

# 11 Learning and memory



Electrodes monitor brain activity in a Buddhist teacher, Madison, Wisconsin, USA



# TED TALKS

**SUGATA MITRA** is Professor of Educational Technology at Newcastle University (UK). In 1999 he conducted a series of experiments in the slums of New Delhi called the 'Hole in the wall' experiments. He wanted to see what would happen if children with no experience of using computers were left on their own with a computer, in a hole in a wall, to explore with. The amazing results prompted further research into the idea of 'self-organized' learning or what he calls 'minimally invasive education'.

Sugata Mitra's idea worth spreading is that with a prompting question, a little encouragement and a computer at their disposal, children's natural curiosity can lead them to make great progress in furthering their own learning.



## BACKGROUND

- 1 You are going to watch an edited version of a TED Talk by Sugata Mitra called *Build a school in the cloud*. Read the text about the speaker and the talk. Then work in pairs and discuss the questions.
  - 1 Why do you think Sugata Mitra chose the slums of New Delhi for his experiments?
  - 2 What are the three ingredients necessary for his model of 'self-organized' learning to take place?
  - 3 Would you consider learning something by yourself on a computer? What and why?

## KEY WORDS

- 2 Read the sentences (1–6). The words in bold are used in the TED Talk. First guess the meaning of the words. Then match the words with their definitions (a–f).
  - 1 It's a **robust** computer that can withstand quite a lot of mistreatment or rough handling.
  - 2 As more transactions are done online, the bank needs to employ fewer **clerks**.
  - 3 Skype allows you to **beam** yourself into another home anywhere in the world.
  - 4 The children watched **in awe** as the character in the 'photo' came alive and started to speak.
  - 5 If you can **tap into** their real interests, students will learn.
  - 6 The computers that seemed so modern in the 1990s are now completely **obsolete**.

a get access to something in a way that brings good results  
b transmit a signal by radio or light waves  
c strong and well-built  
d with overwhelming amazement, admiration or fear  
e people who do routine administrative work  
f out-of-date and no longer needed

## AUTHENTIC LISTENING SKILLS

### Understanding mid-sentence changes

It is common in conversation – although less common in prepared speeches – for speakers to change direction mid-sentence and produce a sentence that appears ungrammatical. They begin a sentence and then without finishing it, either rephrase the idea or bring in an additional idea to finish the sentence. For example:

*I wanted to say that it has been a pleasure to be, I've really enjoyed my, everything you've done for me during my stay.*

Be aware that this is a feature of native speech and try to stay focussed on the main meaning (not what is missing or seems wrong), i.e. *Thank you for everything you've done for me during my stay. It has been a pleasure.*

- 3a** **46** Look at the Authentic listening skills box. Listen to this sentence from the TED Talk. How would you expect the sentence to be written (i.e. without the change of direction in mid-sentence)? Check your ideas with the answers on page 177.

'I tried to look at where did the kind of learning we do in schools, where did it come from?'

- 3b** **47** Listen to another extract from the talk. Complete the extract. Then rephrase the second sentence as you would expect to see it written.

'About eight hours later, we found them browsing and teaching each other how to browse. So I said, "Well, <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ impossible, <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, you know – <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ is it <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_? They <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ know anything."'