



## TECHNOLOGY SUPPORTED LEARNING: the Cambridge ESOL Case Study

Between May 2006 and March 2009, we were engaged by Cambridge ESOL (University of Cambridge) on a variety of assignments. The main contract involved undertaking the role of Blended Learning Programme Manager, responsible for managing the construction of a new online e-commerce based interactive language learning system. This was initially set up for Italian University Students who had a requirement to learn written and spoken English. It also involved the specification and construction of a bespoke Learning Management System to host the 25 learning modules, all of which were developed by a Polish software company.

### English Language Courses for Italian Universities

The role of Programme Manager was extensive with multiple responsibilities, reporting to the Cambridge ESOL Executive and Project Boards. In brief, the responsibilities included:

- Specification for the bespoke Learning Management System
- Specification for technical standards to be adopted
- Specification for accessibility standards to be adopted
- Functional and learning design
- Design of teacher and learner support mechanisms and structures
- Budget management
- Schedule and resource management
- Reporting and research as required

This was a multi-centred development project, with the software developers based in Gdansk, the Editorial team based in Madrid, writers in France and England, and the executive management team based in Cambridge. The programme represented a joint development between Cambridge ESOL and Cambridge University Press. It was the Programme Manager's job to ensure that the programme was delivered compliant to the requirements, within budget and on time to meet a stringent schedule.

The programme went live on schedule and has met with sufficient success to persuade Cambridge ESOL to embark on subsequent Technology Supported Learning e-commerce initiatives and products.

We were subsequently commissioned to develop a generic design for English Language learning programmes.

A follow on commission involved investigating and assessing potential future off-the-shelf Learning Management Systems, making recommendations for a future tender.

## English Language Online Speaking Tests

This study reviewed the landscape for technology solutions and developments relevant to English speaking tests in the widest sense. Cambridge Assessment provides a wide variety of English speaking tests, ranging from low stakes tests for Schools and Call Centre Staff to high stakes tests for those seeking British residency and citizenship, access to Universities and so forth. In addition to a technology review, the research focus also included an investigation of potential competitors as well as partners, and a consideration of the issues associated with technology supported speaking tests.

The objective was to gain as clear a picture as possible of who is doing what in the market place, what technologies are being used or are available for use and what technologies are in development. A second objective was to analyse the requirements of the different Cambridge Assessment initiatives, products and projects and to identify synergies. A third objective was to map the organisational requirements to the various technology solutions identified and to make recommendations for action.

The study used a mixed methods approach, including semi-structured interviews, literature research, technology research and pinpoint research on technology standards and future evolving technologies.

This study informed Cambridge ESOL's strategy for leveraging the global market for online English language speaking tests.