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## Google Glass – a glimpse of the future?

Earlier this month, San Francisco hosted Google's annual development conference, which showcases the company's innovations. This year, there was one big talking point: Google Glass.

Google Glass is probably the world's most hyped product, and it hasn't even been launched yet. The product is expected to actually retail next year.

What is 'Google Glass'? They are no ordinary glasses. The frames house a tiny computer which projects information from the Internet, such as emails, text messages and search results. The information is displayed on a tiny crystal screen suspended just above the user's right eye.

The computer responds to voice commands. Say 'take a picture' to take a photograph. You can record short amounts of video. There is even a function which translates your voice: "Say 'half a kilo' in Chinese."

The device has been tested by two thousand early adopters. They paid about \$1,500 for the devices.

Needless to say, the press at the conference were keen to speak to anyone wearing Google Glass. Many users were enthusiastic. One wearer saw the voice recognition aspect as a benefit: "you don't have to reach for your Smartphone to answer messages".

Another wearer was more cautious, saying these are early days. Indeed, Facebook and EBay have announced they will be making apps for Glass. Clearly, there's more to come. Some of it sounds like science fiction, from face recognition software to product price comparisons as you are about to buy something.

Google Glass has kicked off a privacy debate. One café in Seattle made headlines by already banning customers from wearing these glasses. US casinos are talking about a similar ban. Some US states are considering making it illegal to wear the glasses while driving. Fears centre around the fact that you could film or photograph things and people unnoticed.

Google are not alone in shaping the future. Other companies are working on wearable technology. New technology always raises new issues. It looks like social 'etiquette' - when to wear these glasses - and 'privacy' will be the big areas of discussion.

Things to talk about with your students:

- What do think about Google Glass?
- Would you consider buying them?
- Do you think 'wearable technology' will be the next 'big shift' in technology?

Useful sites to explore:

<http://www.google.com/glass/start/>

<http://blog.ted.com/2013/05/17/our-thoughts-on-using-google-glass-so-far-plus-videos-that-show-what-it-can-do/>