Language Software Review: Harnessing the Power of NearPod

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Article Info	Abstract
	Nearpod is an all-encompassing Edtech tool that can be used for language teaching and learning in multiple modalities. The comprehensive and interactive online platform allows instructors to carry out lesson plans for a variety of subject areas. It is a web-based and synchronous platform (and a Mobile App) that allows for the immediate sharing of lessons by pushing out content to the learners via their devices. It also allows for the collection of feedback from the students' answers and engages students in activities by allowing them to scroll through and interact with the different types of content. The instructor can create and use live lessons on the device to instantly share media with the student or choose a saved lesson to present. Nearpod is easy to use for collaboration, assessment, and virtual reality and live streaming activities and tasks. Nearpod is a real-time assessment tool that facilitates interaction with the students and forges meaningful content collaboration amongst all the students. It encourages content integration for language instructors for classroom success since it easily integrates with other content delivery applications and systems (i.e., Google Drive, Dropbox, YouTube, LMSs like Blackboard, Canvass, etc.). This review will evaluate and review the Nearpod tool and describe how its design and use is connected to second language acquisition theory for foreign language pedagogy.
Software Review Article	

General Description

Nearpod is a web-based and mostly synchronous platform (and is available as a downloadable mobile application) that allows language teachers to share lessons with their students by pushing out content to the learners on their personal technology devices. Nearpod enables the instructor to collect feedback from the students' answers by allowing the instructor to monitor the students' devices/screens as they work on activities while permitting them to access various elements of the presentations as they review content (simultaneously or outside of the synchronous session(s)). Nearpod also assists in engaging students by letting them instantly scroll through and interact with the lesson/module content that the instructor

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presents and submits through the platform. The instructor can create and teach live lessons on their own devices through the Nearpod platform to instantly share distinct types of media files with the students or can choose a previously saved lesson from an archived depository to model the lesson content for the students. Nearpod works by categorizing lessons by codes and then providing the link of the lesson/module to the students via a code system. The code is shared with the students prior to the lesson and is auto generated by the Nearpod system for each separate lecture session. In this sense, the lessons can be "student-paced" or "instructor-paced" because the instructor can decide if they want the students to be able to freely scroll through the media file or text and if they prefer the platform interface to be locked where only the instructor can control the pace at which the screens move, they have that option, too.

The instructor can also design and choose from pre-assembled templates in their archived library via a depository that allows them to easily craft quizzes, polls, audio activities, video clips, drawing and whiteboard activities, virtual reality games, live twitter streams, open ended comprehension questions, etc. to distribute onto the student's devices with the same code system. The instructor may also choose to incorporate embedded videos, audios, or links containing integrated additional tasks (like listening or writing prompts) or add a search engine capability function where they can share importable pictures to allow the students to work collaboratively to edit the existing content within the lesson and/or module that the class reviews. The platform works as a repository for content archiving (documents, PowerPoints, movie files, etc.) where students can complete different types of assignments that are assigned to them or access the constructed modules that their instructor has created that connect to or incorporate specific aspects of the course content. Moreover, the referenced archived lessons can be customized by the instructor or used by another instructor who has an active account on the platform to be tailored for a wide range of core content or interdisciplinary courses.

The Nearpod presentation interface appears as a series of screens and the transitions can be customized so that they become interactive for the students with each use. Nearpod is unique in that it combines collaboration, assessment, and content creation all in one easy-to-use website or mobile application that can be applied to courses taught in multiple modalities (face-to-face, hybrid or remote). An instructor can design lesson questions, quizzes, and information reviews using all these various types of activities within the platform.
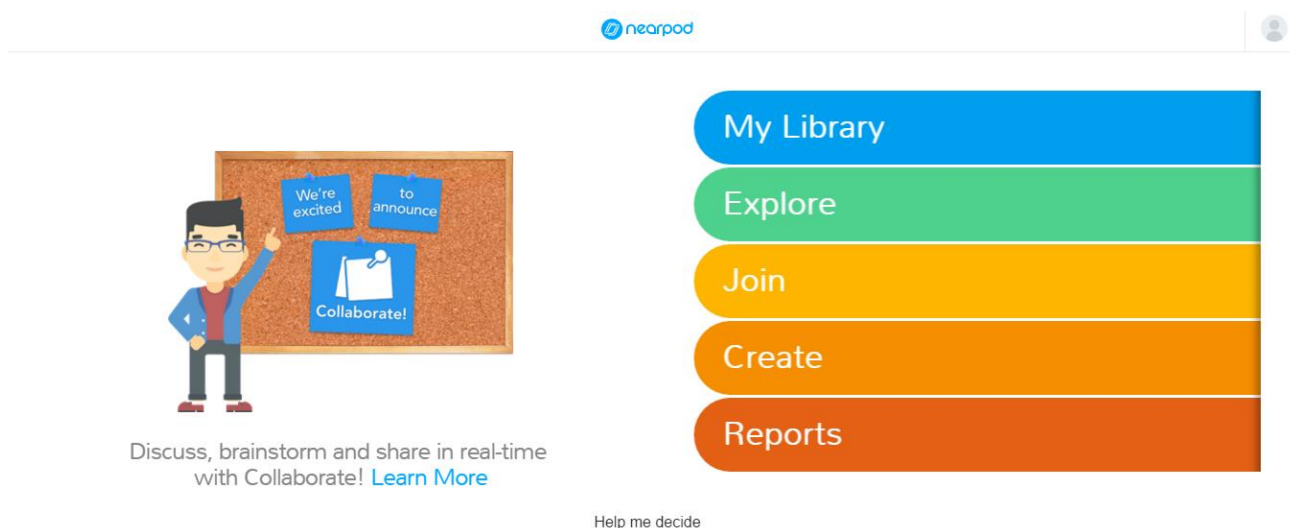

Figure 1. Post Login Nearpod Screen with the various content creation options.

Evaluation
Technological Features
The website version of Nearpod is easy to access and navigate. Creating a user account is free for instructors and students. The instructor or student can link their Nearpod account to a Google cloud account, Dropbox, or social media platform. They may also choose to utilize a Windows 365 cloud profile with the Nearpod site to speed up the login process. If one does not have a profile to link with the website, there is a simple form to complete where either the instructor or student can fill in basic personal and demographic information to access the platform's site. Both the instructor and the student should complete these forms to be granted access to create their accounts upon first registering for the platform. The login process can be executed from any of the devices that Nearpod is compatible with, which makes logins easy and seamless. Thus, users can log-in with any type of device to view their course materials and/or tasks. The screen management interface (see Figure 1 above) is easy to navigate for an instructor when implementing or editing course content. Moreover, an instructor will have the listed options above (in Figure 1) and can decide which presentation mode they prefer to use. The student's screen is immediately prompted by a dialog box requesting a code/pin to be entered before proceeding to viewing the instructor's presentations. As soon as the instructor selects the presentation mode (customized or pre-selected), the code will become available and can then be shared with students.

Pedagogical Features
The Nearpod website and mobile applications allow the language instructor to create dynamic content in a user-friendly space. Instructors ultimately have many resources at their disposal with the use of this platform, allowing for the facilitation of lessons using a plethora of multimodal options. Thus, instructors can hold and disseminate all their content in one website/application area to easily organize and provide engaging content for students. The platform instantly encourages students to collaborate amongst each other by allowing for comments from students to address and process through one easy to use collaboration screen or the students can view the main screen where colleagues' answers may appear, depending on the educational assessment type i.e., modality chosen by the instructor.
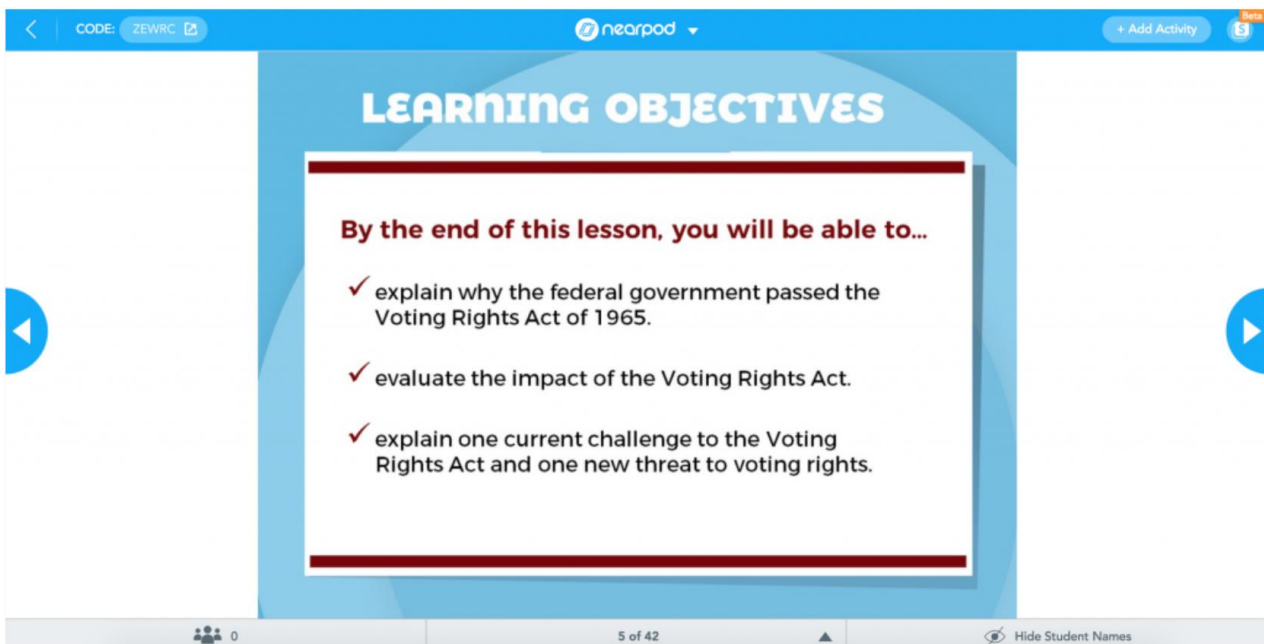

Figure 2. A Sample Learning Objective Slide Housed in a Nearpod Lecture.

Instructors who use Nearpod have access to several highly engaging pre-made presentations that have been created by fellow educators, publishing companies, and educational organizations. The students use the Nearpod application on their devices to "catch" or receive the content and then participate in the lesson or course activities via the module or specific presentational link, depending on how the instructor has structured their course's activities or modules. Instructors who use Nearpod have commented on how they have enjoyed the power and accessibility of this platform since it harnesses the technical capabilities of different features of other media programs in one shared space to present a multimodal way to view and assess students' work. The instructors find the tool rather intuitive to use since they can sync the lessons to their own devices allowing all course work for groups of students to be stored together in the same file sharing system. The instructor is easily and rapidly able to view the students' answers or give feedback in real time and may choose to also use that data in future lessons or modules to foster more collaboration for other course tasks where content editing can happen for students so that both the teacher and instructor can continue to work together to better understand the content in one specific platform. With the Nearpod premium versions (the non-free version), instructors can also log in through https://www.nearpod.com or via the mobile application to access post-session data reports and detailed analytic reviews to monitor student activity and to tweak the way in which they are pacing or sequencing the course. Moreover, instructors can analyze previous teaching sessions to observe their class analytics to assess common student struggles or to view how the students are digesting or mastering other aspects of the content. In this way, instructors can see how students viewed connections, comments, or other materials viewed to gauge how their students have scored on module questions, polls, quizzes, prompts, etc.
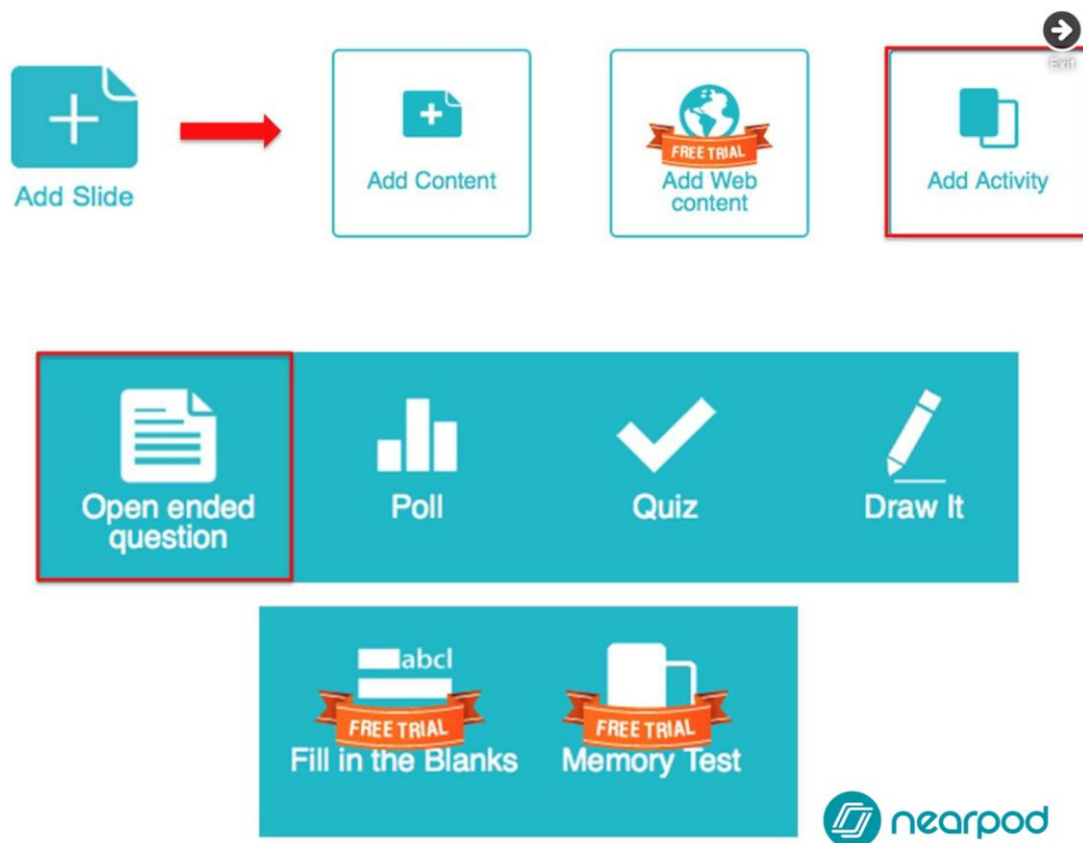

Figure 3. This Platform Interface Shows the Various Activities Available.

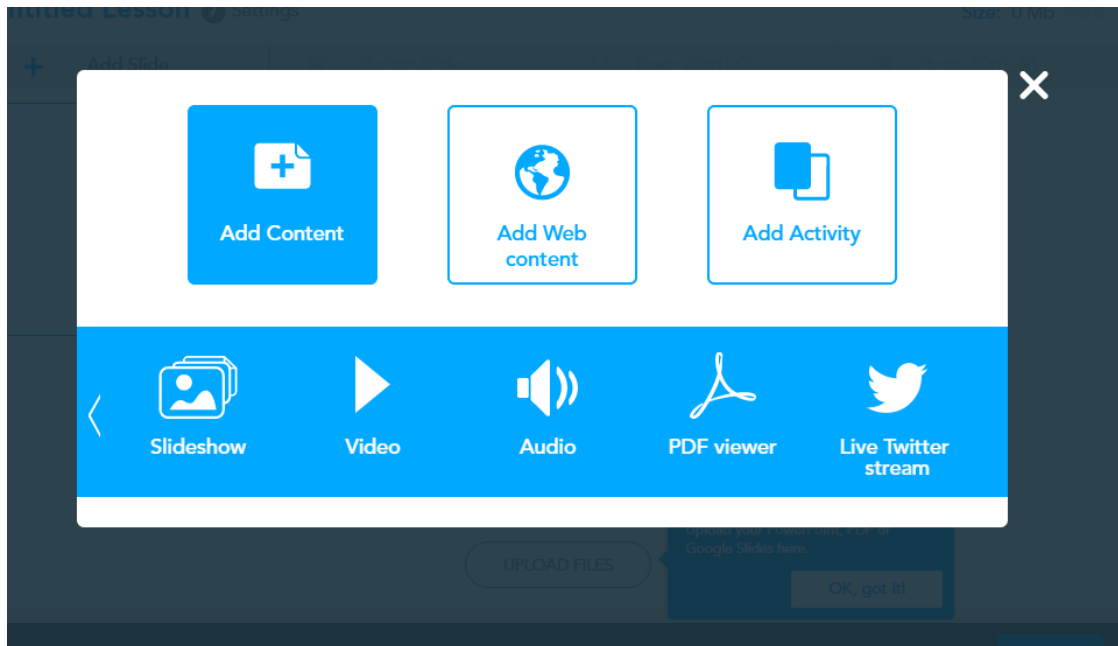**Teacher/Materials Developer (Approach)**

Figure 4. Nearpod allows customized content delivery.

Nearpod allows the instructor to integrate several types of technology in a quick and reliable way. If the instructor wants to upload their own personalized content like PowerPoints or audio/video files into modular sessions, the platform format allows for the facilitation of the material in a way where they can create materials and upload them by adjusting Nearpod's settings to distribute the information to their students in an easy to access way. Thus, the ease of the library repository allows the instructor more access to previously used materials that can be applied and utilized for a variety of different classes or lessons to minimize overall preparation time for the instructor.

For Nearpod to be used specifically for language instruction, an instructor has multiple tools already in place to provide content to the learner so they can interact with the language in a social context to view and edit the content in myriad ways to practice the different linguistic skills necessary for learning a foreign language. According to Smith (2016), language should be shown to students in a way where normal speech learners cannot stop, slow down, or see speech and they must attempt to understand it in real time. Moreover, NearPod allows the instructor to capture concepts and then craft them in a way so that students can slow down or speed up the content delivery at their leisure or follow along as the instructor guides them in their language learning by highlighting the most important concepts throughout a module. Similarly, the instructor can add details to various parts of the course content when they craft quizzes, use the whiteboard to provide more direct instruction to review grammatical points or upload commonly heard expressions in the target language. Also, the language instructor can program or use vocabulary activities or games to sufficiently scaffold the content in their lessons using Nearpod's platform activity list with the goal of promoting engagement and language manipulation via its stream feature. In this sense, students must follow the prompts of the modules and activities to then scroll through the platform's easy to follow interfaces as they quickly navigate through drop down menus/writing boxes to view and edit the content in modified chunks.

While Nearpod is not exclusively a language learning application, its power can be seen through its use as a reliable delivery device system that encompasses various technology components which are used to both strengthen and organize the visual aids that assist students in acquiring language. While the Nearpod library (repository) does include previously used slides and presentations in languages like English, Spanish, and French, the instructors may also use their own slides or content with the customizable creation features to enhance their lesson's efficiency, style, or look. Similarly, instructors have the option to supplement other class or course activities/tasks with the use of storytelling and discussion boards (i.e., through third party websites or popular LMS systems like Canvas, Blackboard, etc.), which can be linked to Nearpod to allow students to view lesson components where they can make comments and/or start threads within the modules to engage with one another throughout their learning.

Nearpod can be used to teach languages effectively because it allows for immediate student and teacher engagement via its various modality capabilities that are embedded in its interactive module type format. With the instructor's guidance and coaching, the students can not only answer questions on the content included in the modules but can also create their own presentations and listen to recordings (or record their own voices to produce the target language).
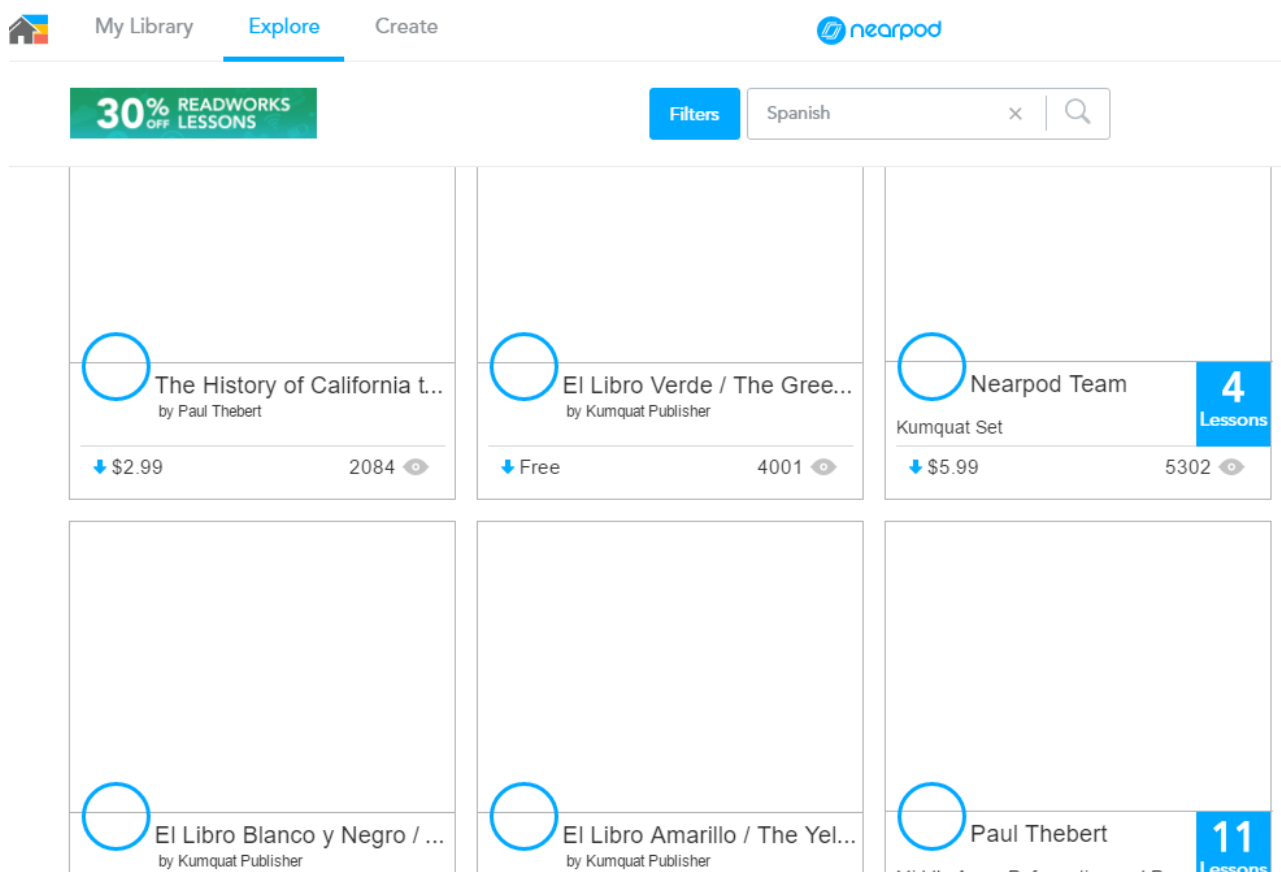

Figure 5. The Nearpod Library.

Nearpod also allows connectivity between social media platforms and gives the students a chance to interact with the content through those platforms that are synced to Nearpod to give the instructor other ways to measure the class's participation or understanding of the content by personalizing activities to see the class's response. Considering the social media platform integration within Nearpod, students can link tweets from Twitter or post profile information (which could come from fake accounts, too) to collaborate and discover new things related to the course themes to strengthen their target language use. In that way, this platform confirms that ideas of Doughty, Long & Skehan (2003) who said that instructors should be tasked with designing activities for language learning that use cognitive and interactionist second

language acquisition (SLA) principles at the forefront of their learning where task-based language teaching and other learning concepts are included in the design and assessment that aim to stress SLA concepts like noticing, negotiation of meaning, learning by doing, etc. In this way, interacting with the content by seeing it presented in multiple ways helps students focus on form. Moreover, students have access to various comment functions within the application where they learn in a collaborative environment about the target concepts and instantly focus on their classmates' contributions and feedback using the instructor's prompts and guidance. In sum, Nearpod allows both the instructor and the student the opportunity to create activities and participate in a task-based analysis session, which may encourage more critical thinking and allow students to probe for more content detail to produce utterances that pair with the already established module content that the instructor has designed.

Learner Fit (Design)
Nearpod's ability to allow the instructor to monitor student production with real time results makes it a valuable tool in the classroom. Regarding the importance of getting students to produce in the target language, the creation and implementation of a communicative learning atmosphere is vital for them to have success. Technology plays a role in that process of language learning and the types of activities communicated in the classroom environment should be unique enough to allow the instructor to "scale up" the content using technology (Gibeault, 2015). Nearpod affects "scaling up" and stresses collaborative learning since it naturally lends itself to more student engagement where students can instantly view and adjust their learning styles to process more information. Furthermore, integrating NearPod within a language course can seamlessly promote individual and group work in a way where it becomes more productive, fun, and motivating for the student. The instructor can plan their modules through the platform's powerful tool integration features so that they can store the various media file types that they use so students can view the course content online in a dynamic way (before, during, and after class) both asynchronously and synchronously (including after the course concludes).

Nearpod's ability to allow for multimedia presentations and editing components allows for the student's affective filer to be evaluated and analyzed outside of a physical classroom environment. The students can negotiate meaning through tasks planned by the instructor as they try to recognize specific language utterances used in the course to answer questions posed by the instructor where they interact with classmates via the module activities/tasks to discuss the content that has been distributed to them. The language teaching naturally becomes more student centered since learners have the content displayed in front of them and can use the language that they produce to add to or interpret various comprehension or vocabulary/grammar activities in their own way and edit/manipulate those production tasks via the platform which all students and the instructor can see updates to in real time.

Related to assessment and curriculum goals, it is important to note that both global and national educational standards have been automatically incorporated into Nearpod's platform to assist instructors in constantly encouraging students to recognize their learner goals. Students can easily access these goals to view objectives within the modules (see Figure 2), which is helpful if students were not able to take detailed notes or process a concept related to a course task or project. The student can also review a project or assignment rubric directly on their device within a screen that is alongside the other aspects of the assignment instructions to observe how the goals and expectations of the assignment align with the instructions. Thus, students can access the content for the course while using their device and view the class discussion board simultaneously inside of this digital modular classroom platform. This technology facilitated access to information and potential task manipulation is vital since earners need the chance to access organized information and view it through different types of learning (listening, reading, writing, etc.) to have a chance to achieve real language growth if a technology tool is going to be a part of their overall language development (Gibeault, 2015).

Summary

The Nearpod content delivery platform allows the instructor to expose students to scaffolded content through a cutting-edge tool so that learners can interact with course materials and produce their own content in the target language while also receiving feedback from their classmates and instructors within the platform. Nearpod is a real-time assessment tool that facilitates interaction with the students and assists in forging more meaningful content collaboration amongst all the classroom participants. The tasks and activities within Nearpod can become customizable in dynamic ways in a fun, quick, and useful way. Furthermore, the Nearpod platform will enable the instructor to distribute information effectively to students, allowing for instant changes or tweaks to the tasks, given the speed and reliability of the technology tool. While some lecture materials may sometime come across as slow if there are over 50 students in the classroom, Nearpod allows for the seamless integration of both social media and LMS systems. It also gives the instructor a variety of different types of assessments that allow for the students' submission results to be distributed immediately to the instructor's device for analysis. Nearpod's ability to assess student engagement and knowledge by using both social media and virtual reality components raises its technology integration to both a unique and top-notch level.

Figure 6. A Nearpod Benefits Summary.

In conclusion, Nearpod is a mobile learning platform that facilitates the learning of language and provides a powerful platform that is both innovative and effective at customizing content especially when an instructor must simultaneously teach multiple preps and is looking to enhance lesson delivery options in multiple modalities. It easily integrates with other organizational and content delivery applications (i.e., Google Drive, Dropbox, YouTube, Canvas, Twitter, etc.) to foster more discussions, submissions, writing and listening activities, and to stream the content in myriad ways for the students. While the premium version can cost a few hundred dollars a year for instructors or institutions and there may be difficulty having classes of over 50 people logged on at the same time with 1 code, the platform still contains a variety of new and useful technology features, which seamlessly allows instructors to integrate different technology tools into its modular system. With Nearpod, instructors can both simply and effectively enhance task-based activities by appropriately building cultural and language community conversations within a digital classroom experience that is accompanied by a variety of tasks like polls, whiteboard activities, discussion board posts, etc.

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Producer Details