**PRODUCT AT A GLANCE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Type</th>
<th>Interactive slideshows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language(s)</td>
<td>All languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>Novice to advanced, all ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Comprehension checks for activities in different modalities through open-ended, multiple-choice, and ordering questions, as well as draw and drag and drop options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Format</td>
<td>Web-based version supported by latest versions of Chrome, Firefox, Edge, and Safari. Does not work in Internet Explorer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating System(s)</td>
<td>Web-based, iOS 8.0 or later, Android, Windows, iPhones, and iPads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware Requirements</td>
<td>Not applicable. Web-based, cross-platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary Software or Hardware</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>Pear Deck How-To Handbook available on the Pear Deck website after entering a valid email address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Basic account is free. Advanced features available for Premium account at $149.99 per year. Custom prices are available for schools and districts. Current pricing information can be found at <a href="https://www.peardeck.com/pricing">https://www.peardeck.com/pricing</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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General Description

Pear Deck is an interactive presentation tool which was launched in 2014. The tool combines slide presentations with different types of interactive questions and activities. It is web-based and supported by the latest versions of Chrome, Firefox, Edge, and Safari, but not Internet Explorer. Users can access Pear Deck on mobile devices including Android and Apple. However, the Google Slides add-on feature is only supported on computers, meaning that users cannot edit their Pear Deck slides on mobile devices. This review will mainly focus on the application’s features and underlying pedagogy, but will start with a general overview of Pear Deck, explaining the tool and the key differences between its free and premium paid versions.

To use Pear Deck, instructors need to create an account; students do not need one. Learners can access a Pear Deck presentation with unique access codes provided by their teacher. As the learners interact with questions on Pear Deck slides, teachers can monitor student and whole-class progress in their teacher account.

Pear Deck is user-friendly and has a basic free version which offers some main features of the tool, such as creating interactive slides, controlling the pace of presentation slides, projecting student answers, allowing students to join a session anonymously (without email login), use of locks and timers, ready-to-use templates, and the ability to teach vocabulary by using Flashcard Factory (which will be elaborated on in the “Pedagogical Features” section). The locks function allows instructors to lock students’ screens so that they cannot change their responses, while the timer function is an added option to first set a timer after which students’ screens will lock.

According to the Pear Deck website, the Premium version ($149.99 per year per instructor at the time of writing this review) includes some additional features such as Drawing and Draggable interactive questions, Google Classroom integration, Immersive Reader, Student Takeaways feature (for publishing takeaways for students at the end of a Pear Deck presentation), and the ability to add audio to slides. There is also a “custom” option available for schools and districts. This option offers premium features for every teacher and student in the respective school, training materials, and LMS integrations with Canvas and Schoology for school districts for a custom price likely to be more than $149.99.

As noted by Poth (2019), Pear Deck is similar to Nearpod in allowing users to create a variety of interactive questions and activities, but while in Nearpod all question types are available in the free version, Pear Deck allows only Premium users to create drawing and draggable questions. However, Pear Deck has some advantages over Nearpod, such as the fact that its free version has
support for MS PowerPoint, a feature that is available on the Gold subscription on Nearpod. Additionally, Pear Deck allows for embedded YouTube videos, while Nearpod offers it as a paid feature.

**Evaluation**

**Technological Features**

Pear Deck is a web-based application and an add-on for both Microsoft Office PowerPoint and Google Slides. Instructors need to create an online account with their Google or Microsoft account to start using it, or go to the add-on tab in their Microsoft Office PowerPoint or Google Slides and add Pear Deck. No downloads are needed to run the application. Figure 1 shows how to start using Pear Deck in Google Slides and Microsoft Office PowerPoint.

After adding Pear Deck to either Microsoft Office PowerPoint or Google Slides, users can start integrating interactivity into their slides using the Pear

![Figure 1: How to starting to use Pear Deck in Google Slides and Microsoft Office PowerPoint.](image-url)
Deck side bar. Figure 2 shows the Pear Deck side bar in Google Slides. Using
the Pear Deck side bar, teachers can add interactive questions by choosing the
“Ask students a question” option, as can be seen in Figure 3. There are a number
of interactive question options such as “text,” “choice,” “number,” “website,”
“draw,” and “draggable”; however, as noted earlier the draw and draggable
options are only available in the paid Premium version. In the draw option,
students can respond to their teacher’s prompt by drawing over the slide. In
the draggable option, students can respond by dragging objects, for example,
on a map or an image. These two questions create added interactivity when
presenting images or graphs.

Figure 2: The Pear Deck side bar.

Figure 3: Teachers need to click on “Ask students a question” to start creating
interactive questions.
After creating slides and interactive questions, teachers simply need to choose “Start Lesson” on the Pear Deck side bar, as shown in Figure 4. This generates a five-letter join code, which needs to be given to students to join the Pear Deck session. Students can then go to www.joinpd.com and enter the code. Alternatively, teachers can copy the session link and share it with their students, who can simply click on the link to join.

**Pedagogical Features**

The Pear Deck website advertises the tool as “the fastest way to transform presentations into classroom conversations.” This concept of interactivity underlines one of the main pedagogical features of Pear Deck. The conversation claim is supported by the fact that instead of lecturing students by showing one slide after another without much active participation from students, Pear Deck enables teachers to integrate interactive questions into their slides, potentially increasing student engagement in class or at home. However, and as always, the quality of this interactivity depends on the quality of the questions that teachers create, which depends, among other things, on teachers’ technological knowledge. Although the Pear Deck website claims that it allows teachers who are not very tech-savvy to “effortlessly build engaging instructional content,” it takes some time to add interactive elements to presentation slides.

Fortunately, for those users who may need some technical help, Pear Deck has a help page titled “Pear Deck help videos,” which provides a good number of easy to follow and helpful videos on a variety of topics (e.g., how to create Pear Deck slides, how to integrate different types of interactive questions, how to share the Pear Deck slides with students, how to review student answers,
Instructors are encouraged to make use of the tutorial videos available at https://www.peardeck.com/help-videos. This section is supplemented by Pear Deck’s FAQ section, which includes answers to users’ commonly encountered issues and questions. Additionally, the Pear Deck website has a “Teaching resources” section, which includes a link to the Pear Deck How-To Handbook for Remote & Asynchronous Learning, webinars, and a knowledge base.

The interactive features of Pear Deck are mainly the interactive questions, which include five types of questions, as noted earlier (text, choice, number, draw, and draggable). Once students respond to the questions, teachers can see student responses in real time, and can decide which responses to share with the whole class. Teachers also have the option of highlighting certain student responses to clarify or underline key lesson points. This also allows teachers to provide students with feedback on the spot if needed. The premium, drag-type question offers another way for teachers to interact with students, allowing them, for instance, to self-assess their learning with tasks such as “Drag your dot to how confident you feel about this topic,” where students are expected to move an object (e.g., a dot) on a scale of three different options: “Keep going. I understand,” “I am a little confused,” “Stop I need help.” Such interactive tasks allow teachers to see how both individual students and the class as a whole are feeling about the pace of a specific lesson and to make modifications accordingly.

Pear Deck offers some facilitative and collaborative tools as well. For instance, the Pear Deck Flashcard Factory, which Pear Deck highlights as a “team-oriented” tool, allows students “to create dynamic and engaging flashcards” while working in groups. As students create their flashcards, they can write example sentences or create visual illustrations. Additionally, for teachers of English language learners, an extra feature is the integration of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Once students finish creating their flashcards, the vocabulary list can be printed for review or can be exported to Gimkit, a classroom game show platform integrated with Flashcard Factory. The Pear Deck website underscores the idea that collaboration through Flashcard Factory and Gimkit integration help students to internalize new vocabulary better.

**Teacher Fit (Approach)**

In this section, we will consider how Pear Deck fares with regard to one of the dominant approaches in the field of foreign language education (FLED)—communicative language teaching (CLT). The communicative approach, which came to the fore in the 1970s (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) as a counter movement to traditional language teaching methods and principles, is focused on communicative competence (i.e., knowledge that enables one to communicate) and
on communicative proficiency, that is, the real-life ability to function in the language within interpersonal interactions. The ultimate goal of CLT is generally defined as communicative competence, that is, the dynamic, interpersonal ability to communicate (i.e., express, interpret, and negotiate) meaning (Savignon, 1997). Taking into consideration these theoretical underpinnings of CLT, Pear Deck needs improvement in supporting CLT, because in its current format Pear Deck allows mostly individual students to work through content and check their comprehension rather than foster student-to-student interaction.

Looking at Pear Deck with respect to some theoretical frameworks such as the SAMR (substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition) model (Puantedura, 2013), a framework for meaningful and effective technology integration, we could argue that Pear Deck generally corresponds to the lower level of the model. The bottom two levels in the SAMR model, the substitution and augmentation levels, are subsumed under the enhancement category, since new technologies/tools in these two levels primarily serve as replacements or enhancements for previously used tools. The top two SAMR levels, the modification and redefinition levels, are subsumed under the transformation category, since new technologies/tools in these two levels allow teachers to profoundly redesign or create new learning experiences. The Flashcard Factory feature of Pear Deck, for instance, would be an example of the substitution level, as it replaces hard copy flash cards with digital ones. Another feature of Pear Deck, the “teacher dashboard” feature, might serve as an example of the augmentation level, as it can improve and enhance instructional practices and learning experiences by allowing teachers to see how each student is doing and then tailor their lessons to students’ needs. The teacher dashboard feature on Pear Deck may aid teachers in tailoring their instruction to students’ needs and providing them with individual feedback on their responses during and after a Pear Deck session (i.e., helping struggling students both on the spot and as a follow-up activity). If Pear Deck were to integrate some additional features that empower students to create meaningfully using language in a collaborative environment, then it would move up to higher levels in the SAMR model such as “modification” and “redefinition.”

However, Pear Deck has some nice features that might support formative assessment, as it allows educators to integrate interactive questions that check for understanding or “exit tickets” to see students’ understanding at the end of a presentation. Notably, in addition to interactive questions, Pear Deck also offers a library of templates to support ongoing formative assessment at the beginning, middle, and end of a class. These templates are in English and might be beneficial for both novice and more experienced teachers, who may not have the skills or time to create questions that support formative assessment. The interactive questions work with different alphabets as well.
Learner Fit (Design)

Pear Deck takes learner differences into account by providing two modes of presentation, namely, “student-paced” and “instructor-paced.” Although the student-paced mode might be more appropriate for asynchronous instruction, it could also be used in synchronous teaching for delivering differentiated instruction and thus better serve heterogeneous groups of students. In such synchronous scenarios, teachers might provide students with a set time to work through presentation slides at their own pace, especially if the topic introduced is complex. As students work on a session at their own pace, teachers can monitor individual student progress and provide immediate and follow-up feedback. Although students may not interact with each other, they see each other’s responses to the questions in the Pear Deck presentation, enabling them to learn from their peers and be exposed to different perspectives.

With respect to the teacher dashboard discussed in the previous section, it is important to underline that teachers should be mindful of how they share students’ responses. If they aim to address a common issue they see in many/all students’ responses, it may be best to share student responses in projector mode, where all responses appear anonymously. Even though responses can be presented anonymously, teachers might still want to exercise extra caution if they feel that student responses can be identified in cases where the class size is small and/or where students’ identities can become evident through the content of their responses.

Another feature of Pear Deck that might be helpful in providing students with effective feedback is the “Student Takeaways” feature. This is a document generated by Pear Deck following a Pear Deck session. If the teacher decides to share the student takeaways, students can see each slide in the session just shown and all of their individual answers to the presentation questions without their classmates’ answers. Student takeaways are generated as editable Google Docs, where teachers can leave comments for their students and the students can reply to the teacher. Takeaways can also be used as a follow-up activity, in that teachers can leave specific feedback for individual students in the notes section of the takeaways, and assign it as a homework task, asking students to reflect on what they learned, in order to support learning outside the classroom. However, the takeaways feature is only available in the paid version of Pear Deck.

Pear Deck has two features that can enhance language learning: the “Immersive Reader” (available for both Microsoft Office PowerPoint and Google Slides users) and audio slide recording features. The “Immersive Reader” feature might be beneficial for improving the reading ability of emergent readers, while the ability to add audio to slides can enable teachers to better tailor their
content to different learning styles. Immersive Reader allows learners to hear the text read aloud, which is very beneficial in the context of language learning. This is a feature available only for Premium users, though. Premium Pear Deck users can enable Immersive Reader in their Pear Deck settings and present their slides as usual. Once the setting for Immersive Reader is on, students will automatically see the button for it on every slide with readable text.

The audio slide recording is another feature that can support language learning. The teachers can leave audio instructions, descriptions, or examples related to the slide content in the target language through this feature. However, similar to the Immersive Reader feature, this option is only available for Premium users.

**Summary**

In conclusion, as underscored by the application website, Pear Deck can aid teachers transform “presentations into classroom conversations” by affording them with an array of interactive and collaborative features; namely, the ability to add interactive questions and engage learners in collaborative work via the Flashcard Factory tool. However, this interactivity seems to be limited in that it is mostly interaction between the student and content, and not so much among students. Additionally, the features such as Immersive Reader and audio recording for slides, which could enhance language learning, are limited to Premium users of Pear Deck. Pear Deck could be a beneficial tool for supporting language learning if these features could be extended to all users of Pear Deck. Furthermore, Pear Deck, in its current form, lacks the ability to fully foster student-to-student interaction, thus enhancing their communicative competence in the target language. It can be used to substitute or augment some instructional practices within the SAMR model framework; however, it needs improvement in supporting the modification and redefinition levels of the model, which correspond to the transformation category levels that can allow teachers to profoundly redesign or create new learning experiences.

**References**


**Producer Details**

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**Reviewer Information**

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