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Language teaching in blended contexts, edited by Margaret Nicolson, Linda Murphy and Margaret Southgate, Edinburgh, Dunedin, 2011, 279 pp., £18 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-906716-20-2

This book is intended for language educators working mainly with adult learners in blended learning contexts. Blended learning and teaching in this volume is defined as 'a combination of forms of instructional technology, including traditional forms of learning used in conjunction with web-based, online approaches' (5). The three editors, and indeed all of the contributors, are experienced language educators based at various branches of the Open University (OU) in the UK. As the OU has a reputation as a leader in distance education in the UK, it seems appropriate that a book of this nature should have originated from this institution. As the edi-tors point out in Chapter 1, the context and nature of teaching and learning are changing dra-matically as a response not only to advances in technology, but also to societal demands and changes in employment patterns. In order to be able to meet the needs of learners – many of whom will be mature learners with various other demands on their time – institutions need to explore creative teaching and learning options and still provide quality language education.

The book is organised into five sections, each highlighting important factors to consider when offering blended learning options. Section 1 (the learning context) contains four chap-ters that unpack elements essential to any learning context – not just those associated with blended learning. This examination of good practice in language education serves to remind educators that the same educational principles apply even if the learning environment is unconventional. The four chapters give specific ways in which educators can provide mean-ingful learning opportunities in such blended contexts. For example, in Chapter 2 the authors emphasise the role of choice and even outline a possible course outline. This is a very valuable chapter for those in the process of planning or reviewing a blended learning course. Chapter 3 focuses on the importance of understanding social practices and learner participation patterns in general. One of the important messages of the chapter is that it is not always easy to identify and account for diversity in teaching and learning situations, as the usual identity markers may not necessarily be available. The authors give some practical suggestions for task-design in blended contexts that accommodate diversity. Chapter 4 gives

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a description of the importance of fostering autonomy and motivation in language education – and the particular importance these factors have in non-traditional settings. The authors note some affordances of blended contexts for offering learners appropriate support.

Section 2 (assessment) contains two chapters outlining good practice for language assessment in general, before outlining ways in which these good principles can be applied in non-traditional learning contexts. In particular, there is an emphasis on assessment as a learning tool which could result in opportunities for dialogue about learning processes. Chapter 5 touches on the need for quality assurance where the teachers may also be physically distant from one another. Chapter 6 provides more details on the role of feedback in order to inform future learning.

Section 3 contains six chapters, which explore the nature of synchronous and asynchronous teaching in blended contexts. The ways in which material is presented – either in real time (synchronous) or with a time delay (asynchronous) – is likely to be determined by a variety of factors: institutional factors, ethical considerations, and the aims and objectives of a particular teaching unit. Chapter 7 explores important considerations for the pre-teaching, teaching and after-teaching phases. Chapter 8 focuses on management and delivery of teaching via the telephone. It also looks at affordances by more recent mobile technology for teaching but stresses that the use of these kinds of new technologies should be driven by sound pedagogy. Chapter 9 gives a thorough overview of the different kinds of tools that can be used for synchronous teaching and learning in online environments. The focus of the chapter is on planning and pedagogical considerations for using such tools. Chapter 10 explores the logistical and practical considerations for delivering synchronous content to learners in distance contexts and for managing the interactions. Even though the face-to-face element of a blended course may be the most familiar environment for teachers and learner, the authors point out in chapter 11 that this element of the course is crucial for making sure that the other parts of the blend work smoothly. In addition, ways in which a class operates could benefit from a fresh perspective in light of technological (and other) developments. The chapter outlines planning considerations and provides sample activities and suggestions for managing the learning environment. Chapter 12 deals with one of the key components of any blended learning course – approaches to asynchronous teaching online. The authors discuss the range and benefits of online tools as well as ways in which they can be integrated into a course. There is also a comprehensive section on task design, accompanied by some examples of tasks for asynchronous tools such as forums and wikis.

Section 4 (community and indigenous Celtic languages) is a particularly interesting inclusion and exists as a separate section because the editors chose to highlight the different pedagogical considerations that are necessary for learners of these languages. There may be issues of identity, cultural factors, extrinsic and/or intrinsic motivations to learn, and variations in proficiency that need to be considered when designing blended courses and drawing on various technologies.

Section 5 (teacher development and final reflections) is the final section which contains three chapters. The authors comment on future directions for blended learning contexts. It is likely that the term 'blended learning' will become redundant once using a mixture of course delivery methods becomes the norm. Language educators will probably need to become proficient users of technology and may need to take on new roles in blended contexts. These new roles will inevitably require ongoing professional development and the chapters in this section deal with the kinds of professional development that teachers could engage in.

Overall, this book is a very welcome addition to the field of language education. Even in more traditional teaching contexts, educators are experimenting with using a range of technology types in order to support learners, address needs, provide resources and widen the

opportunities for learner interaction. The main strength of the book is the focus on strong pedagogical principles, first and foremost, and then describing ways in which various approaches can been leveraged in blended contexts in order to best address the needs of today's language learners.

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The making and shaping of the Victorian teacher: a comparative new cultural history, by Marianne A. Larsen, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 232 pp., £55, ISBN 978-0-230-24128-2

This book examines the making and shaping of a good teacher through relations of power and knowledge in Britain, North America and Europe from the 1830s to the 1880s, the Victorian era. This study is based on new cultural and historical perspectives. A similar public elementary school system emerged in these areas. The common trends in such an educational system-building were the state's increasing intervention, standardisation of curriculum and examination system as well as the establishment of state-funded training institutions. Within the process and practices of these educational reforms, teachers were socially constructed and regulated as modern and moral subjects.

Larsen aimed to conduct a middle-ground study comparing the traditional history of education and new cultural history. Firstly, Larsen stressed the usefulness of the post-structural approach of cultural history in order to assess how certain meanings and identities had been socially produced through relations of the power of knowledge. In doing so, Larsen introduced two analytical frameworks which were provided by Foucault: archaeology and genealogy. The archaeological approach took the form of discourse analyses, which consisted of close readings of texts in search of discontinuity or the reappearance of certain statements. Various educational texts listed later were examined using this approach. The genealogical approach was used to analyse the ways in which the subject had been constructed, produced or created over time and space. The teacher as a subject became an object of knowledge, whilst disciplinary technologies (a set of practices, processes, procedures, methods and tactics) were used to construct and govern the teacher. Larsen pointed out two teacher-creating technologies: external and internal technologies. External technologies were the methods used by others to control and regulate teachers. At a macro-level, these included formal teacher training– a system of regular inspection and certification, and at a micro-level these entailed examinations, inspections, timetables or dress-codes. Internal technologies were used by teachers to recognise themselves as good teachers. However, power and knowledge circulated among both technologies. Secondly, the historical element of the research was the use of various archival historical materials regarding the Victorian educational and teacher reforms. Larsen examined official documents, records of voluntary societies, books, articles and speeches written by individuals as well as school inspection reports produced in Britain, Europe and North America. However, Larsen noted that her analysis on the latter two mainly relied on secondary sources.

Before beginning her analysis, Larsen provided an overview of the Victorian educational reforms, and their common understandings and limitations. She then re-examined these limitations from cultural historical perspectives. Larsen stressed the similarities of the