

# I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULT EDUCATION



## M-LEARNING AS A TOOL TO FOSTER TEACHER AND STUDENT CREATIVITY IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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**Summary.** This article dwells upon the fact of fostering teacher and student creativity in the English classroom through mobile applications. The reasons and possibilities of using m-learning for the purpose of encouraging creativity are analyzed. The result of the analysis is resumed to the lists of suggestions for teachers to follow in their classroom.

**Keywords:** teaching creativity; personalizing; mobile applications.

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The aim of the article – providing suggestions on encouraging student and teacher creativity through mobile applications, based on the thorough analysis of related scientific literature.

“*There are many roads to Rome. Everyone should choose his own...*» [1, p. 57]. The start from this particular quotation is not occasional, as even back at the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Blonsky accentuated that teachers should be creative in order for their teaching to be personalized enough and unique in a way, but still able to meet its initial objectives. The notorious fact is that educators and related researchers had been mostly concerned with students’ needs until the recent decades. However, teachers’ needs and peculiar personal traits are not the part of the educational process to be neglected as well [9, p. 240–243]. To be more precise, due to the fact the teachers are as different as students in terms of their background knowledge, ways of perceiving or delivering information and other characteristics, teachers have to be creative in order to adjust the two-sided process both for themselves and more importantly, for students. Referring to Kumaravadivelu’s work “Beyond methods: macrostrategies for language teaching” [8, p. 8–16], teachers are more encouraged to be *reflective practitioners or transformative intellectuals* rather than *passive technicians*, where the former two types can easily adapt the process, based both on their experience and changing classroom conditions, whereas the latter type largely relies on the prescribed textbook and traditional question-answer system. In this regard the crucial question might be: “How do mobile applications help teachers show their creativity for the benefit of students?” The explanation might be as follows:

- First, creativity in the English teaching classroom nowadays is sometimes widely associated with the usage of modern electronic devices [2, p. 16]. Indeed, in the contemporary context a creative teacher should come up with fresh teaching solutions as in the past, while relying on devices typical for students' everyday life.
- Second, teachers do not usually use random applications just as time-fillers or an entertaining tool. On the contrary, they *thoroughly plan* which one is more appropriate to use, the purpose of its usage, what tasks they should include in order to address both learning objectives and students' needs.
- Third, mobile applications help teachers *personalize* their teaching [5]. Apparently, using certain types of applications in a certain way would help a teacher create a unique atmosphere in the classroom, precisely addressing and demonstrating his or her teaching preferences. From the perspective of vast majority of educators across the world, personalization is critical for teachers to the same extent as for learners, as they are a few teacher's personality types, which are as follows:
  - *parential* – the most patient and sympathetic type;
  - *buddy* – the most casual and humorous type;
  - *reluctant* – the most uninspired and bored type;
  - *wizard* – the most enthusiastic and spontaneous type;
  - *alloy* – the most stern and sarcastic type;
  - *sergeant* – the most strict and sarcastic type.

Evidently, for each of these types there should be a particular set of mobile applications, regarding their peculiar traits and inclinations.

Regarding fostering students' creativity, it is important to mention the expression of Adolph Diesterweg, according to whom a bad teacher tells the truth, but a good teacher shows how to find it [4]. Referring the quotation to the concept of creativity in the classroom, there is plenty of evidence on the fact that it is solely possible to foster students' creativity through providing them with means to get to know something without relying on the teacher, but rather on themselves [3]. From this perspective, students should not be considered as "knowledge-receivers", but "active researchers". In order to do this, the teacher should predominantly provide students with some problematic situations. This also can be successfully done through using diverse mobile applications, either designed particularly for language learning such as Dualingo, Wordbit, Memrise or non-related, including Kahoot, Brain Out and others.

Considering the abovementioned description, it is clear that students' creativity in the English classroom is more referred to the concept of problem-solving, whilst teachers' creativity – to coming up with fresh techniques or procedures on how to use, combine and vary different mobile apps in the most efficient and rewarding way in order to achieve a certain purpose. This article primarily aims to demonstrate that using mobile learning tools might be significantly helpful in terms of fostering teachers' creativity in a professional sense

and students' general creativity, which would be applicable both to learning languages (educational sense) and the daily life context (general sense). In relation to this, the authors of the article have come up with a few useful tips that would help to foster either teachers' or students' creativity in the English classroom, using mobile applications.

*Here is the list of tips on how to foster teachers' creativity in language teaching through mobile applications:*

- 1) Mobile applications should be *appealing* for the teacher.
- 2) They *should not* be random, but should address a certain part of the lesson or a certain learning objective.
- 3) The teacher might conduct *a typical lesson procedure* through a mobile application. For instance, instead of presenting words by showing pictures and drilling them, the teacher might use Memrise or EWA [10] to present and train new vocabulary units.
- 4) It would be necessary to make sure that a mobile application is appropriate for the students' age group. For example, there are some applications, including Mind Snacks, Speech with Milo Apps and the similar, which are only appropriate for the age group between 3 and 6, due to the fact they contain child-friendly interface elements, including colorful pictures, funny songs and rhymes and etc. [6, p. 112–144].
- 5) It is also significant to know that a certain app is appropriate for a particular classroom. It is a common knowledge that students also belong to different personality types. Hence, in one classroom there might be a majority of students, who are energetic and prefer playing active games at the age of 30, or contrastively, there might be students at the age of 15, tending to be reluctant and still during the whole lesson [7, p. 213–214].
- 6) Occasionally, well-experienced teachers might use some of the mobile apps *spontaneously but purposefully* during the lesson once they notice that students have lost their focus or become slightly bored in order to draw their attention.
- 7) In case the teacher is not sure what kind of applications would suit their students best, they might *do an experiment*, dedicating one whole lesson to testing a list of applications on his or her students. It is crucial to monitor students' reaction thoroughly within the process.
- 8) The teacher might use favorite mobile applications *to encourage students* for their success in a certain unit or a task to provide students with a positive feedback and a feeling that their hard work is always rewarding.

*Here are a few suggestions for teachers on how to encourage students' creativity through mobile applications:*

- 1) Not only students should be encouraged to be creative during, but *also at home*. Using mobile applications for learning English at school is not enough. It is necessary for teachers to give assignments that would make students use these apps in a different way at home in order to keep their interest and motivation at a stable level.

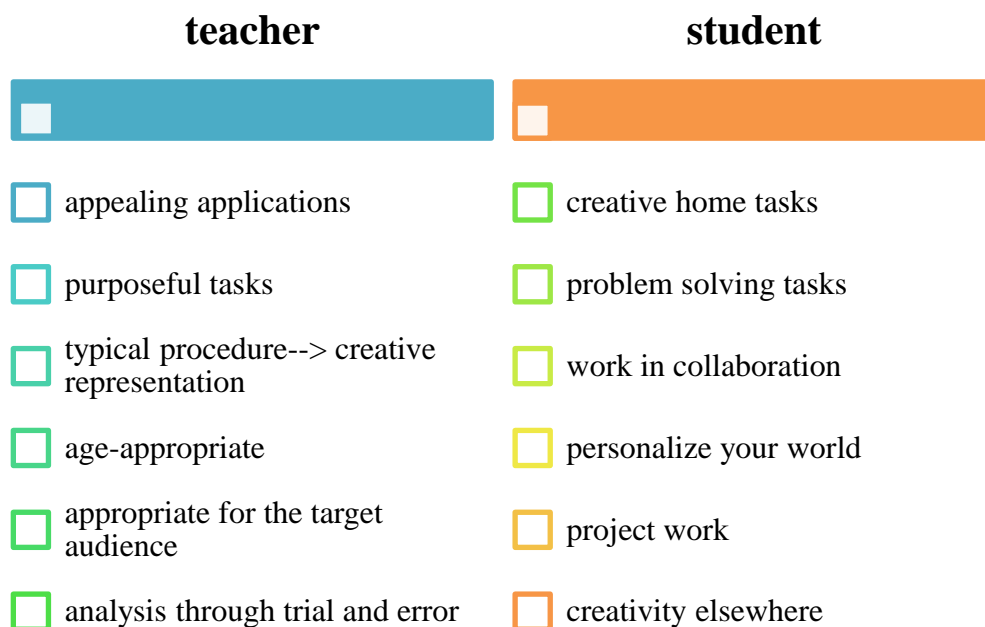
2) Providing *problem solving tasks* for students via mobile applications is critical to encourage their creative potential. In search of a better solution students might improve their ability to “think out of the box” and find an unusual way out.

3) It should be stressed that *work in collaboration* is very important to resolve some particular situations or conflicts. The problem is that some students always tend to work in solitude. However, the teacher should offer a task, where working individually would not work at all.

4) The teacher should demonstrate to students through his attitude toward teaching English that everything *can be personalized*, meaning that in real life students can also adapt any situation to the way they want it to be.

5) Another worthwhile idea might be giving students, preferably over the age of 16, an assignment to divide into groups and search for more mobile applications on their own. Afterwards, they would need to explain their choice in front of the rest of the class. In the next step the class would vote for the best application to be used later on in lessons. This *project work* would prove to students that it might a difficult task to find an application that would be equally appealing for everyone.

6) Presumably, one the most significant suggestions might be explaining to students the idea of being creative not only in the English classroom, but also in their daily life. It would be more preferable if students comprehend that gradually on their own. In order to visualize the suggestions, watch the Picture 1 below.



**Picture 1. The summary of suggestions on fostering teacher and student creativity via M-learning**

The suggestions, listed above might serve as an empowering guideline for teachers to follow in their lessons in order to foster both students' creativity and their own as well.

In conclusion, based on the information in the article, it would be relevant to point up the fact that creativity or creative potential is *a skill*, meaning that it is a set of personal capabilities that can be successfully fostered and mastered by any person. In this case mobile applications were suggested as a powerful tool to do so. Taking into consideration the suggestions, provided by the authors, at the current moment they are purely hypothetical and still require testing and possible modification. However, they were formulated on the basis of reliable sources and feasible to be tested by other teachers who hold some interest in the issue. Later on within the framework of further research, it is anticipated to dwell on the different types of teacher personalities, mentioned before as well as students' particular needs and the influence of the aforementioned on the choice of mobile applications.

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