Resenhas

MOTTERAM, Gary (Ed.). Innovations in Learning Technologies for English language Teaching. London: The British Council, 2013.

ISIS PORDEUS
Rizvi International Schools
isispordeus@gmail.com

Innovations in Learning Technologies for English Language Teaching is a compilation of case studies focusing on the use of ICT in English Language Teaching. The book is divided into seven chapters, each one dedicated to a specific level of ELT, from primary to secondary schools, adult and higher level education, complemented with a chapter on "English for Specific/Academic Purposes", and a chapter dealing with "Assessment". The last chapter is a summary of the editor's objectives for the book and reflections on the field of Computer Applications and Language Teaching. The book is aimed at teachers and researchers in the field of ELT.

In the Introduction, the editor outlines a series of articles and books regarding CALL and ELT. In addition, in each chapter, we find a review on current issues as well as case studies showing what and how teachers are using technological resources in English language teaching. The book contains very helpful tables organizing the types of activities and the applied resources. They bring a very good summary for teachers, enabling them to make quick references to specific contents in the book, either from the starting point of the resource they want to use or the context in which they teach.

Chapter 1 – *Emerging technologies, emerging minds: digital innovations within the primary sector,* by Chris Pim, presents case studies for using ICT and Web 2.0 in primary education. Before presenting the case studies, the author provides an overview of current theories about age and language learning. He cites concepts from the critical period hypothesis to more recent reviews, such as Kirsch's (2008: 4 – in Motteram, 2013: 19), who states that "research into the optimum age for language learning is inconclusive; an early start has a positive impact on children's attitudes; and the only advantage of an early start is the total amount of time spent actively on learning a language". The author also brings other relevant topics such as digital divide, the most appropriate approach for teaching young learners, and varied tools to support the development of different language skills.

Then, there are nine case studies set in different contexts, showing web-based tools and applications to foster language learning in young learners. Case study 1.2a, for example, presents the collaboration between two teachers, one in Australia and the other in Japan, who developed a project of cultural understanding and development of oral skills, using videoconferencing and PowerPoint presentations.

Chapter 2 – *Integrating technology into secondary English language teaching*, by Graham Stanley, focuses on the integration of technological tools in secondary education. After a few words explaining what are lower and upper secondary

education and the basic aims of each stage, the author continues this chapter discussing the growth of the use of technology in teaching. He quotes some statistics that say that a number as high as 90 percent of teachers in Europe uses technology to prepare their lessons, whereas in the US there is a plan devised by the Office of Educational Technology "for transforming education through technology" (p. 45). He also mentions other contexts where there has been an increasing use of technology in education, such as East Asia, Africa and Latin America.

After that, the author discusses other topics that are relevant to the purpose of the book, such as time constraints and the need to train teachers in the use of ICT, stating that "in many cases (…), this training is not given, and more likely than not, teachers are left to their own devices" (p. 46). According to Stanley, teachers end up building networks with other teachers around the world in order to share their experiences, the personal learning networks (PLNs).

There are four case studies in this chapter, exemplifying the use of web-based tools in Egypt, Brazil, Argentina and Turkey. In the first case study, Ayat, a teacher of lower secondary students in Cairo, devised the idea of a partnership with a teacher in Argentina, Maria, to engage in an intercultural project. In this telecollaboration project, each teacher would be a guest in the other teacher's class using the software Skype. Ayat said that the initial motivation of the students was low, but after engaging in the interview, they became more interested and provided excellent feedback. She did this activity with two groups. The second one was more motivated after they heard about the first session. The success of the activity has encouraged both teachers to continue with their collaboration, especially because this activity was able to create in the students a sense of intercultural awareness and fun.

Chapter 3 – *Technology and adult language teaching*, by Diane Slaouti, Zeynep Onat-Stelma

and Gary Motteram, begins presenting *vignettes* of the three teachers portrayed in their case studies, before discussing theoretical issues, like the nature of adult learning and the specific contexts in which it takes place, as well as the interface between technology and language learning.

In the theoretical review of the nature of adult learning, the authors bring to perspective the role of experience in learning. Thus, "adult learners profit from being able to relate material and tasks to prior and current experience" (p. 72), and therefore they may also "be assumed to be goal--oriented in their learning" (p. 73). According to the authors, although not all adults are "equally purposeful and directed" (p.73), in general, these learners know what is relevant and how they want to learn it.

Throughout their review of current literature on adult learning, the authors use their case studies as illustrations of different aspects. One key point that they discuss is the multifaceted nature of the contexts for adult learning of a second or foreign language. This is put into perspective against the role of institutional policies relating to technology use, from the trend to "technologification of adult learning in the UK" (p. 75), to settings where the available resources are fewer than one might wish for. The three case studies are good examples of teachers trying to build their own way into integrating technology in their practice, taking into account the available resources and their learners' needs.

Chapter 4 – *Technology-integrated English for specific purposes lessons: real-life language, tasks, and tools for professionals*, by Nergiz Kern, discusses the ESP technology-related issues. The chapter begins with a brief review of what the S in ESP stands for: medicine, law, advertising, business, etc. Three case studies are presented: the first is about English for Politicians; the second, about Business English, focuses on three managers working in a learning organization; and the third one is about English for Advertising. Along with

the three case studies, the author reviews important aspects regarding the integration of tools and applications in ESP, and includes a brief discussion of drawbacks and challenges. A key point in this chapter is blended-learning, i.e., face-to-face classes complemented with on-line activities. The conclusion is that teachers of ESP cannot afford not to use technology in their classes, because of its central role in their students' professional life. At the same time, it caters for a 'flexible approach' (p. 110), helps students develop their autonomy, and provides opportunities of authentic work-related interactions and authentic materials.

Chapter 5 – *English for Academic Purposes*, by Jody Gilbert, presents new trends and approaches to the teaching of English for academic purposes, such as the use of concordancing tools and *corpus* analysis. The author begins discussing the nature and purposes of EAP and what are the implications in terms of *curriculum* design. In many contexts, EAP courses have a dual purpose: to teach general English and to prepare students to be able to deal with specific genres, such as academic writing, attending lectures, note-taking and preparing presentations. The first case study is an example of concordancing tools applied to EAP, showing how a teacher uses the tool with his students in the Advanced Grammar course in an undergraduate course in a Canadian University. The use of *corpus* analysis is grounded on the notion that it allows "for both instructors and students to investigate lexical and grammatical patterns of academic language" (p. 122).

The second case study portrays a teacher in Canada using wikis to provide additional cultural support to EAP learners. Her interest was aroused by the observation that some of the students (mostly chinese and saudi arabian) seemed to be quite uncomfortable in social situations that required basic communicative functions. The wikis were created in collaboration with the students to provide information about different cultural topics. Because this teacher had not worked with wikis before, she learned by doing, and discove-

red that this tool is very easy-to-use, what may be an encouragement to other teachers in search of integrating this tool in their practice.

The third case study deals with the use of a virtual learning environment (VLE), in an EAP classroom for students of business and economics in Germany. Web-based learning management systems (LMEs), also called course management systems (CMEs), or virtual learning environments (VLEs), are virtual spaces that can host "a range of on-line resources and tools such as tutorials, language skills activities, quizzes, message boards, wikis, and blogs, all within one central on-line space" (p. 135). The teacher in question decided to start using Moodle, which is one of the most common of these VLEs, as a source of specific tasks and exercises, after the school identified that the students needed to improve their academic writing skills. The report shows that students have responded well to the on-line activities, using vocabulary-building exercises on a regular basis.

Chapter 6 – *A practice-based exploration of technology enhanced assessment for English language teaching*, by Russell Stannard and Anthoni 'Skip' Basiel, addresses the issue of assessment in ELT. This chapter is particularly thought-provoking because it carries out a thorough review of assessment in ELT, covering the changes in the field for half a century. As the focus of language instruction has changed from a more behavioristic or structuralist approach to a more communicative and functional view, the process of assessment also needs to change, to reflect this new conceptualization. Terminology is discussed at the beginning of the chapter (washback, affordances, etc.) and some key points are that "assessment has a role to play in motivation, self-reflection and washback" (p. 148), and "good assessment can even provide opportunities for learning" (p. 148*)*.

The authors present six case studies to illustrate their points. According to them, "e-assessment

is still in its infancy and it is almost always experimental" (p. 149); also, "the process tends to be developmental, (…) [it] is generally done in stages with the focus shifting as the teachers get more confident".(p. 149). They provide a historical review of assessment in ELT and discuss aspects related to formative and summative assessment, feedback, washback effect (i.e., the effect of assessment in teaching and learning); peer-evaluation and self-evaluation; social constructivism, and the use of portfolios (e-portfolios) in assessment. Based on the case studies, the authors compile a sound and useful table with the resources and how they are being used by the teachers in question (p. 162-164). Case study 6.5, for example, illustrates the use of audio recordings and presents a suggestion for self-assessment of oral performance (p. 169-170). In spite of the fact that these case studies are being presented here as illustrations of new approaches to assessment, they provide excellent and easy-to-use ideas for integrating technology in language teaching.

Chapter 7 – *Developing and extending our understanding of language learning and technology*, by Gary Motteram, offers more than a wrap-up of the whole book. Departing from the idea that technology is doing more than simply aggregating new tools to the field of ELT, the author claims that it is "enabling teachers to engage in an activity that supports language development in *more profound ways* than has hitherto been realised" (p. 177, my emphasis). He proceeds to discuss cultural history, technical and cultural artefacts and activity theory, situating CALL and ELT as activity systems. Next, he presents a review of teaching skills and CALL, and concludes by saying that the appropriation of these technical cultural artefacts (i.e., technology, web-based tools and computers) has made it possible for ELT to improve, but also to go beyond mere improvement towards a new understanding of language learning and teaching.