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## Book Review: Here orThere

Laura Maddox  
Lamar University, lmaddux@lamar.edu

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# Book Review: Here or There

**Laura Maddux<sup>1</sup>**

*Lamar University*

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence to: [lmaddux@lamar.edu](mailto:lmaddux@lamar.edu)

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In our technology driven world, there are times when the innovation and possibilities of technology outstrip the abilities of users to maximise its potentials. Such is frequently the case in the world of interpreting spoken and signed languages via video link technologies. Into that gap between possibilities and practice comes *Here or There* edited by Jemina Napier, Robert Skinner, and Sabine Braun. The book provides an overview of what remote interpreting via video technologies entails, provides various perspectives of those involved in the interpreting process using video technology, and exemplifies the process through several empirical studies using video link interpreting. This volume will be useful to interpreting practitioners in a variety of video link interpreting settings for gaining knowledge of the field and developing best practices. Interpreter educators may also use the contents to guide their students to becoming successful video-based interpreters. Companies and agencies providing video link interpreting may use the book as a basis for setting up or improving their services. Additionally, governments and other stakeholders may read the clearly evidenced information in order to understand the complicated processes involved in being an interlocutor using an interpreter via video link.

In seeking to describe the current situation in interpreting via video link, the editors have incorporated a multitude of connections between interlocutors, governmental policies, interpreters, technology, and so forth. In doing so, they present a picture of the situations involved in video link interpreting in spoken and signed languages, and provide recommendations for best practices. The editors use the term “video link” to refer to all types of interpreting that occur over the internet using video technology. Rather than providing an overview of each chapter or section, this review seeks to point out the salient and repeated themes emerging from the book as a whole.

An overarching theme throughout the book is the need to discover and apply best practices to the use of video link technology. Chapters from Braun, Davitti, and Dicerto; Conway and Ryan; Koller and Pochhacker; Licoppe, Verdier, and Veyrier, emphasize how technical issues with internet connections and equipment can lead to inequities in interpreted situations. Examples include when the internet signal is not strong enough to fully allow an interpreter to communicate visually with a deaf caller, when sight lines are set up so that asylum seekers cannot know who is speaking to them about their case, or when a suspect must look at an awkwardly mounted screen instead of at the officer questioning them. Fowler suggests that situations where the visuals between interlocutors are insufficient should be limited to low impact situations because the lack of visual access impacts the effectiveness of communication. Conway and Ryan describe the complications inherent in setting up the technology for video interpreting services for deaf patients. It would seem apparent that high quality equipment and a strong internet signal are a must in this situation, but the researchers were not prepared for the intense level of IT support required to set up the service and maintain its use when issues arose. Other issues that were mentioned in this study were the small size of the video screen, the length of time required to set up the device, and lack of audio quality. Braun et al. describes the difficulties inherent in linking technologies with a variety of ages, software, hardware, and features across countries in the E.U. These issues are even more extensive as the interpreters who will use the technology the most do not have a voice in procurement of the devices and services. When technologies are not chosen, and implemented well, there can be negative impacts on the interlocutors and interpreters communicating via video link.

In all aspects of the book, it is evident that interpreters are active participants in the conversations and interactions they interpret. In addition to managing technology, interpreters involved in video link interpreting must handle both turn taking and telling interlocutors who is speaking via source attribution. Balogh and Salaets offer an account of what occurs when interlocutors are not sure who is speaking or who holds a turn in an inter-country collaboration for a legal case. In this situation an interlocutor had to ask who was asking them a question, and there were also issues with turn-taking that indicated a lack of training in how to handle these issues. Koller and Pochhacker describe how interpreters’ use of the first person can be more confusing over video link than in face to face interactions, and Braun et al. discuss how problems can occur when interlocutors choose to speak at the same time. In calls between deaf callers and political figures Napier, Skinner, and Turner provide data on how the interpreters were actively involved as they managed turn-taking between the callers. Interpreters must also juggle modes of interpreting while choosing consecutive or simultaneous interpreting as shown in Koller and Pochhacker. While interpreters must handle technology issues and navigate interactions between interlocutors while interpreting, they are also frequently called upon to perform tasks extraneous to an interpreting situation. In Koller and Pochhacker’s study, interpreters at an interpreting company had to perform administrative duties in the

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office in addition to prepping to interpret in a variety of settings, each requiring specialized knowledge of a field. The interpreters in that study frequently interacted and worked as a team, however interpreters introduced in Tyler had to manage feelings of isolation when they performed their work alone in their homes or from cubicles in an interpreting center.

Multiple chapters in this volume mention the vital role of the government in both regulating and enforcing standards of practice for video link interpreting. Governments are responsible for ensuring that those who do not speak the dominant language are adequately represented in their spheres of need, as discussed in Fowler. This is especially true in cases where these minority language speakers are part of a vulnerable population as discussed in Brunson; Fowler; Balogh and Salaets; and others. Vulnerable populations mentioned in this volume include asylum seekers (Licoppe et al.) deaf callers and patients (Brunson; Napier et al.; Tyler; Conway & Ryan; Warnicke), and legal defendants (Braun et al.; Balogh & Salaets; Licoppe et al.). Brunson and Warnicke each discuss how two different governments influence what occurs during interpreted phone calls between deaf and hearing callers. While governments frequently procure equipment for bureaucratic related video interpreting, the interpreters responsible for knowing and using this equipment are rarely included in the procurement decisions as in Braun et al. The need for equity for those interlocutors relying on video link interpreting in crucial situations is emphasized by Conway and Ryan in a discussion of the miscommunications that occur with people who are deaf when seeking health care, and in Licoppe et al. when discussing asylum seekers.

For all these issues concerning video links, technology, interactional strategies, active involvement of interpreters, and interpreting for vulnerable populations, a common recommendation is for proper training in best practices for interpreter training students and video link users as shown in Balogh and Salaets; Fowler; and Koller and Pochhaker. Fowler mentions the need for training, not only for interpreters and suspects, but also for those involved in the apprehension, questioning, and judgement of suspects in a legal system. The author then lays out a detailed best-practice protocol for courtroom use in England and Wales. While the protocol is listed as specific to those countries, the information can be generalized to many situations. Braun et al. point out that no one system or technology, training, or use is correct for all situations, however, all can learn from the others in order for video link interpretations to be successful.

By putting all of these aspects of knowledge, data, suggested best practices, and training together, we can expect the outcomes for those who must communicate through interpreters on video link to become more positive and productive. As Balogh and Salaets say “If basic “ingredients” are missing, like excellent technology, a professional interpreter and legal practitioners that are aware of working (1) with an interpreter and (2) in a VCI setting, we cannot expect a successful interaction” (p. 293). More evidence of best practices can be found in previous research on video link-based interpreting. Napier, McKee, and Goswell (2010) lay out a list of recommendations for signed language interpreters, that may be adapted to other language modalities. These recommendations include adjusting to potential time lags in the video transmissions, adapting signing styles, and dealing with limited knowledge about language use. Interpreters may also have to deal with limited details of both the upcoming interaction, and lack of knowledge of who is speaking offscreen. Many of the issues and recommendations pointed out in the 2010 volume are still issues in *Here or There*, showing that we must pay attention to the information gained in this research if we are to improve the situation for the future. An aspect of best practice mentioned above, is that training is needed for interpreters to be able to handle the intricacies of video link interpreting. Hoza (2016) discusses how interpreters can be ‘in the zone’ as they interpret to their best ability. Training and mentoring interpreters to have tactics and strategies for culturally appropriate conversation management, as well as ensuring they have the proper attitudes and allyship orientation for vulnerable populations is crucial to successful communication (Dickinson, 2016; Hoza, 2016). Ehrlich and Napier (2015) discuss using digital technology for educating interpreters. Using appropriate digital instructional techniques to educate interpreters on how to engage in video link interpreting is likely a beneficial practice in interpreter education. For those interested in more in-depth training on video interpreting, a curriculum guide containing teaching material pertaining to Video Relay Interpreting (VRS) and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is available from the Video Relay Interpreting Institute. While this is focused on VRS and VRI within the US, much of the material could be applicable to other training contexts.

In summary, *Here or There* provides an excellent and well-structured journey from experts in the field using data-based research, through the technologies, and types of interpreting currently involved in video link technologies. Though there are inherent difficulties, such as confidentiality, government regulations, and the involvement of vulnerable populations, when doing research on interpreting via video link (see Koller and

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Pochacker), the field of interpreting research must try to stay abreast of new developments so that we can begin to lead the trends rather than following them (Ehrlich & Napier, 2015). Just how quickly research can become outdated is shown in *Here or There* in Brunson's chapter on VRS in the USA, as statements in this recently published work are no longer true of interpreters working in this merely 15-year-old industry. As an interpreter currently working in the VRS field in the United States, I have seen for myself that the pay scales are no longer as lucrative as Brunson mentions, and that interpreters are now allowed more freedom in interacting with callers than they were when he conducted his research. Brunson himself points out change in the field is rapid due to the changing technology and social forces, and this claim is backed up by Napier and Ehrlich (2015). One way a U.S. based VRS company is changing with the times is by instituting a training program where interpreting interns are able to observe live calls and gain mentoring time as they prepare to enter the interpreting field. This is just one example of how the interpreting profession must adapt and move forward quickly to keep pace with the impact of technology. I believe we can take the foundation of this volume, and the previous studies mentioned, and use it to spur the field on to greater improvements in the services we provide to all our consumers, no matter which language they sign or speak.

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