Interactive Response Systems (IRS) in Online English Classes: Voices of Foreign University Teachers in Thailand

Kiki Juli Anggoro*1,2
Nurmala3

1Department of Education, School of Education and Liberal Arts, Walailak University, Nakhon Si Thammarat 80160, THAILAND
2Center of Excellence on Women and Social Security (CEWSS), Walailak University, Nakhon Si Thammarat 80160, THAILAND
3Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh 202002, INDIA

Abstract
Technological advances have introduced English instructors to various ways of delivering successful online classes. Using an Interactive Response System (IRS) as a supporting tool is one of them. This qualitative study investigates the perceptions of foreign English language teachers in Thai universities regarding the use of IRS in online classes. The study involved 10 non-native English university teachers, 7 females and 3 males, aged 27 to 35, with 3 to 6 years of teaching experience in Thailand. They are affiliated with three different Thai universities. Data were gathered through multiple online interviews and observations via Zoom or Google Meet, tailored to each participant’s convenience. The data analysis was conducted using a robust content analysis approach. The findings of this study showed that educators integrated IRS tools to boost engagement, benefiting both students and instructors. Additionally, peer influence encouraged IRS adoption and enhanced teaching methods. IRS tools served various roles, ranging from assessment to promoting motivation and enhancing comprehension. The advantages of IRS tools included increased interactivity, competition, and engagement. They aided in monitoring student attentiveness and comprehension while fostering independent learning. Challenges such as unequal internet access, device

* Corresponding author, email: kiki.an@mail.wu.ac.th


Received October 26, 2023; Revised February 19, 2024; Accepted April 15, 2024; Published Online May 31, 2024

https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v11i2.34928
limitations, technology literacy, fees, workload, and language barriers existed, along with concerns about potential cheating during IRS activities.

Keywords: Educational technology challenges, foreign language teachers, Interactive Response System (IRS), online English instruction.

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern education, technology has become a critical component, transforming the way we teach and learn. Among various technological advancements, Interactive Response Systems (IRS) have gained popularity and have been integrated into instructional strategies in several subjects, including English. Moorhouse and Kohnke (2020) discovered that using IRS results in heightened active responses, improved test scores, and increased motivation among students. Similarly, Sun and Lin (2022), when incorporating IRS into a flipped classroom environment, observed enhanced active discussions, increased student willingness to engage with pre-class videos and a positive learning cycle. IRS platforms serve various purposes, such as gamifying instruction (Anggoro & Khasanah, 2021), reviewing lessons (Yürük, 2019), and conducting assessments (Hadijah et al., 2020).

In the context of online education, the IRS has been seamlessly integrated into classes. For instance, Huei et al. (2021) utilized IRS in a virtual setting to enhance students’ achievements. Hapsari (2021) employed IRS in an online course to improve engineering students’ English skills. Alfaruqy and Setyawan (2021) used IRS in online English instructions, reporting improved student learning motivation. Al-Jarf (2022) investigated online vocabulary tasks, utilizing IRS to engage and motivate EFL college students. While these studies (Alfaruqy & Setyawan, 2021; Al-Jarf, 2022; Hapsari et al., 2021; Huei et al., 2021) primarily focus on students’ learning, they leave a discernible gap in the exploration of teachers’ perspectives on IRS, particularly within the context of online education.

Recent research on teachers’ views of technology in language education has primarily focused on the general use of educational tools, overlooking specific dimensions like online education and particular tools such as interactive response systems. For example, noteworthy studies by Taghizadeh and Hasani Yourdshahi (2020) and Boonmoh et al. (2022) explored general technology tools in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. In a separate investigation, Abbasi et al. (2022) primarily investigated teachers’ attitudes toward technology in English instruction, emphasizing general information and communication technologies (ICT) tools. A similar study on EFL teachers in Indonesia mainly focused on general technology tools and did not extensively explore teachers’ experiences in online education using IRS (Puspitasari & Pelawi, 2023). Although Sari and Putri (2022) identified online learning tools, including IRS, in online EFL classes, they did not investigate deeper into teachers’ perceptions. Additionally, a study by Ulla et al. (2020) discussed teachers’ experiences with internet-based applications, including IRS, but it was not within the context of online education.

Identifying this research gap, the present study seeks to provide a comprehensive and focused exploration of teachers’ perspectives on IRS within the online education context, delving into aspects such as instructional strategies, challenges faced, and the
perceived effectiveness of IRS tools. The unique dimension introduced by the participants being foreign EFL teachers further enriches the study by offering insights into their distinct experiences and considerations. The following is the research question of this study: How do foreign teachers perceive the use of Interactive Response Systems (IRS) in online English classes at Thai universities?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Foreign EFL Teachers and Interactive Response Systems (IRS)

Across diverse global contexts, the demand for the recruitment of foreign educators to facilitate English language instruction is a widely acknowledged imperative, prominently illustrated in nations like Thailand (Anggoro & Nguyen, 2021). This phenomenon has engendered the ubiquitous presence of foreign English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors within the educational setting. The principal rationale behind the influx of foreign EFL teachers into Thai educational institutions lies in their pivotal role in enhancing students’ English proficiency and fostering linguistic self-assurance (Post Reporters, 2020). As Taylor (2019) emphasized, the Thai government has actively sought to augment the English communication skills of Thai students through the engagement of additional foreign English teachers.

Numerous scholarly perspectives echo the notion that foreign EFL instructors offer pedagogical dynamics that are both stimulating and convivial. A study by Nomnian et al. (2023) revealed student preferences for foreign teachers over Thai teachers due to their communicative language teaching, emphasizing participation over grammar. They added that foreign ESL/EFL lecturers employed active learning tools, while Thai lecturers leaned towards textbooks. Supporting this agreement, a different study by Qiu and Fang (2022) found that students noticed foreign English teachers employing interactive teaching methods that included diverse activities and various communication modalities.

2.2 IRS in Online English Classes: Benefits and Challenges

Digital interactive language learning is gaining prominence in educational settings due to its increasing significance. More and more universities currently offer online and distance learning courses, including English, which makes it convenient and easy for learners. However, to master English skills, constant practice is important. Hence, a teacher-centered online class might not be sufficient to develop one’s English skills. Wu (2019) stated that traditional lecture methods often result in passive student engagement, making it challenging to implement collaborative learning approaches.

In an online synchronous class, a teleconferencing tool is normally used. When the class size is larger, the tool alone might not be enough to facilitate engaging activities for all students, hence integrating IRS might be one of the solutions. Studies have shown that the use of IRS tools in the classroom leads to more enjoyable and engaging lectures compared to traditional teacher-centered classrooms (Wang et al., 2022). Before the Covid-19 pandemic, instructors had embraced IRS to enhance student engagement and improve academic performance (Li & Tseng, 2019). During the pandemic where classes were online, IRS utilization also showed positive effects
on students’ engagement (Ningrum, 2022) and achievement (Huei et al., 2021). In addition to being effective and engaging, the IRS is also enjoyed for its convenience (Anggoro & Pratiwi, 2023; Ningrum, 2022). Furthermore, it promotes active and intelligent learning (Wang et al., 2022).

Despite the benefits, using the IRS in online English classes might bring several problems. The biggest issue happens when the internet connection is not stable. Poor internet connections pose a major threat to students’ participation in an activity using an IRS (Anggoro & Pratiwi, 2023; Basar et al., 2021; Ningrum, 2022). Also, to participate in an IRS activity, infrastructure and tools for learning are important, yet students might not have them at home (Göksün & Gürsoy, 2019). A student must have a reliable device, such as a laptop or tablet to log in to both the teleconferencing tool and the IRS. Without proper equipment, students will not receive the potential benefits that the IRS can give them in English classes, including interactive language practice in real-time, virtual collaboration with peers, receiving immediate feedback, and improved language performance (Anggoro et al., 2023). However, without reliable devices, students may miss out on these advantages. Khan et al. (2021) noted that unsuitable devices can result in access and operational challenges. Moreover, they emphasized that unreliable devices, such as smartphones, may divert students’ attention from learning to accessing social media and entertainment apps.

2.3 Popular IRS in English Language Teaching

The diverse array of IRS available in higher education today offers educators a spectrum of pedagogical tools that can be used in both face-to-face and online settings. Each platform, with its unique strengths and capabilities, ultimately enriches the learning experience and empowers instructors to foster enhanced student engagement and academic achievement.

Socrative, an established online platform since 2011, pulls real-time mobile app interaction to enhance learning (Pryke, 2020). It facilitates question posing, quiz creation, and instant feedback gathering via smartphones or tablets. Socrative’s adaptability to students’ personal devices fosters engagement and collaboration (Romero et al., 2021). Studies highlight the benefits of platforms like Socrative, with findings showing increased participation, student involvement, and improved achievement (Fitriyah, 2022). In Amoia-Watters’ (2023) study, students also responded positively to Socrative, further supporting the idea that using such platforms enhances engagement with class material.

Google Forms, another versatile tool, emerges as a valuable tool contributing to the enhancement of students’ knowledge and self-efficacy (Saleh Alharbi et al., 2021). It simplifies creating and administering assessments while aiding efficient data analysis (Douell, 2020). Students benefit from immediate feedback and technological alignment, while educators find it cost-effective (Adelia et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2020).

Quizizz, a gamified application, engages students with avatars, themes, and real-time quizzes (Zhao, 2019). It increases engagement and motivation (Zhang & Crawford, 2023), improves learning outcomes in specific subjects (Fadhilawati, 2021), reduces anxiety, and offers an enjoyable learning experience (Fadhilawati, 2021). A study unveiled a notable difference in student motivation and interest levels between the traditional approach and the use of Quizizz (Margallo et al., 2023). The results
specifically demonstrated that integrating Quizizz heightened students’ curiosity and increased their desire to learn.

Kahoot!, a popular game-based platform, checks knowledge, provides formative assessments, and boosts engagement (Khasanah & Anggoro, 2022; Wang & Tahir, 2020). A study by Akkuş et al. (2021) found that the majority of students perceived the Kahoot! application to improve course attendance, reinforce learned topics through repetition, and increase motivation and attention.

Pear Deck takes a distinctive approach by seamlessly blending interactive elements with presentation slides, delivering real-time feedback, and elevating student involvement to new heights (Anggoro & Khasanah, 2021; Liu et al., 2019). This innovative platform possesses considerable potential for both traditional classroom settings and online education, effectively addressing the perennial challenge of sustaining student engagement (Anggoro & Khasanah, 2021).

These IRS platforms are just a few of many others that exist at present and can aid teachers in various ways during instruction, and it is believed that newer and more advanced tools are coming up due to rapid technological advancement. The potential that these IRS platforms have can offer betterment for online English classes. The previously published works have confirmed their positive impacts on students’ engagement and achievement. Nonetheless, as previously highlighted, little is known about the teachers’ perceptions of the tools, let alone the foreign teachers. It is believed that their perspectives will deepen understanding and knowledge on the matter and benefit future applications of IRS in online English classes.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

The research design for this study is grounded in a qualitative approach, aiming to investigate the perceptions of foreign English instructors regarding the use of IRS in online classes within Thai universities. The application of the IRS is highlighted, along with its benefits, drawbacks, and recommendations for future use. The initial phase involved formulating a precise research topic and conducting an extensive review of relevant literature, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive exploration.

3.2 Participants

This study employed a qualitative purposive sampling approach (Palinkas et al., 2015), ensuring that participant selection adhered to strict criteria to enhance the validity and representativeness of the findings. The selected participants were English university instructors based in Thailand, who had accumulated three or more years of teaching experience and held, at a minimum, a master’s degree in a field directly related to the English language or education.

Furthermore, to guarantee that the participants were directly engaged with the subject under investigation, they were required to actively incorporate at least one IRS into their online English classes. This criterion was essential to ensuring that the insights and experiences shared by the participants were grounded in practical usage and firsthand knowledge of IRS integration in the educational context.
The study enrolled a diverse cohort of non-native foreign English university teachers, comprising seven females and three males, selected from three distinct Thai tertiary institutions. Their ages were between 27 and 35 years. They ranged from three to six years of teaching experience in Thailand. Additionally, most participants primarily taught General English (GE) classes, including English communication skills. In terms of their educational qualifications, eight of the English instructors held master’s degrees, while two participants possessed doctorate degrees.

Regarding consent, all individuals involved in this study provided their consent prior to the commencement of data collection. Each participant consented through both verbal communication in an initial interview and a written agreement, where they were provided with a form to sign. In terms of confidentiality, only the researchers had access to specific personal information required for data collection, ensuring utmost privacy. All collected data were securely stored.

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection involved multiple interviews and observations. Interviews, adopting established protocols in qualitative research by Edwards and Holland (2013) and DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), were conducted to ensure a comprehensive exploration of participants’ experiences and insights. Qualitative research interviews were chosen as the cornerstone of this research design due to their unique capacity to provide a profound understanding of the participants’ worldviews, the intrinsic significance of their personal viewpoints, and a comprehensive exploration of their lived experiences preceding any scientific explanations (Kvale, 1996). This data collection process spanned a four-month duration, during which the researchers coordinated with participants to accommodate their availability, including both weekends and weekdays, in line with their individual preferences. During the interviews, the researcher utilized follow-up questions, probes, and comments to facilitate in-depth investigation.

Observations were another pivotal part of the study to examine the implementation of IRS in online English classes. These observations were conducted regularly, with each teacher being observed at least three times, all in compliance with their consent and permission. Three teachers graciously extended their cooperation, granting researchers the opportunity to observe a total of 10 of their classes.

The interviews and observations were conducted online through platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet, customized to their convenience. While no specific time limit was imposed, the interviews typically lasted between 35 and 60 minutes. Each observation covered the entire duration of the respective class, which, on average, lasted for approximately two hours. However, some classes deviated from this norm, ranging from about one hour to occasionally extending up to three hours in length.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted through the content analysis approach, guided by the well-established framework outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). The results from both interviews and observations were integrated to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the data. Common themes emerged from both the observational notes and interview transcripts, covering the application of Interactive Response Systems
(IRS), both in general and on specific platforms, as well as the benefits, drawbacks, and suggestions for future implementations. These themes were systematically classified, categorized, and organized based on the study’s research questions.

4. RESULTS

4.1 IRS Application in Online Classes

4.1.1 Reasons for the IRS application

During the interviews, the participants highlighted several reasons for integrating the IRS into online instruction. Primarily, they aimed to enhance the online learning experience and increase student engagement. Eight participants noted that traditional lecture-based classes lacked enthusiasm, prompting them to introduce interactive media to make their teaching more enjoyable and engaging.

(1) Students like it when there is an interactive game in the class. They always enjoy the game.

(2) I did not like online classes because it felt like I was alone talking on my own laptop. It gave me stress. With an IRS, I feel better because I feel like I am interacting with the students. I can monitor who is active.

(3) My friends use it and they told me about the tools. Because of them, I started using interactive quizzes too (laugh). I do not want to be left behind.

Another pivotal reason cited was the well-being and enjoyment of the instructors themselves. Three participants candidly confessed that the challenges of conducting online classes, characterized by low participation and interaction, had previously caused them considerable stress. Communicating with students seemed demanding, with frequent instances of students ignoring their instructors’ attempts to engage. However, the adoption of IRS tools proved to be a game-changer. These tools empowered instructors to engage all students simultaneously, fostering a sense of inclusivity and active participation. For instance, employing platforms like Quizizz for lesson reviews or teaching vocabulary and grammar ensured the engagement of every student. Additionally, two teachers used the potential of Pear Deck, enabling real-time interactions with students through interactive slides. This interaction contributed to the instructors’ mental well-being, providing excitement and motivation.

Interestingly, peer pressure emerged as a final noteworthy theme during the discussions. One instructor revealed that his decision to incorporate the IRS into his teaching was prompted by observing the successes of his colleagues. Witnessing their effective use of IRS tools inspired him to match their performance and ultimately enhance his own teaching methods.

4.1.2 General IRS application

From the interviews and observations, the application of IRS during an online class varies. The next excerpts contains some of the participants’ responses. The most common practice is to use them as practice tools.
I use it usually at the end. So, I can assess students’ comprehension. They also can anticipate doing a game.

I use it sometimes one or two times in a class. I use it at the beginning like a pretest and at the end like a posttest. Sometimes I use it in the middle of the lesson as a practice.

Since I use interactive slides, students can join it for the whole class duration. I think it is convenient for myself and my students.

Six instructors mentioned that they used an IRS, such as Kahoot!, Quizizz, Google Forms, or Socrative, to preview or review the lessons. The preview acted like a pretest, while the review gave them insights into students’ comprehension and implications for the next class. The preview was usually done at the beginning of class, and the review was sometimes done in the middle or at the end of class. Some instructors mentioned that, in addition to helping students practice, they integrated IRS at the beginning of class to boost students’ motivation and excitement for the class. For instance, with Pear Deck or Nearpod, they asked students to draw something related to the upcoming lesson’s topic. Some lecturers used interactive quizzes with Kahoot!, Quizizz, or Socrative. Quizizz and Kahoot! were also highlighted for their engaging sounds and animations. It was also observed that three lecturers used IRS for the whole class, from the beginning to the end. They used platforms like Pear Deck or Nearpod to start the class, deliver the lesson, interact with students during the lesson, give practice, and ask for students’ reflections.

4.1.3 Application of specific IRS

While the previous section discusses the general applications of IRS this section highlights the application of specific IRS as mentioned by the participants. To start, Pear Deck proved to be a valuable tool for both pre-lesson activities and interactive classroom activities. In terms of pre-lesson activities, teachers commonly provided students with interactive slides a week before the class, allowing students ample time to complete exercises at home prior to the next session. During the online classes, Pear Deck served as an interactive presentation tool, actively engaging students in the learning process. It was particularly useful for exercises such as grammar practice, where students could respond to various questions posed by the teachers. Furthermore, Pear Deck facilitated lesson reviews. For instance, when it came to writing practice, Pear Deck emerged as a valuable tool for teachers to provide prompt feedback immediately after students finished their writing tasks. Students could read and respond to the feedback on this platform, revise their writings, and showcase their revised versions. The following table includes the participants’ comments.

The following excerpts show the application of Pear Deck as reported by participants. It includes their perceptions and experiences regarding the use of Pear Deck for pre-lesson and during lesson activities.

I use Pear Deck for the pre-lesson and during the lesson activities. I usually give students some interactive slides a week before the class and then I give them chances to do the exercises that I have prepared.

With Pear Deck, I can see students who are active and inactive. I can see their responses right away and give them feedback when necessary. It also allows me to do various activities like drawing, writing, and multiple-choice.
Socrative emerged as another commonly used IRS among teachers, primarily utilized for assessment purposes, particularly for vocabulary tests. Socrative offers a range of interesting features. Teachers could generate their own questions, import quizzes created by others, share quizzes with colleagues, and administer quizzes for students to complete. The platform is user-friendly, making it simple for teachers to navigate and explore its functionalities. Teachers found Socrative to be highly beneficial, as retrieving quiz results could be accomplished swiftly after running the questions. Below are some excerpts on the application of Socrative.

9. I usually use Socrative for assessment. It’s convenient to use as the scores are automatically graded and displayed once students’ answers are submitted.

10. I use Socrative mainly for formative assessment, especially for vocabulary tests.

In addition, Google Forms has emerged as another IRS tool commonly employed for assessment purposes. It served as a versatile tool for both in-class assessments and homework assignments. In an online environment, Google Forms proved to be a valuable platform for preparing and distributing final examination questions. Its effectiveness as a summative assessment tool was recognized during this period. A teacher expressed

11. I use Google Forms to collect students' homework or assignments, and for summative assessment when the classes and the final tests are also moved online.

Meanwhile, Kahoot! and Quizizz were frequently utilized for reviewing lessons or exercises that did not require grading. These tools were primarily chosen by teachers because they provided a fun and gamified experience for students during lesson reviews or exercises. Additionally, teachers could readily access available quizzes on these platforms that corresponded to the specific lesson topics they wanted to review. After answering each question, both teachers and students received immediate feedback on the correctness of the responses. At the end of the game, Kahoot! displayed the three highest scores, while Quizizz provided individual scores or ranks. The use of IRS tools like Kahoot! and Quizizz fostered competitiveness among students and motivated their active participation in the learning process. Here are some of the comments on the application of Kahoot! and Quizizz.

12. I usually use Kahoot! to attract students’ attention. I would choose the questions or games based on the lesson topic.

13. I use Quizizz for some activities because it is easy and fun.

4.2 Advantages of IRS in Online Class

The findings reveal several advantages of IRS in online classes. The following excerpts are some of the responses of the participants in the interview.

14. The classes become more interactive. The students are more engaged in the class.

15. Interactive components of IRSs. For example, Kahoot! is entertaining because everyone can join the quiz and there are some winners. It makes classes more fun because there is the element of competition in Kahoot!.
I think seeing students happy makes me happy. Knowing that they are actively participating kind of boosts my energy, but I am not sure why.

When my students are engaged, it makes me feel like I did something right.

IRS is a means for the teachers to assess students’ ability whether they understand the lessons or not.

As we are currently conducting the classes online, IRS tools help me a lot in facilitating learning, for example, I can give my students interactive slides using Pear Deck so they can actually answer the questions simultaneously while I am explaining the lessons to them or even I can give the slides before the class so they can practice first. So, this actually helps them a lot to study more.

The excerpts in (14) to (19) show that one advantage of IRS is that it enhances the teaching and learning experience. The participants mentioned that the utilization of IRS tools significantly increased the interactivity of the classes. The game-like features of several IRS tools made the classes more enjoyable, introducing an element of competition. The display of winners at the end of the quiz added to the excitement. The participants agreed that this resulted in heightened engagement and provided an opportunity for all students to practice the lessons learned in class. The fun learning atmosphere also positively affected the instructors. One participant mentioned that knowing that students were engaged and having fun in the class made him happy and improved his mood. Another participant stated that it helped her maintain her positive energy while teaching online. Previously, online teaching was boring to her due to a lack of students’ engagement, but the IRS helped transform it into a better experience.

The next advantage is to monitor students’ presence and attention during online classes. The IRS helped the participants determine if students were fully engaged or multitasking. These tools proved to be highly valuable in assessing student attentiveness during virtual lessons. One participant mentioned that he did not have a specific time to do the interactive quiz activities. He occasionally did it in the middle, or at the end of a meeting. By doing so he hoped to keep the students’ anticipation. From the observations, several instructors used the IRS to identify students who were active and not. Those who were active would like to join the activity as soon as it was launched. Instructors who used interactive slides like Pear Deck could easily identify the names of students who responded to prompts given in real-time. Then, they could do something for students who had not responded yet, like calling their names.

The third advantage is to check students’ comprehension. As previously mentioned, the IRS can help monitor students’ attentiveness. Additionally, while doing so, teachers can observe students’ understanding of the lesson and use it as a part of formative assessment. One participant mentioned that not only did it bring enjoyment to the class, but it also acted like a map of students’ comprehension. The instructor could see the scores of all participating students, not just the winners. After the game, they could review the questions one by one, especially items that most students struggled with. One instructor also further elaborated that she sometimes gave students with lower scores in the game more attention by giving them extra sessions.

The last advantage is to foster students’ independent learning before class. Two instructors explained how they assigned students independent learning materials by using IRS. The selection of the IRS was to provide materials and practice simultaneously. Also, the instructors could monitor whether students did the independent learning and/or what aspects of the lesson they were struggling with.
Furthermore, they hoped the IRS could increase students’ motivation to study independently. The instructors used various platforms for students’ self-study, including Pear Deck, Nearpod, and Edpuzzle.

4.3 Challenges in Using the IRS

Despite the numerous benefits of IRS tools, teachers faced several challenges during their implementation. Some of their comments are shown in the following excerpts.

(20) Not all students are advanced in using technology since they may not have good equipment and a good internet connection.

(21) When the internet connection is bad, like you know there is a delay, the students may miss out on some information or activities.

One significant challenge was the unequal access to high-speed internet among students in online learning environments. This resulted in the teachers’ worries that some students missed out on lesson explanations and felt left behind due to slow internet connections. Also, sudden blackouts sometimes happened, and it made it inconvenient for the class to reconnect to the internet and teleconferencing tool, let alone the IRS.

Another concern is about students’ personal gadgets. To use the IRS, teachers need to make sure that students have proper devices. If students only use a smartphone for an online class, they might not conveniently join the IRS activity. From the observations, students with a single smartphone would not join the IRS activity or had to log out of the Zoom session. Since students with a single smartphone might have access to only one screen, they might find it challenging to simultaneously engage in both the Zoom meeting and the IRS platform. Consequently, some students resorted to borrowing a family member’s phone to multitask teleconferencing and IRS activities. Possessing multiple smartphones allows students to dedicate one device to teleconferencing and another to IRS activities, thereby enhancing convenience. However, this solution may be contingent upon the specifications of the smartphones. Newer models with superior specifications might seamlessly facilitate users in splitting screens and accessing two platforms simultaneously. Ideally, the teachers mentioned that each student needed a reliable laptop, tablet, or computer to join the online session.

The next problem is about the students’ technology literacy. From the observations, technologically less proficient students struggled with unfamiliar IRS tools, finding it challenging to participate in class activities involving those tools. Sometimes it would take approximately 15 minutes to get students ready for an IRS activity, as mentioned by three instructors. Consequently, the students who encountered problems joining a game would usually look less enthusiastic.

Additionally, the participants were worried about having to pay for the subscription fees to use the IRS. Some popular IRS platforms had limited their participants to the free version. For instance, Kahoot!’s free version only allows around 11 participants. So, it is no longer accessible for larger classes. The teachers were worried that other IRS would follow. They hoped that their universities would pay for the subscription fees when needed.
Another concern is workload. To use the IRS, more preparations were needed. Sometimes the participants had to create an interactive activity from scratch, thus taking longer for class preparation. One instructor mentioned that he had to stay up late at night preparing for the IRS activity. Though he was happy doing it, he could not deny how exhausting it was. Some instructors recommended teachers collaborate to use the IRS as it would help reduce the workload.

The next problem is the language barrier as the foreign teachers were not fluent in Thai. When teaching students with low English proficiency, the instructors occasionally struggled to help students with problems accessing the IRS. The students or teachers would then use translation software to communicate with each other, which took a longer time. An instructor highlighted that in an online class, it would be more challenging to use body language or gestures to explain some instructions to the students. Therefore, she had to use a translation tool. In a face-to-face class, she could approach and help the students with problems in person, but in an online class, she did not have that advantage. Finally, the last observed disadvantage of using IRS tools was the potential for students to engage in cheating during activities, such as using translation tools or searching for answers online.

4.4 Suggestions for Future Applications

Teachers have provided recommendations for improving the use of IRS tools in online classes, as displayed in the excerpts below:

(22) IRS tools should be more user-friendly.

(23) It would be great if students could record themselves in audio or video on the IRS platforms.

Firstly, it is important to enhance the user-friendliness of the IRS tools. This entails simplifying the user interface design and ensuring that the available features are easily navigable. It is crucial to address the issue of certain features requiring a strong internet connection, as this poses difficulties for students with unreliable connections. Additionally, developers should consider offering a variety of background music options that align with different modes of usage. For example, soothing music during test mode to aid concentration or upbeat music during exercise mode to boost energy levels. Another suggestion is to allow students to upload audio or video recordings of themselves, enabling them to provide written and oral responses. This would enhance the interactive nature of the platform. Furthermore, to mitigate cheating during online exams, it would be beneficial for the tools to incorporate measures such as disabling automatic translation features.

5. DISCUSSION

From the findings, there were several interesting points to discuss. To start, the findings support the utilization of IRS in online English classes. This study agrees that the IRS creates a more enjoyable learning experience (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2020) as well as increases student engagement and participation (Ningrum, 2022). It supports the notion that the IRS platform in a virtual setting can enhance students’ achievement (Huei et al., 2021; Li & Tseng, 2019) and learning motivation (Alfaruqy & Setyawan,
It agrees that the IRS gamifies instruction (Anggoro & Khasanah, 2021), reviews lessons (Yürek, 2019), and conducts assessments (Hadjiah et al., 2020). In general, IRS tools are convenient to use in online settings (Anggoro & Pratiwi, 2023).

Additionally, the findings also found problems in the IRS similar to previous studies. Similar challenges included unstable internet connectivity (Anggoro & Pratiwi, 2023; Basar et al., 2021; Ningrum, 2022) which hindered several students from actively participating in class. Our findings highlight the importance of having reliable devices for online classes (Göksün & Gürsoy, 2019). Without proper equipment, IRS utilization will not be a convenient and fun experience. Several findings were not found in previous studies, including the subscription fees of the IRS platforms and the increased workload. Popular IRS platforms have made their free versions less accessible for a larger class or disabled their most-used features. Also, creating IRS activities for students would take up the free time of the instructors, and thus collaboration might help reduce the burden. Since the participants are foreign English teachers in Thai universities, language barriers were among the problems. Communication with students with lower English proficiency levels was challenging and required the additional effort of using a translation tool. Body language and gestures might not help much in a virtual setting, especially when giving lengthy instructions or abstract concepts.

Furthermore, this study further adds to the literature by diving further into the reasons behind IRS utilization. While it has been known that IRS is used for formative assessment (Douell, 2020), content practice or lesson preview and review (Anggoro & Khasanah, 2021; Liu et al., 2019), and boosting students’ learning motivation and enjoyment (Akkuş et al., 2021; Fadhilawati, 2021; Margallo et al., 2023), little was known about the teachers’ own enjoyment of the platform utilization. Low student participation and engagement might cause stress for several instructors. Hence, the adoption of IRS tools might solve the problem. This real-time interaction with students through the IRS might significantly contribute to the instructors’ mental well-being during online classes, infusing them with excitement and motivation. Another unique reason for using the IRS is peer pressure. One instructor revealed that his decision to incorporate the IRS into his teaching was prompted by observing the successes of his colleagues. Witnessing their effective use of IRS tools inspired him to match their performance and ultimately enhance his teaching methods.

Participants in this study also suggested several modifications for a better IRS experience. Teachers recommend enhancing IRS tool usability by simplifying the interface and addressing connectivity issues. They propose offering diverse background music options for various usage modes, enabling students to upload audio or video responses for greater interactivity, and implementing anti-cheating measures like disabling automatic translation.

6. Conclusion

The findings from this study shed light on the multifaceted application of IRS in online classes. Educators, driven by the desire to enhance the learning experience, incorporate IRS tools to inject excitement and engagement into virtual classrooms. This transformation not only benefits students but also alleviates stress and enhances the enjoyment of instructors. Peer influence plays a pivotal role in driving the adoption
of IRS tools among educators, creating a positive cycle of improvement in teaching methodologies. In terms of general application, IRS tools serve various functions, from pretesting to reviewing lessons. They boost student motivation and participation while providing valuable insights into comprehension. Specific IRS tools, such as Pear Deck, Socrative, Google Forms, Kahoot!, and Quizizz, are utilized for diverse instructional purposes, ranging from pre-lesson activities to assessment. These tools enable real-time interactions, prompt feedback, and engaging learning experiences, making them indispensable resources for online educators.

The advantages of using IRS tools in online classes are numerous. They elevate the teaching and learning experience by fostering interactivity, competition, and student engagement. IRS tools also serve as effective monitoring tools, helping instructors gauge student attentiveness and comprehension in real time. Moreover, they promote independent learning by offering materials and practice opportunities before class. However, these benefits are accompanied by several challenges, including unequal internet access, device limitations, technology literacy issues, subscription fees, increased workload, and language barriers. Additionally, there is a concern about potential cheating during IRS activities.

Some limitations of the present study have been identified. It is based on interviews and observations, which may not capture the entire spectrum of educators’ experiences with IRS tools. Additionally, the study is context-specific, focusing on a particular educational environment, and its findings may not be generalizable to all online teaching scenarios. Further research involving a larger and more diverse sample of educators and students could provide a broader understanding of the challenges and benefits of IRS tools in online education. Additionally, further investigation into the impact of peer pressure on the adoption of IRS tools among educators can provide valuable insights into effective professional development strategies.

REFERENCES


