accessed 19 Oct 2015.
- Inghilleri, Moira. 2008. The ethical task of the translator in the geo-political arena: From Iraq to Guantánamo Bay. *Translation Studies* 1(2): 212–223.
- Inghilleri, Moira. 2009. Translators in war zones: Ethics under fire in Iraq. In *Globalization, political violence and translation*, ed. Esperança Bielsa and Christopher Hughes, 207–221. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Inghilleri, Moira, and Sue-Ann Harding. 2010. Introduction: Translating violent conflict. In: *Translation and violent conflict*. Special issue of *The Translator*, ed. Moira Inghilleri and Sue-Ann Harding 16(2): 165–73.
- Kaigo, Muneo. 2012. Social media usage during disasters and social capital: Twitter and the Great East Japan Earthquake. *Keio Communication Review* 24: 19–35.
- Kaufmann, Mareile. 2013. Emergent self-organisation in emergencies: Resilience rationales in interconnected societies. *Resilience: International Policies, Practices and Discourses* 1(1): 53–56.
- Kelly, Michael, and Catherine Baker. 2013. *Interpreting the peace. Peace operations, conflict and language in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kurultay, T. 2001. *Depreme Karşı Toplumsal Hazırlıkta Eylem Odaklı Bilgi* [Action-based knowledge in disaster preparedness]. *Proceedings of the Disaster Management and Community Seminar, Hacettepe University, June 2001*. Ankara.
- Lewis, William. 2010. Haitian Creole: How to build and ship an MT engine from scratch in 4 days, 17 hours, & 30 minutes. *Proceedings of the 14th Annual Conference of the*

- European Association for Machine Translation (EAMT 2010)*. Saint-Raphaël, 27–28 May 2010 (no page numbers).
- Lewis, William, R. Munro, and S. Vogel. 2011. Crisis MT: Developing a cookbook for MT in crisis situations. *Proceedings of the 6th Workshop on Statistical Machine Translation*, 501–511. Edinburgh, July 30–31.
- Liu, Z., Jacques, C., Szyniszewski, S., Guest, J., Schafer, B., Igusa, T., and J. Mitrani-Reiser, J. 2016. Agent-based simulation of building evacuation after an earthquake: Coupling human behavior with structural response. *Natural Hazards Review*, 17(1).
- Luhmann, Niklas. 1990. The world society as a social system. In *Essays on selfreference*, ed. Niklas Luhmann. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mason, Ian. 2009. Discourse, ideology and translation. In *Critical readings in translation studies*, ed. Mona Baker, 83–95. London/New York: Routledge.
- Meier, Carol. 2007. The translator's visibility: The rights and responsibilities thereof. In *Translating and interpreting conflict*, ed. Myriam Salama-Carr, 253–266. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi.
- Mihata, Kevin. 1997. The persistence of emergence. In *Chaos, complexity and sociology. Myths, models and theories*, ed. Raymond A. Eve, Sara Horsfall, and Mary E. Lee, 30–38. London: Sage.
- Mizuno, Makiko. 2012. Community interpreting in Japan: Present state and challenges. In *Translation and translation studies in the Japanese context*, ed. Nana Sato-Rossberg and J. Wakabayashi, 202–221. London: Continuum.
- Morrow, Nathan, N. Mock, A. Papendieck, and N. Kocmich. 2011. *Independent evaluation of the Ushahidi Haiti Project* [Online]. Available from: <http://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/independent-evaluation-ushahidi-haiti-project>. Accessed 19 Oct 2015.
- Moser-Mercer, Barbara, L. Kheriche, and B. Class. 2014. Interpreting conflict: Training challenges in humanitarian field interpreting. *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 6(1): 140–158.
- Munro, Robert. 2013. Crowdsourcing and the crisis-affected community: Lessons learned and looking forward from mission 4636. *Journal of Information Retrieval* 16(2): 210–266.
- Naito, Minoru. 2012. Community interpreting at the time of Great East Japan Earthquake. *Conference Interpretation and Translation (국제회의 통역과 번역)* 14(1): 97–115.
- Palmer, Jerry. 2007. Interpreting and translation for Western media in Iraq. In *Translating and interpreting conflict*, ed. Myriam Salama-Carr, 13–28. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi.
- Preston, John, Barry Avery, Namita Chakrabarty, and Casey Edmonds. 2011. Emergency preparedness as public pedagogy: The absent–presence of race in “preparing for emergencies”. *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 30(6): 749–762.
- Rafael, Vicente L. 2007. Translation in wartime. *Public Culture* 19(2): 239–246.
- Rafael, Vicente L. 2009. Translation in wartime. In *Critical readings in translation studies*, ed. Mona Baker, 383–390. London/New York: Routledge.
- Schäffner, Christina, Tcaciuc Luciana Sabina, and Wine Tesseur. 2014. Translation practices in political institutions: A comparison of national, supranational, and non-governmental organisations. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 22(4): 493–510.
- Simon, Sherry (ed.). 2005. Translation and social activism. *Special Issue of TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 18(2).
- Silvia, Tony. 2001. CNN: The origins of the 24-hour, international news cycle. In *Global news: Perspectives on the Information Age*. Ames: State University Press.
- Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the pain of others*. London/New York: Penguin.
- Stahuljak, Zrinka. 2000. Violent distortions: Bearing witness to the task of wartime translators. *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 13(1): 37–51.

- Stahuljak, Zrinka. 2009. War, translation, transnationalism. Interpreters in and of the war (Croatia, 1991–1992). In *Critical readings in translation studies*, ed. Mona Baker, 391–414. London/New York: Routledge.
- Sutherland, Gwyneth. 2013. A voice in the crowd: Broader implications for crowdsourcing translation during crisis. *Journal of Information Science* 39: 397–409.
- Takeda, Kayoko. 2008. Interpreting at the Tokyo war crimes tribunal. In *Doing justice to court interpreting*, ed. Miriam Shlesinger and Franz Pöchhacker, 65–83. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Taurecka, Rita. 2006. Securitization theory and securitization studies. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 9: 53–61.
- Tesseur, Wine. 2014. Institutional multilingualism in NGOs: Amnesty International’s strategic understanding of multilingualism. *Meta* 59(3): 557–577.
- Translators without Borders. 2015. Words of relief takes flight. <http://translatorswithoutborders.org/twbnewsletter/09/words-of-relief-takes-flight/> . Accessed 19 Oct 2015.
- Tyulenev, Sergey. 2014. *Translation and society: An introduction*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Zelizer, Barbie, and Stuart Allan. 2010. *Keywords in news and journalism studies*.