
Reviews of Books

Holly Mikkelsen: *Consecutive Interpreting, Edge 21-An Interpreter's Edge for the 21st Century*, ACEBO 2006, ISBN 1-880594-37-4, 178 pages

The present book is the first from a 3-volume interpreting series called EDGE 21. It contains practice exercises for consecutive interpreting and it mainly targets judicial interpreters or those who aim at becoming judicial interpreters with English and Spanish as their working languages. It also contains a set of seven CDs employing the two-tone stereo technique, which enables the learners to listen to both the material to be interpreted and to an interpretation done by the author herself. The other two volumes in the series are *Simultaneous Interpreting* and *Sight Translation*.

The author, Holly Mikkelsen, who wrote such seminal works for judicial interpreters as *The Fundamentals of Court Interpreting* (1992), *Interpreter's Edge* (2004) and *Introduction to Court Interpreting* (2000), is a state and federally certified court interpreter, with over 30 years experience in court interpreting. She is the Director of the International Interpretation Resource Center at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Her Edge 21 series draws upon her experience as a professional judicial interpreter, and is designed to assist those who wish to study independently and those who study consecutive interpreting with a teacher.

The first volume in the series contains 20 lessons in consecutive interpreting, preceded by a section of memory exercises and one on note taking, with sample notes for several consecutive lessons in the present book. Every section is preceded by an introductory part, which gives practical advice about how to use the book and the CDs more effectively. She explains the difficulty of consecutive interpreting in court as follows:

Not only must you convey the content of the source language message, but you must also convey structural elements of that message that are not contained in the words: pauses, tone of voice, stress, etc.

The consecutive interpreting section offers a wide array of practice texts drawn from actual documents and court cases with a high incidence of occurrence, such as muggings, personal injury depositions, drive-by shootings, border crossings, automobile accidents, robberies, shootings, forged visas, etc. The aim of this is to familiarize the students with the terminology, procedure, and the often-controversial nature of court cases with which the students may or may not agree. In one of the disclaimers she stresses the fact that she chose some texts which "carry a political content or are otherwise controversial", explaining that "[t]he inclusion of such texts is intended to provide you with much needed practice interpreting material with which you may not agree" (p. xiii). Indeed, court interpreters are often faced with the ethical problem of having to maintain an equidistant stance at all times and not let their personal feelings or convictions hin-

der the judicial process.

The memory training section, which precedes the consecutive interpretation lessons, aims at training the students' memorization skills, which are vital for consecutive interpreters. It contains listening exercises in both English in Spanish at the end of which the students must formulate the main idea, a summary, or a detailed description of a recorded dialogue. Moreover, by practicing chunking, jotting down key words, and writing down detailed notes the students are gradually introduced to the third section of the present book, consecutive note taking. This section, which is based on the author's own note-taking technique, offers a variety of examples and exercises for consecutive note taking.

Although the present volume is aimed primarily at interpreting students with knowledge in the specialized field of judicial interpreting, and those who aim at obtaining certification in the United States, some of the practice exercises, especially parts of the memory training and note taking sections can be effectively used in an intermediate to advanced interpreting class of non native speakers of English.

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Pete Sharma and Barney Barrett, *Blended Learning. Using Technology in and beyond the Language Classroom*. Oxford: Macmillan, 2007. 160 pp. ISBN 9780250020832. £14.95

*Computers will never replace teachers.
But teachers who use computers will replace those who don't.*
(Ray Clifford, Provost of the Defense Language Institute)

Though this phrase has become a maxim in education there are probably quite a few language teachers who do not use computers or do not use them as much as they'd like to. Among those who do use computers in their teaching there are probably many who want to use them more and in a more efficient or innovative way. The book by P. Sharma and B. Barrett "*Blended Learning*" is a good guide for all: beginners will find an easy introduction to new technology and media, more experienced teachers are offered useful resources and innovative ways to use technology in and beyond the classroom.

Blended learning as a term has many meanings in different areas of knowledge and practice. In language teaching, it can refer to various combinations of pedagogical approaches and/or web-based technologies, distance and classroom learning, online and in-person classroom activities, multiple approaches with the deployment of a diversity of methods and resources, and the like. In this book, *blended learning* primarily applies to language courses, which combine a face-to-face classroom component with an appropriate use of technology. The authors have covered quite a representative range of recent technologies, such as the Internet, CD-ROMs and interactive whiteboards, computers, mobile phones, digital recorders, cameras and camcorders, mp3 players, and others. They also have addressed different formats of computer-mediated communication (CMC), from e-mail to forums and chats, and a number of learning environments, which enable teachers to enrich their courses, such as VLEs (virtual learning environments) and wikis.

The underlying concept of *Blended Learning* is a belief that the incorporation of technology into a language course significantly increases its value and positive learning outcomes. To prove this, the authors list numerous advantages of the use of CMC and technology in teaching languages, such as enhanced motivation and autonomy of learners, highly beneficial interactivity, instant feedback, and others, which have been unanimously acknowledged by many educators (for example, M. Warschauer, D. Crystal, D. Davies, G. Kessler). Some concerns on the side of the critics of computer-based interaction are also mentioned, but these reservations seem quite insignificant compared to the enthusiastic appreciation of blended learning that permeates the book. The desire of the authors to share this enthusiasm with other ELT teachers, especially those who lack knowledge or confidence when incorporating CALL techniques in their teaching has inspired this useful publication and defined its structure.

There are nine chapters in the book, and each of them, with the exception of the first one dealing with the concept of blended learning, introduces some technology and addresses its use in the language classroom. There are chapters dedicated to the Web, electronic language-teaching materials (ELT), electronic dictionaries, office software (word processors, databases, spreadsheets and presentation programs), interac-

tive whiteboards, and portable devices (phones, cameras, recorders). Chapter 8 deals with computer-mediated communication and covers a range of ways in which learners and teachers can communicate through the medium of the computer (electronic mail, chat, MOOs, forums, audio- and video-conferencing, and VLE). The final chapter focuses on how to implement blended learning by creating teacher's own resources using blogs, podcasts, wikis and websites. The *Afterword* concluding the book provides a brief look at the future of technology inside and outside the classroom, which, in the authors' opinion, will be very exciting with technology inevitably becoming "ubiquitous" and increasingly welcome in teaching and learning foreign languages.

All chapters follow the same design: first, the authors introduce a program, device or application and provide the description of what it is and how to use it. This part is especially useful for those readers who are not familiar with the device or medium. Then, they describe opportunities offered by using this technology and bring attention to various issues connected with its application in the classroom. The following section suggests a number of practical activities and projects both for classroom work and self-study. The methodological value of this section is enhanced by the careful consideration of the teaching aim of the activity, the type of interaction it entails, the required level of students' language competence, and pedagogical rationale of using the activity (language skills it develops, learning problems it addresses, types of students it can appeal to, and so on). The procedure itself, the pre-class preparation and follow-up exercises are outlined in sufficient detail. What makes these recommendations especially attractive for beginners is thoughtful advice of what teachers need to do before the activity and how to prepare for it in a better and easier way. Each of the chapters concludes with case studies, which provide information on real situations faced by teachers who incorporated the described technology in their teaching. The case studies also offer more examples of inventive approaches to blended teaching/learning.

The consistency of the structural organization of the book supports the selective approach to its material encouraged by the authors. When dealing with any technology or device, Sharma and Barrett recommend each reader to assess the degree to which she or he is familiar with it. Some teachers may be relative beginners in the area and thus should learn more about it starting with the introductions to the chapters. Others, familiar with the technology, may not be acquainted with its application in the ELT context and might find the sector on issues and applications more relevant for them. The parts where the practical activities are suggested and case studies are discussed could appeal to the majority of readers as they offer new ideas for classroom work and independent study even to those teachers who are using the technology on a regular basis.

The practical value of the book is further increased with *Teacher's Resource Bank*, a set of photocopiable materials provided as the appendices to some chapters. These include handouts for class work, lesson preparation sheets, evaluation sheets for web-based material and podcasts, blog and podcast projects planning sheets and other useful resources. A separate appendix gives recommendations on how to get connected to the Web, protect the computer from viruses, and install software. It is obvious that the authors make every effort to help ELT teachers overcome their lack of confidence in the digital world and get "wired".

Besides the selective approach, the book also requires an individual one, as teachers have different classrooms and different concepts of what might or might not work in each particular context. So, instead of going into further, detailed description of the book, which can offer something useful for every language teacher, I'd prefer to highlight some of the places which seemed particularly useful for me as a moderate user of blended learning. Among those are recommendations about how to search the Web for images, audio and video materials (p. 18) and suggestions of the specialized blog-searching engines which make the process of finding useful and interesting web logs in the overwhelming accumulation of active blogs much easier (p. 19). There is also a list of directory websites which help to find podcasts on a specific topic (p.

21) and some websites, which have podcasts accompanied by support materials such as transcripts and vocabulary lists specially designed for ELT purposes. One case study in the chapter on presentation software shows a quite innovative way of using PowerPoint to construct interactive grammar and word study mazes by using the *Hyperlink* function of the software to connect question and answer slides (p. 95). The chapter on using portable devices proves that it can be easier to construct your own illustrated vocabulary handouts with a digital camera and word processor than search the textbooks, magazines or the Web for an appropriate picture. Finally, the most useful finding for me was the fact that teachers can use a wiki and a web log practically in the same way as a web site, and it is much easier and more straightforward than the creation of your own web page. The latter, as the authors contend, still continues to be an undertaking and requires some specialized knowledge, so they do not dwell on this issue in the book and refer the readers to other sources instead. There is one aspect of the book, which may be considered a shortcoming – it is short. The main text is only 131 pages and leaves the reader wanting more interesting activities and exercises, which technology can offer EFL students and teachers. But this is compensated to a certain degree by a website, supported by the publishers, Macmillan (<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/methodology/books/Blended-Learning.htm>). It provides regular updates of the contents of the book as technology changes and the authors try to keep pace with it. However, the site is not only for updates – the authors also continue to supply new useful links and further ideas for blended learning, so, in a way, the book is still being written. As it stands, it is a succinct and inspiring introduction to the ever developing and expanding synthesis of technology and foreign language teaching.

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