

Community spirit

From COVID-19 to the United Nations: Sonia Ruggieri and Corrine Harries describe three volunteering projects using translation skills



Sonia Ruggieri started her career in the language industry in 2007, working as a language trainer for international corporations and as a qualified teacher for secondary schools. Since gaining her second MSc (in Scientific, Technical and Medical Translation with Translation Technologies) at UCL in 2015, she has been providing translation and localisation services to the healthcare, manufacturing and IT industries. In 2020 she became a Qualified Member of ITI. She is the founder of Tradberry Language Solutions.

COVID-19 has thrown much of the world into a crisis and into huge uncertainty. A number of ITI members who specialise in medical translation from English into Italian have joined an international volunteer project which aims to share critical knowledge about the successful strategies implemented in South Korea to fight the spread of the pandemic.

International cooperation

The COVID Translate Project was initiated by Sebastian Seung, who is a research scientist at Princeton and Samsung. The team involved has selected the documents from the Korea Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) that they believe would be most useful to policymakers and stakeholders around the world: for example, useful templates for governments and hospitals to follow, and guidelines for social distancing measures. The documents have now been translated into seven languages, thanks to a collaboration of volunteer translators, researchers, PhD students and academics from universities including Harvard Business School, the City University of New York, and University College London (UCL). They are available at www.covidtranslate.org.

On 31 March I received an email from the community manager at Extreme Citizen Science (ExCiteS), one of the research centres at UCL, describing the project and asking for volunteers. Even though my work and family schedule were already being stretched by the demands of lockdown, I very much wanted to take part. On the basis that time is never an insuperable issue when you

want to support an important cause, I decided to contact the coordinator. To my great surprise, after a couple of days I received the assignment of building and coordinating the Italian team of linguists.

I immediately realised that this collaboration involved a lot more than medical and technical translation skills alone. It also meant coordinating a team of professionals, and working with different professional and academic institutions. All the volunteers had their own expectations and their own linguistic and technological skills and resources – and many had other personal and

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professional demands on their time too. And we had to produce well-edited and well-presented documents which the general reader could understand. I decided to contact Ann Brooks, ITI's professional development officer, who put me in touch with contacts at the ITI Italian Network. The response was overwhelming: in less than 48 hours, my inbox folder was filled with over 30 replies from enthusiastic and high-profile translators willing to offer invaluable skills.

The Italian translators' team has been working intensively for two months, focusing in particular on

translating four key documents: *Response Guidelines for Local Administrations*, *COVID-19 Screening Center Operation Guide*, *'Drive-Through' COVID-19 Screening Center Standard Operating Model* and *Guidelines for Routine Distancing in Social Life*. These are all available on the website and will be disseminated through social media too.

Participating in the COVID Translate Project has shown how new, worthwhile and interesting experiences might arise from the COVID-19 emergency for translators and interpreters. I would like to express my gratitude to all the translators who joined the project, and to ITI for providing access to professional resources, which have turned out to be key to carrying out this humanitarian project.

Sonia Ruggieri