REVIEWS

TEACHING ONLINE
TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES, OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

This book about teaching online is a real find; jam-packed with ideas and activities. The reason it really works is because of the way in which Nicky Hockly and Lindsay Clandfield communicate with their target audience, deftly exploiting the wealth of their ELT experience. In this compact and accessible text (just 112 pages long), they have captured what we want and need; they understand how we think and the concerns we have in meeting the needs of our learners with technology. Pressures of work, time and money mean that for many of us, signing up for a course in distance and online teaching is not that simple. This book fills that gap.

The book is clearly laid out. It is divided into three distinct sections: A, B and C. Section A is designed to help get you started. Section B is the longest section and provides a rich bank of practical teaching suggestions and classroom activities. Section C shows the reader how they might expand and develop their online teaching skills, from exploiting Web 2.0 technologies to raising awareness of the growing and thriving online discussion groups and communities. The lay-out of the book means that there is something for everyone to either try or to think about. It is packed full of great activities, so is an excellent resource pack, but it goes a stage further for those teachers who are confident and competent but want more. In essence, there is something for everyone!

Section A sets out the basics encouraging the reader to reflect on the notion of online learning from their perspective whether they are a teacher, director of studies, university teacher or a teacher of young learners. Some readers may feel that the points in this section are simple or obvious, for example, the diagram (p.6) describing the hardware needed

to get started with online learning. I would have to disagree, though, because it all depends on your point of entry and level of technological experience. Issues are raised early on that I feel might dispel the typical concerns about online learning, addressing the advantages but significantly showing awareness of the drawbacks of online learning. I was delighted to read that online learning need not be an "all-or-nothing" (p.10) approach and that integrating technology can be a blend of face-to-face and techie delivery depending on the context and the needs of the learner. Section A indicates how teachers might embark upon an online teaching programme making the transition from mainly face-to-face, half and half, mainly online then leading to the fully online programme. It all feels do-able and not an ordeal. I love the way in which the writers distinguish and set out a comprehensive list of useful (and favourite) software tools from Wikis to VLEs and Blogs with a concise explanation of what they all mean, what they do with useful website addresses. Having considered the hardware and software, at the end of Section A the authors talk about the all important "liveware", the bit that makes teaching, teaching wherever we are – the people. This section considers the vagaries of engaging and interacting with people in an online setting. I love the Netiquette table on p.30 as a helpful reference tool.

Section B is divided into Chapter 1 – The Starting Line; Chapter 2 – Reading and Writing; Chapter 3 - Listening and Speaking; Chapter 4 – Language and Evaluation and Chapter 5 - The Finishing Line. Dividing this section into five components is really sensible and teacher friendly because we all like to hunt out activities that will help our learners to develop different language skills. The layout will be very familiar to teachers because it follows the style adopted by other EFL resource books. Furthermore, this section is a goldmine for busy teachers who are looking for ideas to begin or expand their repertoire of online teaching materials. Each suggestion describes the tools needed and the technique to use with the learners as well as follow up activities. An example that I love is the activity on p.35, "My Window, my world"; I have used this kind of activity with a class in Mexico with tremendous effect because it's so visual, invites learners to contribute something of themselves in a class blog and is a great way of building an online sense of community. As with all resource books, I would hasten to add that teachers can adapt these ideas to suit their preferred teaching styles and interests. The "Find someone who" activity on p.40 exploits either email or chat, but this activity is a great example that illustrates how technology

can add a modern twist to traditional teaching activities that students will love! This extends into the other chapters in Section B, for example, there is a reading race (p.43), a chat room interview activity (p.54), a great 'Define it!' activity (p.68), and an online Dictogloss (p.78). There are plenty of ideas I'd like to try out, so these are just a small selection. Essentially, all these teaching and activity ideas are highly accessible and easy to understand, with great little support notes attached to each one. I hesitate to suggest that the only possible drawback to this section is that teachers may feel uneasy about manipulating and integrating new and unfamiliar technologies into their classroom because the students are likely to be more competent than them. If this is the case, my own experience has shown me over and again that students are only too willing to help out and will not hold it against you if you are a bit unclear abut the mechanics. Let caution to the wind and be bold!

I would suggest that Section C (online teacher development) not only offers the online power user food for thought, but also presents the less experienced teacher with some really helpful suggestions. My only gripe is that I personally need to conceptualise how to usefully deploy the plethora of technological options available to me, I can tend to feel a little overwhelmed by the mass of innovation that's out there at the moment. Many of us simply don't have time to take ownership of these opportunities, whether in the form of following or writing a micro-blog (e.g. Twitter), constructing an ePortfolio or tuning in and attending an online conference or webinar. Having said that, Section C of the book categorises and presents the reader with a clear description of each of these online teacher development options, explaining why they might be helpful and how to set about trying them out.

The authors recommend useful addresses for online discussion groups (e.g. Webheads), online conferences and teachers' blogs that provide teachers with some fabulous ideas and resources (e.g. Nik's Learning Technologies Blog). In this section, rather than feel overwhelmed, consider the possibility that technology is not an all or nothing option; we can dip in and sample different options to see what works for us, so I would recommend picking out an element you like the look of and giving it a go!

Overall, this book has something for everyone, whether we are fresh recruits to the e-learning world or old hands. I would recommend this book unreservedly because it is clearly presented, practical and easy to follow. Umm … perhaps it is high time I signed up for that online teaching course; having pored over the pages of this book, I now want to find out more!

Reviewed by
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Dr Miranda Hamilton is an educational consultant currently working with Cambridge Assessment on a project researching formative assessment in the context of K12 and blended learning environments. She has eleven years experience teaching English with a particular interest in the effective integration of technology in an EFL context. She has a PhD from the University of Cambridge in the relationship between autonomy and VLEs. She has presented at conferences and published papers about her work in Modern English Teacher, The Guardian Weekly and contributed to academic texts about learning with digital technologies.

TRANSLATION

Juliane House (2009)
Oxford University Press (pp. 122) ISBN, 97- 0-19-4389228
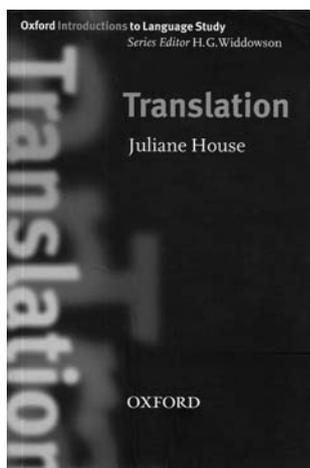
El volumen *Translation* se inserta en la colección "Oxford Introductions to Language Study", editada por H. G. Widdowson en la editorial Oxford University Press. Los volúmenes de esta colección, citando las palabras del propio editor en el prefacio, sirven "to prepare the conceptual ground" (House 2009: viii); se trata de textos no tanto académicos (cuyo detalle y nivel técnico suelen abrumar al lego) como de transición, "which will ease people into an understanding of complex ideas" (ibídem).

Todos los libros de la colección están organizados en cuatro apartados: el *survey*, o panorámica de los principales conceptos de la disciplina (constituye la parte principal del volumen), *readings* (breves textos de lectura para reflexionar sobre algunos de los conceptos implicados), *annotated references* (o bibliografía

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