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SEÇÃO: ARTIGOS

M-learning and the EFL classroom: Using mobiles as tools to engage teenagers in speaking activities

M-learning e a sala de aula de Inglês como língua estrangeira: usando celulares como ferramentas para engajar adolescentes em atividades de conversação

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ABSTRACT: Technology is definitely ubiquitous. It is what keeps us constantly connected to different people on a daily basis. Since the advent of smartphones, technology has also changed the way we perform many of our everyday tasks, including the ones at the school local context. It also reinvented the way teenagers learn and behave in the classroom, EFL institutions included. This article, then, aims to present and discuss the role of mobile learning in the teaching of English-speaking skills and the concept of Bring Your Own Device. Additionally, based on the concept of Partnering Pedagogy (PRENSKY, 2012), it suggests a lesson plan for regular school pre-teens to show how teachers can give the first step toward the implementation of mobile devices in their educational practices. The lesson, which can be applied either to online or face-to-face contexts, showed how teenage students become more willing to participate in speaking activities. Finally, the text brings to light some reflection on the integration of mobile technologies in EFL learning practices, emphasizing the essence of delivering high quality learning lessons rather than giving central importance to technology per se.

KEYWORDS: digital technology, mobile learning, partnering pedagogy, English as a foreign language, speaking activities

RESUMO: A tecnologia é definitivamente onipresente. É ela que nos mantém constantemente conectados a diferentes pessoas no dia a dia. Desde o advento dos *smartphones*, a tecnologia vem mudando também a maneira como realizamos muitas de nossas tarefas cotidianas, incluindo àquelas relacionadas ao contexto escolar. Ela também reinventou a maneira como os adolescentes aprendem e se portam em sala de aula, inclusive nas instituições de ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira. Isso posto, o presente artigo tem como objetivo apresentar e discutir o papel da aprendizagem móvel no ensino de língua inglesa e o conceito de *Bring Your Own Device (Traga seu próprio dispositivo)*. Além disso, com base no conceito de Pedagogia da Parceria (PRENSKY, 2012), sugere um plano de aula desenvolvido para pré-adolescentes da escola regular para mostrar como os professores podem dar o primeiro passo na implementação de dispositivos móveis em suas práticas educacionais. A aula, que pode ser aplicada em contextos online ou presencial, mostrou como os alunos adolescentes ficam mais dispostos a participar de atividades de conversação quando essas incluem o uso de dispositivos móveis. Finalmente, o texto faz uma reflexão sobre a integração de *smartphones* nas práticas de aprendizagem de inglês como língua estrangeira, enfatizando a essência de oferecer aulas de aprendizagem de alta qualidade, em vez de dar importância central à tecnologia por si só.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: tecnologia digital, aprendizagem móvel, pedagogia da parceria, inglês como língua estrangeira, atividades de conversação



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Introduction

Digital technologies have created new ways to communicate, look for information and interact with people. These new ways were even noticeable after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the latest breakthroughs in technology, we have at our disposal a set of devices for prompt use such as virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence and high-tech mobile tools. In this paper, I will focus on the role of mobile learning in language teaching, more specifically the concept of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), by reinforcing the idea that learning can be stimulating, motivational and inspiring if technology goes hand in hand with high-quality teaching. However, having devices integrated into the learning process still seems to be a desire for many students, especially teenagers who see gadgets as an important tool for their personal development. Some schools still display in their classrooms warnings like "No mobile phones allowed", "No cell phone Zone" or "Mobile Phones prohibited", reinforcing that the use of such devices are not beneficial to education. Although there are many reasons for schools to continue relying exclusively on old resources as their main technological advances – lack of resources, pedagogical improvement and professional learning – they seem not to be suited in current times, an issue I will briefly bring to discussion in the lines to follow.

Since my teaching background includes teaching in private English schools, I aim to contribute with teaching practices and suggestions used in this educational context. The previous experience I had at a language school, which has been engaged toward the implementation of mobiles as learning tools, has influenced positively my decision to deepen my studies in this area as well as proposed some reflection on the importance of incorporating Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in English classes for young learners.

This paper, thus, explores the theoretical and applied nature of the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom through mobile learning, and presents a sample of a lesson plan that shows how teachers can incorporate the use of

mobiles to engage teenagers in speaking activities. It does not address, though, the constraints some schools have regarding incorporating technology into children's everyday classes. Since it is a complex issue, it would be necessary to use it thoroughly and consistently by presenting valuable data to corroborate the current scenario of schools in Brazil, especially the State ones.

Technology and the EFL student from the 21st century

New technologies have changed the way we live and communicate and "most educators agree that new technologies require new skills" (Hockly, 2012, p. 108). Pegrum (2011), and Dudeney *et al.* (2013) state that these skills include the so-called "digital literacies", which correspond to four main areas, such as language (decoding online text genres); information (searching effectively for information online); connection (exchanging relevant information with online networks); redesign (recreating already-made digital content in innovative ways).

According to Hockly (2012, p. 110), Pegrum (2011) makes clear that "digital literacies are not a checklist of discrete skills that are simply acquired and then ticked off". These literacies certainly include procedural skills (inserting an image into a word-processed document), but they also include "less clearly defined skills, such as communicating effectively in distributed virtual communities. As technology evolves and changes, so new skills and literacies emerge and become increasingly important".

Although some national curricula make provision for the development of digital literacies within primary and secondary schooling, teachers may find challenging to know how to operationalize these literacies in the classroom. This is particularly true for teachers who still may not feel confident with technology themselves or have received little or no training in how to use technology in a principled manner with learners. As English language teachers, we can help our learners acquire not only the language skills needed for communication in an increasingly

globalized world but also some of the digital skills that they will inevitably also need.

It is increasingly difficult for us to separate language from the digital environment used. As such, one could argue that by integrating new technologies into our classroom, they can help learners develop key digital literacies and that it is indeed their duty as language teachers to do so.

Ybarra and Green (2003) claim that technology can be used as an effective teaching tool for English language learners once it provides students with a language-rich environment as they engage in different language activities. The authors state that learners need to be able to interact with each other so that learning through communication can occur. As computers can work as tools to increase verbal exchange, incorporating ICT into the EFL classroom goes beyond simply exercising grammar structures in front of a screen. Students have to be able to interact and share their ideas to make learning more meaningful. These scholars still add that by planning lessons carefully, ICT can incorporate various learning strategies into teaching as well as accommodate a variety of learning styles.

For Dudeny and Hockly (2007), the insertion of technology in the English classroom is an important issue due to the possibilities it brings to education. Technology can be a source to provide students with authentic tasks and materials. It also helps them in the development of the four main language skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. For Crompton (2013, p. 47), technologies enable new affordances to the learner such as learning which is personalized, contextualized and unrestricted by temporal and spatial constraints.

Likewise, due to its portability, technology is present in many locations and different contexts. According to Prensky (2012), this new context is the main cause of our educational problems. Our students, also known as *Digital Natives*³, establish a natural interaction with technology and that

is why they share expectations concerning its integration into teaching. For Prensky (2001), it is clear that digital natives and the educational system are not working in accordance one with the other: "Today's students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach." (PRENSKY, 2001). He claims that this new generation of students are likely to receive information very fast. They like parallel process and multi-task as well as they prefer random access and games to "serious" work. Therefore, the same young people who are bored in schools are the ones who are hard at work learning *afterschool*⁴. In other words, it is in the *afterschool* world that many of our students are teaching themselves and each other useful lessons about their real present and future.

(...) When they learn to download, text, and tweet, they can immediately participate in profound social revolutions, such as changing the music business and influencing government policies. As they learn to post their creations online, they become aware that even as young people, they can truly influence and change the world. This gives new urgency and meaning to the "Why should I learn this?" (...) Today's students expect the same thing from their formal education as from the rest of their lives – that it be not just relevant, but *real*. (Prensky, 2010, p. 4)

Moreover, Prensky (2010) believes that even more people are now deeply and permanently technologically enhanced, connected to the world in ways no generation has been before, and this is a good reason for changing the schools' reality. It is important that schools rethink their practicum in order to follow these new tendencies and make their English classes more appealing to their students. As Hanson-Smith (2000) states in her book "Technology Enhanced Learning Environments", in the technology-enhanced environment, the classroom has to expand to encompass the world:

Technology can enrich the often-impoorished classroom world – four walls, desks, chalkbo-

³ Prensky (2001) defines Digital Natives in contrast to Digital Immigrants. The former concept refers to those who were born in the digital era. They are used to receiving information very fast, enjoy multi-tasks and work better when networked. The latter relates to those who were not born into the digital world, but usually adapt themselves to profit from it as well.

⁴ Term used by Prensky (2001) to encompass informal ways of learning among the students, such as learning by the Internet, television, games and other emerging opportunities.

ard, pencil and paper – with explorations of the greater world and the many accents of the real English speakers in it. (...) Where teachers learn to use the technology and collaborate in its pedagogical development, students flourish in surprising ways. (Hanson-Smith, 2000, p. 1-2)

Taking the benefits stated by Hanson-Smith into consideration, we could assume that implementing technology into the EFL curriculum may result in a more meaningful and interesting way of learning English among teenage students. For Blake (2013, p. 25), rationale and motivation to incorporate technology into the language curriculum becomes quite clear once it is a medium that our students understand, pay attention to, and like to use.

Pedagogical principles for implementing technology in the EFL classroom

In "Brave New Digital Classroom", Blake (2013, p. 110) points out some pedagogical principles that he refers to as *threads*, to guide the integration of technology into the Foreign Language (FL) curriculum. The first principle involves the conscious use of a diversity of technological tools. According to the author, one device can never fit all time and places and, similarly, it cannot guarantee successful learning. "No one should think that the mere use of technology by itself would create educational change in the FL classroom and improve the curriculum. (...) The lesson plans need to be constantly reviewed and adapted based on the students' reception of them" (Blake, p. 120). In other words, activities have to be in accordance with the learning conditions created by the teacher and, most importantly, supported by the learning environment, and accepted by the learners.

Then, the second principle is in relation to the theory-driven applications of new technologies. It means that teachers should integrate digital technologies in the EFL classroom as long as it presents clear benefits to the learning process itself, and not just for the sake of using a specific tool. "How technology is used should always be the focus and the testing ground for the brave

new digital classroom" (Blake, 2013). Blake (2013) also explains that technology can never be the content of a lesson and points out the results of its successful implementation encompass the following:

Using new technologies will not make up for a lack of planning or foresight but rather will tend to intensify existing classroom methodological deficiencies. Moreover, teachers need to plot out how the introduction of a given technological tool and its accompanying tasks will empower students to take control of their own learning process and, consequently, stimulate a more student-centered classroom. (Blake, 2013, p. 112)

Mobile learning, for instance, serves as a complement to the tasks teachers already develop with their students, something that will result in more student-centered classrooms, the third pedagogical principle presented by the author. Speaking of student-centeredness, Blake (2013) states that this approach fosters a sense of authorship and makes students become producers of their own learning process. The internet, for instance, is designed to encourage student-centered learning rather than teacher-centered learning (Blake, 2013, p.29). For some learning contexts, the learner-centered approach can sound laborious; however, by changing their perception and mindset about the process of teaching and learning, they can envision a more participative and instigating classroom. As Blake (2013) points out: "Teachers should redirect their energies away from notions of control toward learning objectives that ensure that the tasks and tools will motivate students to become active participants who engage in reflections about both their own culture and the target one" (p. 113).

The author highlights that promoting technological activities without any preparation or planning can lead to frustration and problems. "Using technology never obviates the need for the lesson planning and careful technical preparation, especially if the goal is to involve students as willing and active participants in the process" (Blake, 2013, p. 114). For this reason, apart from having a firm grounding in how the tools work (i.e. functional literacy), "a successful incorporation

of technology into the language classroom curriculum demands that students reflect on what they are doing (i.e., critical literacy) and then put it into practice (i.e. rhetorical literacy)" (Blake, 2013, p. 114). Moreover, the key to enact the brave new digital classroom still relies on each teacher's change of mindset toward a more student-centered approach that incorporates technology (Blake, 2013, p. 123).

Rethinking pedagogy in the 21st classroom

Reevaluating our daily practice is necessary for the implementation of mobile technology in the EFL classroom, and this includes adopting a new pedagogy so that students and teachers can work as partners in the learning process. "Today's teachers need to find ways to create 21st century citizens (and workers) who parrot less and think more." (Prensky, 2012, p. 3).

For this reason, this section summarizes two pedagogical approaches to help teachers understand how they can successfully implement technology in the EFL classroom and use it to conduct teaching and learning in a way that students can also be responsible for the process themselves. "Most of our teachers require neither punishment nor replacement, but what they do need is new perspectives and ideas that work. Our educational context has changed, and a new context demands new thinking." (Prensky, 2012, p. 3).

Partnering Pedagogy

According to Prensky (2010), in their push to get their classrooms technological and education more up to date, some teachers end up adding technology to their teaching before they know pedagogically what to do with it. "Technology only helps when it supports a pedagogy of *partnering*." (Prensky, 2012, p. 7). According to the author, this pedagogy allows both teachers and students to work as partners in the learning process. In other words, the teacher is no longer the one who teaches, but the one who guides the students towards learning. "In partnering pedagogy, using technology is the students' job. The teachers' job is to coach and guide the use

of technology for effective learning." (Prensky, 2010, p. 3). Collaborating, thus, is opposed to a traditional way of teaching: instead of lecturing and explaining, the teacher guides the students to make them discover things by themselves, either individually or in groups. Students are the ones who search, make hypotheses, find the answers to the questions they want to know, and learn *with* their teachers and not only *from* their teachers. See table 1 to understand how partnering/collaborating pedagogy changes the teachers and students' attitude in the classroom according to Prensky's theory:

TABLE 1 – Students' and teachers' roles in partnering pedagogy

Teacher	Student
Doesn't tell, <i>asks!</i>	Doesn't take notes, <i>finds out!</i>
Suggests topics and tools	Researches and creates output
Learns about technology from students	Learns about quality and rigor from teacher
Evaluates students' output for rigor and quality; supplies context	Refines and improves output, adding rigor, context, and quality

Source: Prensky (2010, p. 16).

Notably, technology can play a prominent role in pedagogy once it will support collaboration and enable students to personalize their own learning process. Prensky (2010) claims that it is through technology that students will be free to learn at their own pace as well as have the opportunity to learn more or less in whatever ways they prefer, as long as they remain in the topic proposed. Therefore, the author adds that it is necessary to adopt a new way of thinking, and this new way of thinking includes a new pedagogy if one wishes to work successfully with technology in the classroom. Furthermore, Prensky (2010) explains that partnership-based relationships and technology work very well together because it allows technology to be used fully.

[...] partnering enables students to be engaged, from the start of every class, in discovering on their own (and sharing with each other) what the material is and how it works, in finding examples

in multiple media, in creating and sharing their own examples, and in communicating with peers and writers around the globe. (Prensky, 2010, p. 17)

For this scholar, the levels of partnering can vary to fit different types of students, situations, and backgrounds. These are *basic*, *guided*, and *advanced*. *Basic* is the one in which the teachers provide students with guiding questions to make them discover the answers by themselves (individually or in groups) and, subsequently, make them present the results. It means that instead of lecturing about some topic, the teacher will ask students about it and encourage them to find and discuss the answers.

Prensky (2010) admits that the freedom proposed by *basic partnering* may not work in all contexts. Some students may have difficulties researching or working independently, for instance. Then, in these cases, teachers may opt for *guided partnering*. The *Guided* level also starts with guiding questions followed by the discussion of results, but it is followed by the presentation of a task so that in the end students can be able to answer questions by themselves. This level is a more structured version of *basic partnering* once the kinds of presentations students do are more specific; moreover, the author recommends it for starters or students who need tutoring.

A third approach to this type of pedagogy is called *advanced partnering*. The main objective of this level is to let students search for topics on their own. These topics are based on real-life cases or problems. Students are supposed to research different issues to evaluate a hypothetical situation and solve an overarching problem like the ones teachers normally propose in business and medical schools. Prensky (2010) adds that *advanced partnering* is much more challenging because students are supposed to deal with more complex issues and be in full control over the subject.

The author highlights that whatever type of collaboration the teacher chooses students will

use some digital technology to search and find the answers to their guiding questions. Undoubtedly, this type of pedagogy is also possible to be applied without any technological resource. However, the more technology available to students, the better collaboration usually goes (Prensky, 2010).

Prensky (2010) also points out that either new and experienced teachers have already used some partnering pedagogy in their lessons once notable scholars like Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1978) coined other names for the pedagogy, active learning, and student-centered learning, respectively. However, more important than the name given to this approach is the initiative to move from a traditional way of learning to a collaborative one in the classroom. Yet, the author states that some teachers find it hard to incorporate partnering pedagogy into the school curricula because of the contents with which they are required to work. On the contrary, Prensky (2010) believes *partnering* does work very well in today's school curricula once it rethinks the pedagogy and adapts book-centered activities by changing them to a guiding question approach, an important step when it comes to mobile learning.

Learning-by-doing Pedagogy

Corroborating Prensky (2010), Norris and Soloway (2013, p. 110) state that when it comes to mobile learning, it is necessary to move from an instructional pedagogy to a learning-by-doing pedagogy so that teachers can finally transform the teaching and learning environment. This process scaffolds⁵ students and enables them to take ownership and responsibility for their learning and, as a result, pupils happen to learn by getting involved in tasks, and the teacher or the classroom textbook no longer plays the mediator role. However, we need emphasize that mobiles are simply tools, and "although mobile technologies are a necessary condition for classrooms moving to a learning-by-doing

⁵ Scaffolding is understood here as "an instructional strategy that involves supporting novice learners by limiting the complexities of the context and gradually removing those limits as learners gain the knowledge, skills, and confidence to cope with the full complexity of the context." (Young, 1993).

pedagogy, they are far from a sufficient condition" (Norris & Soloway, 2013, p. 112). It means that teaching can never be a free process. "Teachers must be provided with a curriculum – with that something to do" (Norris & Soloway, 2013, p. 112).

The authors present some advantages brought by the learning-by-doing pedagogy. The first two advantages are "Learn in context", and "Direct and immediate access to information, events, locations, and data". Both ideas bring the concept of mobility provided by the internet and the applications easily carried in nowadays pockets, i.e., the access to information becomes immediate and direct. "If a student has an interest, no longer must their interest be mediated by the teacher or the textbook. Rather, the student can himself or herself immediately pursue, to virtually any depth, his or her interest in a topic, an event, a location, etc." (Norris & Soloway, 2013, p. 112).

Another advantage is related to "discuss, collaborate⁶, and work as a team", i.e., we learn in conversation, when there are discourse and discussion, and the role of teachers is to help students learn and guide them in what information to retrieve. As related by the authors, the "I teach", gives space to "We learn". Apart from 'all the time, everywhere learning' there is the last advantage: "mobile learning is not just computers". As it suggests, mobiles of today bring GPS, camera, mic, and other devices altogether. "Mobile technologies – devices, software, network – provide learners with a broad range of tools with which they can truly take control and ownership of their learning" (Norris & Soloway, 2013, p. 113). Therefore, m-learning can present a personalized classroom that counts on mobility, a considerable dissimilarity between this practice and the one performed on desktop computers.

More about m-learning

Mobile learning is a new modality in education that is here to stay. The term "mobile learning" or "m-learning" as the name suggests, means learning

by the use of mobile technology. M-learning is not as new as people might think. It came subsequently to other terms such as "e-learning", "educational technology", "distance education" and includes not only the use of mobile phones but also tablets, hand-held computers, mp4 players, and other portable gadgets. Likewise, determining which devices are part of m-learning has been debatable since technologies are constantly being invented or redesigned. According to "Policy Guidelines for Mobile Learning" presented by UNESCO (2013, p. 6), the list of devices available on the market today is enormous and ranges from mobile phones and tablet computers to portable audio players and hand-held gaming consoles. This list may continue to change, thus, to embrace a broad definition of mobile. UNESCO (2013) recognizes mobile technology as digital and easily portable devices that are usually owned and controlled by an individual rather than an institution, can access the internet, have multimedia capabilities, and can facilitate a large number of tasks, particularly those related to communication. By considering this definition, mobile technology in this article will exclusively refer to mobile phones, tablets, or any other device whose functions are similar to the ones referred to above.

For UNESCO (2013), mobile learning is considered a branch of ICT in education that involves the use of mobile technology, either alone or in combination with another device that makes learning happen anytime and anywhere. In this way, learning can take place in a variety of ways: people can use mobile devices to access educational resources, connect with others, or create content, both inside and outside classrooms. Mobile learning is "learning across multiple contexts, through social and content interactions, using personal electronic devices" (Crompton, 2013, p. 4). Likewise, in the book "Mobile Learning: Transforming the Delivery of Education and Training" Ally (2009) emphasizes the changes the use of mobiles has brought to the world and states that, naturally, education has no other choice

⁶ The authors Norris and Soloway (2013), Ally, Grimus, and Ebner (2014) as well as UNESCO (2013) share the same concept when it comes to *collaborative learning*. For them, the term *collaborate* means to cooperate in a learning experience so that it is possible to share and contribute to each member's understanding of a topic to complete a given task.

but to deliver learning materials on mobile devices. Moreover, Traxler (2009) states that mobile, personal, and wireless devices are radically changing societal notions of discourse and knowledge and have transformed art, employment, language, deprivation, and of course, learning. Similarly, Ally (2009) conveys that "The role of education, perhaps especially formal education, is challenged, and the relationships between education, society, and technology are now more dynamic than ever." (p. 10). The author also points out that m-learning helps teacher to personalize their lessons to fit different learning styles and approaches, which corroborates for authentic learning involving real-world problems, and collaborative work.

Reasons for implementing m-learning in the EFL classroom

Despite the whole new scenario imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO (2013, p. 6) claims that the role played by mobile technology can be explained by analyzing numbers. In other words, by considering developed countries, 4 out of 5 people own and use a mobile phone today. In developing countries, this number is lower; however, it has been growing considerably fast. As this report highlights, mobile continues to accelerate digital inclusion and drive increased connectivity with 3.8 billion people now using mobile internet. Almost half the world's population now use mobile internet. By the end of 2019, there were 3.8 billion people using mobile internet (an increase of 250 million users since the end of 2018), with three quarters of all mobile internet users living in low- and middle-income. Moreover, as the price of smart phone ownership continues to decline, more and more people, including those in impoverished areas, are likely to own and know how to use a mobile device within the next few years.

Due to such popularity, mobile phones still tend to be associated exclusively with entertainment, not education and, as a result, they are commonly dismissed as distracting in the school settings (UNESCO, 2013, p. 39). It is claimed, though, that the implementation of mobile learning into the

curricula can bring many advantages to the learning process. Mobiles allow personalization, once there are generally owned by its users, highly customizable and carried throughout the day, as well as let teachers and students manage class time more effectively. According to a case study presented by UNESCO (2013), mobiles can also encourage high-level thinking, hands-on research, and collaboration, and help ensure that learning which happens inside and outside the classrooms is mutually supportive. In other words, mobiles can bridge formal and informal learning by letting the student access supplemental materials to complement or clarify the content taught by the instructor. "The success of mobile learning hinges on the ability of teachers to maximize the educational advantages of mobile devices" (UNESCO, 2013, p. 31).

Another advantage of mobile learning is the vast number of applications of mobile devices available to users. Apart from educational applications, digital distribution platforms such as *Appstore* and *Google Play* offer a diversity of apps that can be adapted to the English classroom settings. By using these applications, students can share data and, then, build the learning process together.

From a didactical, methodological, and technical perspective, mobile apps seem to be an efficient means for teaching and learning purposes. Mobile devices such as smartphones provide the technological platforms for access and transfer of information. (...) The majority of mobile devices and smartphones are easy to use and are seen as efficient tools for collaboration and data sharing. Didactical concepts derived from a constructivism perspective shows ways to manage dispersed and self-organized work or group-work process. (Khaddagge & Lattermann, 2013, p. 125)

Besides, whenever an institution decides on mobile learning implementation, the whole system has to be revised. UNESCO (2013) highlights that improving school infrastructure and its connectivity is not enough; it is essential that schools review, update or create a new policy, i.e., plan carefully the rules that will guide such specific practice. More important than the implementation of technology itself, the

training⁷ for better teaching practice becomes fundamental: teachers and students need to be prepared to incorporate mobile technologies into their pedagogical practice. Because schools often overlook or prohibit mobile devices, educators have not had opportunities to teach students how to use them responsibly. "Schools are well-placed to guide the appropriate and productive uses of mobile devices, and students are unlikely to get this guidance elsewhere." (UNESCO, 2013, p. 36).

BYOD moment: how does it work?

By considering mobile technology as an element of change in the EFL classroom, it would be ideal if in-person courses could provide groups with some m-learning so that teachers can easily incorporate it into their practice. However, this technology can become costly if we consider the amount of devices schools should buy to implement the respective changes. Not all English courses in Brazil can afford a set of tablets with a list of ready -to-use applications and, because of that, they are rethinking their practice to incorporate "Bring-your-own-Device" moments, best known as BYOD, an emerging education technology trend which has gained popularity worldwide. The idea behind BYOD is to encourage students to make use of the technology they carry in their pockets for educational purposes. Mobile phones, as well as other handheld devices, can be powerful multipurpose mechanisms for learning. Podcasts, video interviews, polling and quizzes can all be accomplished via cell phone to enhance our student learning experience. BYOD is not about the whole lesson but about a moment in which teachers invite students to perform an activity on their mobiles. Then, instead of using course books or other printed resources, the teacher can adapt and personalize activities counting on the students' support.

According to UNESCO (2013, p. 36), BYOD is an attractive and inexpensive model given that learners shoulder the cost of the device, maintenance, and even connectivity. Thus, BYOD

projects can be implemented in areas where most people have mobile devices, and this allows more room for personalization.

As with any other material used in class, the BYOD model can present some limitations. UNESCO (2013) states the main disadvantage of BYOD is that this model gives students some room for comparison once it can create scenarios where learners with superior connectivity plans and devices can outperform those with inferior ones. For this reason, UNESCO (2013) recommends that schools and teachers follow some policies so that they make the most out of BYOD moments without any constraints. Among these recommendations, it is to verify, before an activity, if all students have the access to the mobile technology, individually or in pairs, and if the school provides students with connectivity if needed. Another suggestion is to make sure your students really use their mobiles in class to support learning and research in the lesson. Finally, UNESCO (2013) emphasizes the importance of making students aware of how to use their devices in classes responsibly.

Analizing a sample of a lesson plan on m-learning

It is possible to claim that m-learning goes far beyond the simple use of mobiles in the classroom. It requires time, careful planning, and acceptance by the teachers, and most importantly, by their learners. Through illustrating the principles presented and encouraging other teachers to rethink their practice toward a new concept of EFL classroom, I suggest a lesson plan applied to the learning environment where I teach, and I explain how I engaged students in the activities designed for them. This lesson plan was applied to face-to-face environment, however it can be easily adapted to reach online contexts.

Setting the context

The group, whose level is equivalent to A2⁸, counts on eighteen teenage students ranging

⁷ According to UNESCO (2013), training goes beyond the reception of formal instruction. It encompasses the informal support teachers receive by exchanging ideas and experiences with their peers.

⁸ Elementary users, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2020).

from 12 to 14 years old. The extra-curricular lesson named "What if objects could talk?" was applied in the school where I used to work. This class was designed to last one hour and fifteen minutes. Apart from tablets or mobiles, its planning also required the use of a data-projector.

The application used for this lesson is *Chatter Pix – by Duck Duck Moose*⁹, free available for the *IOS* and *Android*, but any other similar app can be used in its place. Although *Chatter Pix* is not designed for educational purposes, it can be easily incorporated into the teaching context. The objective of this application is to make any image talk by taking a photo, adding expressive animated stickers, including facial features, special effects, and voice recording. According to Walker and White (2013), due to technology, we live in visual culture. Then, images and videos bring the world to the classroom as well as allow learners to see a context, body language, facial expressions, and artifacts. The authors think it is a good idea if students post their videos online to make their creations move beyond the classroom environment, something that is also possible to be done through this app.

Lesson Planning

Table 2 on pages 21 to 24 presents a lesson plan that is organized in six steps: the warmer, the lead-in, the skills development, the production, the follow-up, and the extra activity. All stages are gradually connected with one another to establish a smooth transition among the steps.

As a warmer, students are divided into groups. Together, they are supposed to brainstorm objects they use or see every day. The activity aims to activate students' schemata¹⁰, preparing them for the theme of the lesson as well as the oral activity that follows it (teachers can also change it into a game). For this, each group receives a blank paper. The teacher times

the activity as students write as many objects as they can. The teacher counts the words and, finally, the group with more words written is the winner.

As a lead-in activity, the teacher asks students if they happen to talk to any of the objects they put on the list. As most adolescents tend to say "no" to avoid being questioned, I suggest starting with a video of a teenage boy showing different objects and the situations where he talks to them. Again, this video will activate students' schemata and encourage them to give their opinions about the topic so that they are provided with the chance to speak with their colleagues.

After students talk in pairs about the objects they usually interact with, the teacher invites them to watch another video in which objects talk to humans this time. As a skill development stage, the teacher invites students to share what items would say to them if they were able to talk, asking the class to decide on the most annoying, friendly, or the smartest answers while giving reasons for that.

Finally, the teacher divides students into trios for the production stage. S/he sets the task and explains it gradually before giving them the tablets. This initiative controls the students' anxiety and makes them focus more on the task rather than on the gadget itself. Having chosen the "talking" object and taken its picture at the school surroundings, the teacher briefly exemplifies the use of the application so that students feel more at ease with the app and, then, become able to perform the task in a continuous flow. As a follow-up activity, students present their creations, answer the questions posed by the objects, and decide on the funniest video, the most annoying item, and the best story.

⁹ There is a similar app also available free at *Google Play* and *Apple Store* called *Funny Movie Maker*. Even being a bit simpler than the one presented in this paper, their functions are quite similar.

¹⁰ Schemata are units of knowledge that not only affect the way information is interpreted, thus affecting comprehension, but also continue to change as new information is received. Retrieved November 6, 2014, from <http://www.csus.edu/indiv/g/gipej/teaparty.pdf>.

TABLE 2 – Lesson Plan Sample on m-learning

What would objects say if they could talk?	
Class profile	18 pre-teens at level equivalent to A2.
Time	1 hour and 15 min.
Setting	Classroom and surroundings.
Content focus	Narration, inquiries and responds.
Aims	Exercise the ability of giving opinions. Make students discuss issues and other aspects to compose a digital story. Make students express and support ideas while working cooperatively in a small group environment.
Potential Language Outcome	Linkers: <i>After, after that, later, then,</i> Expressions: <i>How about...? What about? Why don't we...?</i> Adjectives: <i>...ing, ...ed</i> Comparative structures: <i>more annoying than, better than, as ...as</i>
Skills	Speaking, writing and listening.
Patterns of interaction	Teacher-student [T/S]; Pair-work [P/W]; Group-work [G/W]; [W/G] Whole group.
Suggested App	Chatter Pix – This application can make anything talk - pets, friends, food, objects and more. Simply take a picture, draw a mouth, record a message and add expressive animated stickers to customize the photo, including facial features and special effects.
Materials used	Notebooks, pencils, data-projector or IWB and tablets.
Input	Video 1 - <i>youtube</i> video - Talking to Objects: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgE7MMZkEnI ; Video 2 – <i>Chatter Pix</i> demonstration video produced by the teacher.

Steps (15')	Resources	Procedures
Warmer	Data-projector	In pairs, students are asked to make a list of objects they use every day. [TSI] After this list, the teacher invites students to think of the following question: <i>Do you talk to any of these objects on a daily basis?</i>
Lead-in Activity		Show the video "Talking to Objects" or any other video, which brings someone talking to daily objects. Video link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgE7MMZkEnI
		
Skills Development		[PW] After the video, students are invited to discuss the following questions in pairs: <i>Do you talk to objects? Which objects do you usually talk to? What do you say to them?</i> After that, teacher invites students to think of the following question: <i>If these objects could talk back to you, what would they say? Which object would be the most annoying? The smartest? The friendliest? Why?</i> <i>The teacher guides their students to think about the questions by showing a video they created using the app "Chatter Pix".</i> [PW] Students discuss the questions previously asked in pairs.
Steps (15')	Resources	Procedures and timing (15')
	Tablets	Organize students into groups of 3. [GW] Explain that some objects can carry very interesting stories and that it is time to "wake" some of the objects at the school. Hand a tablet per group. First, they move around the school to choose one object and take a picture. After that, students return to the classroom and think of a 30" story to be told by the object itself. Have one student write down the ideas on a piece of paper before they start recording their voices. Apart from the story itself, the speech must include a curious question or request to the audience. While monitoring, encourage students to try to be as creative as possible. [GW] In trios, students start working on their digital stories by using "Chatter Pix".
Production	Tip: If the noise level in the room is high, tell students to record their stories outside the classroom as long as they do not disturb other groups.	Make notes as students work on their stories. If you notice they need any help with new words, remind them of the dictionary app on their tablets.
Follow-up (15')	Tablets	[WGI] Have students share their stories with other groups and remind them to answer the questions posed by the objects. Feel free to decide on the best way to have students present their stories.
Extra (5')		[WGI] Students vote for the funniest video, the most annoying object and the best story. Make students explain their choices.

This lesson provided students with speaking skill opportunities for improvement and, as such, indicated more motivation and engagement among learners in the activities proposed. The principles brought by Prensky (2013), Norris and Soloway (2013), and UNESCO (2013) were put into practice since the center of attention was the student's creation and not the devices they used. The version of *partnering* (Prensky, 2010) used in this lesson plan was "guided partnering" not only because the group was starting to use tablets but also because teenagers usually need more guided instruction.

The lesson began with guiding questions, as stated in the lead-in activity, followed by the discussion of its results and the creations themselves. It also presented the task performed with the support of m-learning technology. As proposed by Norris and Soloway (2013) in the learning-by-doing pedagogy, the teacher played the role of a mediator while students were the ones in charge of the learning process. Collaboration, connectivity, mobility, portability, and convenience were benefits brought by this type of technology in the classroom. In groups, students were able to photograph, make a character, and record its voice by using only a portable device. They were absorbed by their creations, having mobiles as tools and teachers as monitors throughout the lesson. The teacher contextualized learning and reinforced the importance of group work so that language could be practiced (Norris & Soloway, 2013; UNESCO, 2013). Students were able to share out tasks, while considering collective ideas; from the collaborative learning perspective, the learning objectives were collaboration (digital story in groups), discussion (group work), and interaction (the exchange of ideas).

Finally, for those who are interested in putting this lesson plan into practice, some time should be spent with a careful reading of the material. Teachers should also get as familiar as possible with the *Chatter Pix - Kids* application so that they can help guide their students in the tasks. If there is no high-speed internet at school, it is recommended that teachers open the links

beforehand and in case the school does not count with a set of tablets, but with students who have any sort of mobile technology, you can suggest that they download the app beforehand as homework.

Final considerations

Mobile applications have become even more popular among teenagers of all ages and social classes due to their portability and facility for wireless connection. Besides that, there are thousands of applications freely available, and smartphones have become more affordable in the past few years. On one hand, it is acknowledged that planning lessons on m-learning is not an easy task and it may intimidate some teachers by the fact that it goes far beyond the simple use of mobiles in the school environment. On the other hand, m-learning technology brings many benefits to the EFL classroom as it increases opportunities for students to work on convenience, utility, facility, and motivation.

Apart from saving lesson time, mobile apps enable personalized activities and make learning more meaningful and appealing to teenagers. According to Norris and Soloway (2013), teachers should avoid activities that bring mobile technology as the center of attention. In other words, if technology is not necessary to perform a task, they should not change their practice to impress their pupils with m-learning. For this reason, teachers should keep in mind that cell phones and tablets are merely tools, which should be used to deliver good content and promote interactivity and collaboration among learners.

Language schools, thus, should get the most out of technology in face-to-face contexts by integrating it into their curriculum and then use it effectively. Change is not optional; it is essential, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, which obliged education to be fully technological for quite a long period. All in all, changing takes time and dedication from school higher instances and teaching staff, and the school needs to provide some financial and educational support to everyone involved in the process of incorporating technology in the learning

environment. Smooth and well-planned lessons will be required so that the learn-by-doing can successfully happen. Overall, schools need to reflect on what pedagogical approaches are being used and examine if they are promoting some adjustment among learners. I hope that schools will start looking at mobile technology as a learning facilitator and potential tool for transformation once ignoring the use of this resource to foster education can represent a missed opportunity for learners (UNESCO, 2013).

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