Teaching**English**

Innovations in learning technologies for English language teaching

Edited by Gary Motteram

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Foreword

Martin Peacock

I remember as a fledgling teacher in the British Council teaching centre in Hong Kong listening to the Director of Studies giving a welcome speech to teachers at the start of the new academic year. The centre had begun investing heavily in computers and had just opened its 'Classroom of the Future' – a classroom with specially adapted furniture which gave students relatively painless access to computers built into desks. The Director of Studies was talking about the role of technology in the future of language learning and rather dramatically made his point by closing with the following epithet: 'The British Council needs teachers who are confident with technology. You are either into technology or you are in the way and had better start looking for a new job.'

Strong words indeed – and at the time quite a wake-up call for a number of teachers in the room who looked nervously around at their colleagues and no doubt made mental notes to get to grips with this new-fangled email malarkey.

Times have changed, teachers have evolved, and we now have a new breed of learning technologists. As in Hong Kong, the first changes began in the classroom itself – new technologies such as overhead projectors, interactive whiteboards, laptop computers and wireless internet have opened up the classroom to the outside world. Teachers who spent their lives managing with a textbook, a tape recorder and a blackboard are now adept at using PowerPoint to present grammar, playing podcasts to practise listening skills, pulling texts off the world wide web to introduce reading skills and perhaps most ground-breaking of all – empowering students by giving them access to a wide range of web-based tools that allow them to publish work and engage with live audiences in real contexts.

And that is just the beginning – because just as technologies have begun to change the way that English is learned in the classroom, even bigger changes seem to be taking place outside it. In fact, the digital revolution in learning now threatens to undermine the classroom completely as a place of study. Learning English through mobile devices gains credibility every day and the increasing popularity and rapidly diminishing cost of tablet devices reinforce this by providing a format that really is capable of delivering courseware. Factor in the growing interest in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), providing large-scale (and free) learning interventions, and it is clear that technology still has much to offer ELT.

This is why I am delighted to introduce *Innovations in learning technologies for English language teaching*, the latest volume in the British Council's Innovations series. The volume provides a systematic and comprehensive overview of the current use of technologies to support English teaching and learning. Systematic in the sense that each chapter looks at a key segment of the ELT market – young learners, adults, English for specific purposes, English for academic purposes, assessment and teacher training and provides a view on the current state of technological intervention. Comprehensive because the view is a wide one, supported by numerous case studies which serve to keep the volume grounded in the realities of practising teachers using technologies in innovative and exciting ways. I am sure that this volume will be of practical interest to teachers and researchers in search of teaching ideas and examples of good practice, and provide food for thought for policy makers and school administrators studying the potential of learning technologies in transforming the ELT sector.

I would like to finish by thanking all the contributors who have written chapters for the volume and the teachers and researchers who have contributed case studies. And a special thanks to Gary Motteram for his tireless work, both as a contributor and volume editor, in making this publication a reality.

Martin Peacock
Head of English Product Development, British Council