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Abstract

This paper introduces the implementation of Pear Deck to provide a self-learning platform for students. As online classes have become common due to the COVID 19 pandemic, teachers have been using additional tools to support students’ independent language learning. Among others, Pear Deck is superior as it allows students to access interactive slides at their own pace. This paper gives details about Pear Deck, including how to access it as well as what features this tool provides. In this review, the authors argue that despite a few limitations, Pear Deck offers a wide array of benefits and can motivate students to study independently and enable teachers to supervise them.

Keywords: Pear Deck, independent study

Lack of student engagement and participation have been major issues in EFL classes, particularly during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic when classes were online. Though teachers can give students materials to study by themselves, some problems may occur (Gonda et al., 2021; Li, 2018). For example, some students may find it difficult to study without being supervised or may lack engagement in learning. Pear Deck (http://peardeck.com) is an online platform that can be used to address these problems. Pear Deck allows for synchronous learning when teachers use it in their online classes and asynchronous learning when students use it outside the classroom for self-study. This article reviews the use of an online platform, Pear Deck, as a tool to improve students’ independent English language learning.

What is Pear Deck?

Pear Deck is an interactive response system (IRS) which is defined by Liu et al. (2003) as a technology-enabled learning environment that improves student engagement. Additionally, an IRS, as defined by Awedh et al. (2014), is an online student response system that allows teachers to test student comprehension and track their progress by giving educational assignments. A Pear Deck ‘add on’ can be easily combined with Google slides and Microsoft PowerPoint. Therefore, all the interactive Pear Deck slide features can be embedded into presentations, providing engaging tasks. A Pear Deck account can be quickly
created by teachers by signing up with their Gmail or Microsoft Outlook accounts. In addition, Pear Deck can be used both synchronously and asynchronously. It can facilitate students’ independent study as part of a flipped learning method or supervised instruction. It means students can work on various interactive slides while teachers supervise each student’s progress in real or delayed time.

**What can Pear Deck Interactive Slides do to Support learning Outside the Classroom?**

Pear Deck’s interactive slides can provide self-access opportunities for students to support their learning as it allows a variety of self-study activities (Anggoro, 2020). Students can set their own pace, which enables them to study and complete the slides independently anytime outside the classroom. Knowledge related to subject matter from books and other sources such as vocabulary items, grammar points, reading and writing strategies, and many other language features can be added to the slides. Each slide is equipped with interactive features assisting students in studying. The interactive slides can also contain open-ended questions that can help learners to reflect on their outside-class learning.

The slides come with pre-set activities and responses previously created by teachers. Text slides allow students to give written responses to prepared prompts. Students can take advantage of these slides by responding in short or long sentences. Next are the multiple-choice slides where students can select an answer from various options. Using this type of slide, students can review their lessons, such as vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening tasks. In relation to listening, audio materials can be provided; thus, students can conveniently click to listen to the audio as many times as needed without having to go to another website. One type of slide which is particularly popular among students is the drawing slide. These slides enable students to respond to tasks by drawing on their screens. There are various ways in which students can benefit from the drawing slides. One way is for students to draw a description of what they hear on the audio file provided. Another is to create flowcharts to summarize what they have learned. These text, draw, and multiple-choice features are helpful because they give students opportunities to respond in a specific way which helps their learning. Other slides that can be provided for students’ self-learning are draggable texts and website features. Using draggable texts, students can match and pinpoint certain spots on the screen, while the website features let students go to an intended site in one click. Research currently being conducted by the writers showed that students believe that the use of Pear Deck increases their independence and accessibility in learning because they can access and complete the activities on the slides at their own pace.
What are the Benefits of Pear Deck Interactive Slides?
Anggoro (2020) states some strengths of Pear Deck, including its real-time response system and session review. These two tools are very beneficial for students to study interactively and independently both inside and outside classrooms. Hence, the students can still be supported both synchronously and asynchronously, whether in or out of the classroom. Their responses will be shown on the teacher’s dashboard allowing the students to receive feedback from the teacher. Direct notification is sent to students once the teacher writes any comments on their responses. As teachers can use the session review feature to monitor students’ participation levels during independent study, they can send reminders to their students and guide them when needed. As for teachers’ convenience, the teachers can transfer all the students’ written responses into a spreadsheet for a more convenient format. Teachers can also respond to students via email using the ‘generate takeaways’ feature. Furthermore, Pear Deck allows teachers to share the students’ answers via Google Classroom if needed.

What are the Shortcomings of Pear Deck Interactive Slides?
In general, Pear Deck is a useful platform to facilitate engaging independent learning tasks. Nonetheless, there are two elements that could be improved. Currently, teachers are unable to upload videos into the interactive slides. Although students can be given a link to watch a video and then come back to the slides, it would be more convenient if students could watch the video on the Pear Deck slide itself. Another thing to note is that the students’ responses are still limited to mainly written, checked, and drawn ones. It would be useful if students could upload their own audio or video content on the platform in the future.

Is Pear Deck Free?
Pear Deck has two versions, free of charge and premium for 150 US dollars per teacher per year. Both greatly benefit teachers and learners. However, there are some distinctions between the two versions. Pear Deck’s premium users receive full access to all the templates and all of the aforementioned benefits. Its most prominent benefit is the teacher dashboard, where teachers can observe and identify the progress of each student in the class. Also, it lets teachers give simultaneous feedback to specific individuals. On the other hand, the free version does not give access to the teacher dashboard. Free users can observe students’ responses, yet they cannot identify the owners unless the teachers ask students to
write their names before every response. The users are also unable to give feedback directly on Pear Deck. The comments or suggestions, nevertheless, can be given directly to students in synchronous classes or through learning management systems (LMS) or emails. Currently, a free 30-day trial to its premium version is provided for a new user experience.

**Conclusion**

Pear Deck does not only allow fun experiences when doing self-study but also a controlled environment where teachers can always see their progress and what students have or have not understood. Interaction becomes possible outside the classroom as teachers can give feedback, and students can immediately respond to it. Most importantly, Pear Deck slides are engaging. Previous studies have indicated that students are satisfied when the platform is used (Javed & Odhabi, 2018). Although Pear Deck was mainly designed for teacher use in classroom environments, it is also useful for student self-study outside the classroom, mainly for homework tasks set by the teacher. However, the open-ended questions could be useful for helping students to reflect on their outside-class learning and also for receiving comments and support from their teachers. Hence, it is strongly recommended that EFL teachers use Pear Deck in their instruction.

**Notes on the Contributors**

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