BUILDING POWER AND TRUST: THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN SPREADING INFORMATION IN SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE AGE OF COVID-19 IN MOROCCO

CONSTRUINDO PODER E CONFIANÇA: O PAPEL DA TRADUÇÃO NA DIVULGAÇÃO DE INFORMAÇÕES EM MÍDIAS SOCIAIS NA ERA DA COVID-19 NO MARROCOS

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ABSTRACT

This paper falls within a conjunction of translation studies, crisis communication, and social media communication. It sheds light on the critical role of translation in crisis management, with a focus on how the aforementioned elements of scrutiny converge and collaborate in the milieu of the outraging global pandemic. Likewise, the paper seeks to reveal the way translating information and information exchange enhances public trust. Therefore, it emphasizes how discourse can heavily contribute to building trust during a global health emergency and how translation can offer power to the source language/culture by relocating its emanating knowledge to the rest of the world. Likewise, the paper seeks to discuss the way translating information and information exchange enhances public trust. The present paper is a qualitative study that recovers data from selected translated discourses imparted by organizations as well as a questionnaire inquiring about the communicative content disseminated through social media networks during the COVID-19 pandemic. The article scrutinizes the data in terms of content, based on communication content analysis to shed light on how translation could be a powerful tool of relocating meaning production in establishing trust and the extent to which social media is effective as a crisis management mechanism. The further aim of this study is to demonstrate how internet communities and networking technologies can influence deep-rooted forms of communication adopted by

governments and the way social media dynamics enhance or undermine the information-translation process at times of crisis. The preliminary data, contrary to what has been assumed, shows that non-expert reactions, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and trends are transmitted via social media and algorithmically analyzed, influencing the information cycle in real time. The networked-translation paradigm focuses less on a one-to-many communication style that uses language, context, and reasoning to persuade receivers and more on a many-to-many communication style that uses audiovisual means to mobilize crowds. (Van Dijck & Alinejad, 2020)

Keywords: Translation. Crisis communication. Crisis translation. Covid-19. Social media.

RESUMO

Este artigo se insere em uma conjunção de estudos de tradução, comunicação de crise e comunicação em mídias sociais. Ele lança luz sobre o papel crítico da tradução na gestão de crises, com foco em como os elementos mencionados convergem e colaboram no contexto da pandemia global em curso. Além disso, o artigo busca revelar como a tradução de informações e a troca de informações aprimoram a confiança pública. Portanto, enfatiza como o discurso pode contribuir significativamente para a construção de confiança durante uma emergência de saúde global e como a tradução pode conferir poder à língua/cultura de origem ao relocar seu conhecimento para o restante do mundo. Da mesma forma, o artigo busca discutir como a tradução de informações e a troca de informações aprimoram a confiança pública. O presente artigo é um estudo qualitativo que recupera dados de discursos traduzidos selecionados por organizações, bem como um questionário que investiga o conteúdo comunicativo divulgado por meio de redes de mídia social durante a pandemia de COVID-19. O artigo analisa os dados em termos de conteúdo, com base na análise de conteúdo da comunicação, a fim de lançar luz sobre como a tradução pode ser uma ferramenta poderosa para relocar a produção de significado na construção da confiança e até que ponto as mídias sociais são eficazes como um mecanismo de gestão de crises. O objetivo adicional deste estudo é demonstrar como comunidades virtuais e tecnologias de rede podem influenciar formas arraigadas de comunicação adotadas por governos e como a dinâmica das mídias sociais aprimora ou prejudica o processo de informação e tradução em momentos de crise. Os dados preliminares, ao contrário do que se presumia, mostram que reações, atitudes, sentimentos, experiências e tendências não especializadas são transmitidos por meio das mídias sociais e analisados algoritmicamente, influenciando o ciclo de informações em tempo real. O paradigma de tradução em rede se concentra menos em um estilo de comunicação de um-para-muitos que usa linguagem, contexto e raciocínio para persuadir os receptores e mais em um estilo de comunicação de muitos-para-muitos que usa meios audiovisuais para mobilizar multidões. (Van Dijck & Alinejad, 2020)

Palavras-chave: Tradução. Comunicação de crise. Tradução de crise. Covid-19. Mídias sociais.

Introduction

A crisis influences any system as a whole physically and disrupts its current structure. Crises may stem not only from in-house problems as small scale but also FROM non-organizational factors like economic crises, terrorism ,and natural disasters (Ritchie, 2004). Therefore, the role of leaders, organizations, and stakeholders is, among other things, to promote a permanent political dialogue with national, regional and local authorities, as well as with citizens. On a daily basis, and

much more intensively since the global pandemic, social networks have become the driving force behind their institutional communication.

The type of communication under study arises in a rhetorical sphere where actors, both the official communication agents and the public, are co-producing, and reacting to information. (Rodin et al., 2018). Within the crisis arena, actors are creating and responding to official messages and can influence the interpretation of these messages across many different communication channels. (Veil et al., 2011)

Lee and Jin (2019) maintain that media plays an essential role in crisis communication. Crisis information production and dissemination are critical for crisis preparedness, crisis response, and crisis recovery, as many have witnessed [...]. Although media professionals and communication scholars recognize the importance of engaging the publics via different forms of media, how to effectively engage with public via both traditional and social media has been a struggle.

Crisis communication in the middle of the digital world evolution

It is evident that the digital world evolution and its impact on societies has massively escalated in the past decade. The significance of the internet attracts the attention of our reality every day, as humanity is witnessing the tremendous activity of the digital world, especially the use of social networking in our contemporary societies. Through navigation and information retrieval, every user holds a particular power granted by the infinite flow of information in the cyberspace.

In a post-COVID world, where disease is widely and rampantly spread, effective and efficient communication has become critical. According to new research, the merging of communication networks has put information flows at our fingertips. It is, however, both empowering and confounding, because erroneous information circulates quicker than it can be addressed. (McCollough, 2021)

While facing the constant repercussions of Covid-19 occurring in our post-pandemic world, crisis communication is what links the public with communication practitioners to face the series of calamities that occurred or may arise in the future. In a multicultural world where one language of communication does not effectively

serve the entire affected population, it is crucial to translate crisis information into multiple languages as required for adequate communication between members of the public and experts.

Translation and the chaos engendered by crisis

Evaluating the initiatives undertaken by humanitarian organizations in the domains of multilingual communication and language translation is a crucial endeavor in comprehending the sector's contributions to risk mitigation and enhanced resilience. Research inquiries addressing this subject matter have thus far been scarce and underexplored.

Outside of the academic and professional realms of translation, most people are not familiar with the debates surrounding the distinct skills needed for translators and interpreters. In common usage, "translation" is a term broadly applied to convey the transfer of meaning and cultural nuances from one language or cultural context to another, regardless of whether it involves written or spoken communication. (O'Brien, 2019)

The major influencing parties in the course of a global sanitary emergency are both the officials and the media. Therefore, official communication practitioners should be aware of the concerted and complementary association between them and the social networking platforms amidst a global sanitary crisis. In other words, the governments produce information and require media platforms to disseminate it in all spoken languages while the media needs public health communication departments to access timely and accurate information. (Quinn, 2018)

In crisis situations, an individual might switch between translating written content and interpreting spoken language. In academic and professional contexts, the term "translator" is typically used for those who have received formal training or possess relevant experience (Gouadec, 2007). However, during a crisis, anyone capable of bridging language and cultural gaps, even without formal training or qualifications, can be considered a "translator."

The broad definition of a translator, especially in crisis situations, may not sit comfortably with professionals and academics in the translation field. However, during crises, the luxury of having a trained expert is often unattainable. It's crucial to acknowledge that translation in crisis scenarios is a diverse practice involving various individuals, encompassing both oral and written forms, and may involve people of different ages and backgrounds. Translators in such contexts not only convey linguistic information but also play a vital role as cultural mediators. (O'Brien, 2019)

It is worth noting that in a world that is experiencing considerable evolution in terms of digitalized information, media, and online social platforms are at the core of this paradigm shift. The ramping amount of information and the integration of the web into our daily activities rewired our vision to eventually view every crisis as a crisis 2.0 and address it as such. For this reason, merging crisis communication, translation and its use through social media boosts managing the crisis, especially in a global sanitary emergency where every citizen awaits desperately new information and updates every day. Thus, the World Health Organization identifies that social media is a powerful tool to engage the general public, facilitate peer-to-peer communication, raise awareness, monitor and respond to rumors, public reaction, and emergency concerns.

Method

Presentation of the study

In this empirical study, a qualitative research approach was employed to investigate the pivotal role of translation in cultivating power dynamics and trust within the realm of social media and organizations amidst the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic.

The goal of this paper is to highlight the significance of translation in crisis management, as well as to make the argument for more emphasis on language translation in crisis communication.

The research design primarily relied on survey methodology to capture nuanced insights and perspectives from a diverse range of organizations. In this vein, in order to ensure uniformity in response coding, interviews were performed using a consistent questionnaire. The research design primarily relied on survey methodology to capture nuanced insights and perspectives from a diverse range of organizations. By employing this approach, the study aimed to elucidate the intricate ways in which translation practices and multilingual communication strategies have contributed to both the dissemination of critical information and the establishment of trust with the public and various stakeholders on social media platforms.

Data Collection and Analysis

For the sake of convenience, this study opted for a qualitative survey, comprising carefully crafted questions, which facilitated the exploration of real-world experiences and organizational practices. Through interviewing 80 participants, the questionnaire sought to uncover not only the challenges and successes encountered but also the underlying mechanisms through which translation influences resilience and trust-building dynamics in the context of a global health crisis. The utilization of qualitative data analysis techniques enabled the extraction of meaningful patterns, narratives, and themes, ultimately shedding light on the multifaceted nature of translation's impact during the Covid-19 pandemic in Morocco.

Results

The preliminary data, contrary to what has been assumed, shows that non-expert reactions, attitudes, feelings, experiences, and trends are transmitted via social media and algorithmically analyzed, influencing the information cycle in real time. Through social media, news and information about crises can be shared, reaching a large spectrum of people without the intervention of the press. The networked-translation paradigm focuses less on a one-to-many communication style that uses language, context, and reasoning to persuade receivers and more on a many-to-many communication style that uses audiovisual means to mobilize crowds. (Van Dijck, 2020)

Study focus 1: Translation practices and trust

To fathom the participant's attitudes and experiences where accurate translation on social media played a significant role in building trust and resilience during the COVID-19 crisis in Morocco. The following responses highlight the vital role of social media in disseminating accurate translations of COVID-19 information. The national media companies in Morocco's use of bilingual updates and community groups providing translations demonstrate how translation enhances the role of social media platforms to be a source of reliable information, fostering trust and a sense of collective responsibility among users during a crisis.

Participant 34: *"I follow the national SNRT News (National Radio and Television Company) social media page, and their regular updates in Arabic and French were a lifeline. It reassured me and helped me follow the health guidelines and minimize my anxiety."*

Participant 16: *"A community group on social media provided translations of important COVID-19 announcements originally produced in English, like the information provided by the World Health Organization for example. It made me feel informed and part of a collective effort to stay safe."*

Study focus 2: Impact of Translation and information dissemination on crisis management

To determine the role of translated Covid-related content contributes to managing the crisis through raising awareness as well as building trust between the public and the government, the following responses highlight that accurate translation on social media positively influences public perception of government agencies and organizations during a crisis. We noticed that transparency, inclusivity, and a commitment to reaching all citizens in their preferred language enhance trust and create a sense of unity among the public.

"Seeing government agencies post daily updates in both languages showed their commitment to transparency. It built trust in their efforts to manage the crisis." (Participant 32)

"My elder parents can read only Arabic, translations I used to find on Social Media platforms made me believe that media agencies as well as authorities cared about everyone, regardless of language. It felt inclusive and united." (Participant 4)

On the other hand, the responses we gathered also highlighted the fact that the unmonitored social media content had psychological bearing on the public, regardless if the language with which the information was originally produced. The following samples emphasize the potential negative consequences of inaccurate translations and misinformation on social media during a crisis. Misleading translations can lead to confusion, panic, and a loss of trust. They underscore the importance of ensuring that translations are accurate and sourced from reliable channels.

"Early in the pandemic, there were misleading translations of health information on some social media accounts. It created confusion and mistrust." (Participant 7)

"I saw fake news articles translated into Arabic, causing panic and distrust. It's crucial to have reliable sources because sometimes, we cannot know whether it was the translator who was responsible or the producer of information ." (Participant 53)

"Social media content creators have to be controlled by some entity in order to avoid the dissemination of misinformation/disinformation, and State institutions

must integrate social media in order to ensure that true information is the dominant one." (Participant 11)

Another issue that occurred during the health emergency outbreak is the lack of access to information for linguistically diverse communities living in Morocco, Tamazight[1] speaking communities more specifically.

"My grandparents and some members of my family only speak Tamazight, and the fact that news was not as accessible to them as the ones in Arabic or French is an issue that my family and many people of Tamazight-speaking villages faced during the pandemic." (Participant 27)

Tamazight speakers may lack access to critical information, such as safety measures and health guidelines, as it is primarily available in Arabic or French. In this sense, excluding a portion of the population due to language barriers hampers effective crisis management, potentially leading to slower response times and less effective measures.

Study focus 3: Future considerations

"Accurate translations help educate the public about public health measures. This knowledge stays with us and prepares us for future health challenges." (Participant 34)

"Social media can be a platform for sharing success stories and community support. When everyone understands the situation, we can respond effectively to future crises." (Participant 58)

We focused in this section to understand whether the participants believe that translation on social media during the COVID-19 crisis can contribute to the long-term resilience of communities or individuals in Morocco. The responses we gathered highlight the long-term benefits of accurate translation on social media during a crisis. Education and understanding of public health measures can lead to better preparedness for future challenges. Additionally, social media can be a

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[1] The Amazigh language, also known as Tamazight, is a family of closely related indigenous languages spoken primarily across North Africa by the Amazigh people, who are also commonly known as Berbers. These languages have a rich history and are an integral part of the cultural heritage of North Africa. (Abdelhay, 2020)

platform for building a sense of community and support, which can be valuable in future crises.

There are many steps that government agencies, organizations, or social media platforms can adopt to ensure that accurate translation on social media becomes a central part of crisis response strategies in Morocco, especially during a pandemic like the one we witnessed. According to the participants involved;

"Government agencies should collaborate with professional translators and community leaders to ensure translations are accurate and culturally sensitive." (Participant 9)

"Social media platforms should promote reliable sources of information and introduce fact-checking features for translations to combat misinformation." (Participant 30)

These responses provide practical suggestions for improving the role of accurate translation on social media in crisis response. Collaboration with professional translators and community leaders ensures linguistic and cultural accuracy. Meanwhile, social media platforms can play a role in promoting reliable sources and implementing fact-checking mechanisms to combat the spread of misinformation during crises. These steps can help build trust and resilience in the community.

Discussion

The results showed that there is an impact that translation practices has on creating a certain degree of trust and reassurance as the participant described the updates as a "lifeline," indicating that the availability of information in their preferred languages provided a sense of security and reassurance during a time of uncertainty. Correspondingly, the results also demonstrated that translation practices in times of crisis are a means of facilitating compliance. In other words, the translated updates helped the public follow health guidelines effectively. This illustrates how accurate translations can bridge language barriers and empower individuals to take the necessary precautions.

The community group's translations made participants feel informed and part of a collective effort to stay safe. This sense of inclusivity and community support is a powerful aspect of social media during crises. Community-led efforts can play a pivotal role in reaching diverse segments of the population, ensuring that information is accessible to all, irrespective of their language proficiency.

The responses gathered underscores the importance of transparency in crisis communication. Trust can affect the perception of communication, while communication can build or erode trust (Shore, 2003). When government agencies provide updates in both languages (in this case, Arabic and French), it demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that all citizens have access to critical information. This transparency is crucial in building trust because it suggests that the government is not withholding information and is actively working to keep everyone informed.

However, ineffective or culturally insensitive communication erodes trust in responders and institutions. Neglecting the need for proper communication with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities like Moroccan Tamazight-speaking communities can exacerbate social upheaval, leading to a chain reaction of negative consequences. This, in turn, places responders at risk, as their lack of comprehension or cultural sensitivity can make them seem uncooperative when dealing with crisis-affected populations. (O'Brien, 2019)

The data gathered from the respondents' experiences reflects a common problem during crises, where misleading translations or misinformation can be disseminated on social media platforms. Such instances can create confusion and undermine the public's trust in the accuracy of information sources. The responses underscore the critical need for accuracy and reliability in translation efforts during crises. Misleading information, especially in matters of public health, can have serious consequences, eroding trust and potentially leading to harmful actions or decisions based on false information.

Interestingly, a significant issue has been observed: the translation of fake news articles into Arabic. This not only causes panic but also fosters distrust in information sources. It is a reminder that misinformation can spread across

language barriers and have far-reaching consequences that inevitably disrupt crisis management.

Additionally, the challenge of determining responsibility for inaccurate information—whether it's the translator or the original producer. This complexity emphasizes the importance of verifying information at its source and maintaining rigorous quality control in translation. Therefore, this suggests the need for some level of content control and regulation on social media platforms during crises. As emphasized by MacKay et al. (2021), the suggestion to integrate state institutions into managing and disseminating accurate information on social media aligns with the concept of authoritative and reliable sources. In this sense, state institutions can play a crucial role in ensuring that verified information dominates social media platforms during such situations.

Tamazight speakers may lack access to critical information, such as safety measures and health guidelines, as it is primarily available in Arabic or French.

Excluding a portion of the population due to language barriers hampers effective crisis management, potentially leading to slower response times and less effective measures. Hence, language barriers make Tamazight-speaking communities more vulnerable, as they may struggle to take precautions or seek medical help, resulting in higher infection rates and worse health outcomes. As a result, we noticed that these communities being unfairly seen as non-collaborative due to the language barrier, which is not their choice but a result of a lack of crisis translation services, accentuated the risk during the global pandemic.

The significance of clear and accurate communication, including translation and social media, in not only addressing current crises but also in building a well-informed and resilient community capable of responding effectively to future challenges in public health and crisis management. (Sheehan, 2015)

Accurate translations are essential for conveying public health measures effectively. When information is accessible to all, regardless of their language or cultural background, it helps ensure that everyone understands and follows the necessary precautions. This not only addresses the current crisis but also equips the

public with knowledge that can be applied to future health challenges. In essence, it fosters a more informed and resilient society.

Conclusion

The present article navigates the significance of clear and accurate communication, including translation and social media, both as means of crisis communication mechanisms in not only addressing crises but also in building a well-informed and resilient community capable of responding effectively to future challenges in public health and crisis management.

Social media platforms offer a powerful means of disseminating information that creates community support (MacKay, 2021). Likewise, translation practices during crises significantly affect trust, providing reassurance and a sense of security especially when the language preferences of the public are taken into account. Accurate translations facilitate compliance with health guidelines by bridging language barriers and empowering individuals to take precautions.

Van Dijck (2020) considers that transparency in crisis communication is a key aspect as discussed, it can be concluded that public trust affects the public's perception. The evidence suggests that government updates in multiple languages demonstrate commitment to inclusive information access, thus fostering trust by implying openness and active engagement. That aside, data shows that culturally insensitive communication erodes trust in institutions, especially among diverse communities like Moroccan Tamazight speakers. Otherwise, neglecting proper communication exacerbates social upheaval and risks responder cooperation, underscoring the importance of cultural sensitivity during crises.

Based on the findings, when information is conveyed accurately and comprehensibly across these platforms, it can unite communities, inspire collaboration, and empower individuals to respond effectively to crises. The ability to share success stories and best practices during crisis can serve as a valuable resource for future challenges, promoting a sense of unity and preparedness within society.

This paper bridges translation studies, crisis communication, and social media to highlight translation's vital role in managing crises, particularly during the global pandemic. It explores how translation and information exchange build public trust, emphasizing the power of discourse in a global health emergency to share knowledge across cultures, enhancing trust in information diffusion.

In this vein, the research recommendations in the area of translation, social media, and crisis communication include investigating the impact of translation quality on public trust during crises as well as examining the significance of cultural sensitivity in crisis communication translations. Thereby, exploring the role of artificial intelligence in improving automated translations on social media during crises should be given more importance in the midst the digital evolution and the implication of algorithmically produced content in raising risks at times of crisis by analyze the effectiveness of different approaches to regulating and controlling content on social media platforms during crises.

The key findings emphasize that exploring public perception of crisis communication efforts, focusing on language accessibility, might help developing best practices for crisis translation on social media.

These research areas aim to enhance our understanding of how accurate translation on social media influences trust, resilience, and effective crisis response, ultimately leading to improved strategies for communicating during crises.

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