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## [JALT PRACTICE] YOUNGER LEARNERS



### Martin Sedaghat & Emily MacFarlane

The Younger Learners column provides language teachers of children and teenagers with advice and guidance for making the most of their classes. Teachers with an interest in this field are also encouraged to submit articles and ideas to the editors at the address below. We also welcome questions about teaching, and will endeavour to answer them in this column.

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## Using LoiLoNote for Improving Lesson Flow and Student Engagement in Elementary English Lessons

Andrew Lankshear

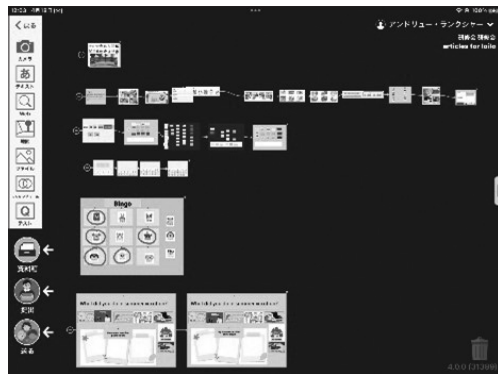
This article introduces some of the main features of LoiLoNote School (hereafter, LoiLo) which I have found to be extremely useful in my young learners' classrooms. LoiLo is a cloud-based learning platform, created in 2014, that is used widely throughout Japan's compulsory education institutions. More than 2000 schools are currently subscribed to it (LoiLo, 2023). The students within my own private school in Koriyama, Fukushima prefecture have each had a tablet (iPad) since 2021 and we have used LoiLo since 2019. My students are now all adept at using it and I, too, with lots of guidance from my teacher colleagues (and some of the students!) have discovered how the paper-based things I used to do can now be done more efficiently on this digital platform.

So, what is LoiLo? It is a cloud-based desktop on which you save information within multimedia cards (Figure 1). The multimedia cards can store videos, website links, PDFs, audio, text, and/or images.

The cards can be stacked, connected, imported, resized, and moved freely both around the desktop and within other, larger cards. A desktop, with its stacks of cards, can be made for each separate class within separate folders, which helps me to easily store and retrieve materials for future use. I can also easily share those cards with students (and other teachers) who are exclusively registered to that class.

Figure 1

LoiLo Note Desktop



Given its ease of use and wide-spread uptake, research into LoiLo has been increasing with research topics ranging from the metacognitive development of students in mathematics (Tateishi, 2023), to facilitating the education of taste awareness (Kobayashi et al., 2022), which has been conducted

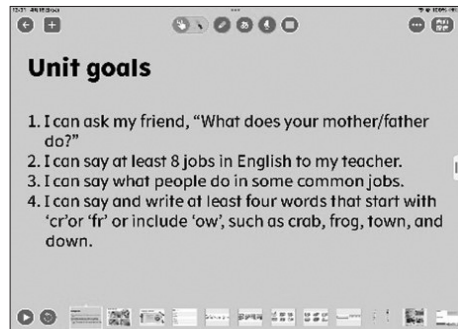
across all levels of education. When researching its efficacy in English lessons at elementary schools, Matsushita (2023, p.255) noted its usefulness for both creating and delivering activities, especially for the creation of digital presentations and the ease of sharing these with other students. Also, Yamazaki (2021) reported on how ICT, which included Loilo applications, supported elementary school students in their learning of the four skills.

Much productive work has been done with Loilo in schools and reported in Japanese, so I hope to be able to share some of the benefits of this very useful software with English-speaking readers as well. In this brief article, I wish to share the three key features which I think are the most important for my English classes. The first is the ability to sequence goals, resources, and activities to enhance lesson flow and to organize and store unit resources. The second feature, also known as the manipulation feature, is the ability to select, move, and arrange cards within larger cards so that students can easily complete information-gap activities or the like. Finally, the third is the ability to easily record and provide audio resources.

### LoiLoNote and Unit Flow

LoiLo provides multimedia cards which can be easily shared wirelessly with students who have registered within a particular class. These cards can be linked and sequenced, thus providing a framework for a unit of learning. A typical unit of learning begins with the unit goals (Figure 2). An example is “I can say at least eight jobs in English to my teacher.” At the end of the unit these goals are incorporated into a reflection card (Figure 3) for students to self-evaluate how well they believe they have achieved the unit goals. They submit this and any other unit work using the submission box function in the main desktop. With this function, I have been quickly able to pull up the unit goals at the start of each of my lessons and, as a result, I have shared them more readily and noted which ones we are working on during a particular lesson. I knew that this was helpful to my students’ learning to do this (see Hattie, 2012) but I had sometimes failed to do it in the past consistently. By having it readily available I am doing it more often and thus providing better quality lessons.

**Figure 2**  
*Unit Goals Card*



**Figure 3**  
*Reflection Card*



The rest of the cards in my unit consist of activities informed by the presentation, practice (both controlled and free), and production (PPP) method. The first few sequenced cards provide the presentation stage of the unit—the unit dialogue, unit song, and unit vocabulary items. Each card has audio embedded. Most textbooks provide audio content which performs the same task. However, by collating all these resources into one place, the entire unit’s work can be easily shared, and the students can seamlessly navigate through it. This enhances the flow of the lesson and reduces the amount of down time which is a welcome feature in what is already a time-poor teaching environment.

### Information Gap Activities With LoiLoNote

The next feature is the manipulation functions of Loilo. This is used within the practice stage of my PPP-informed units. An activity at this stage often consists of information gap activities which are either completed in pairs or by the whole class (a jigsaw information gap activity). For example, if the unit goal is for your students to be able to say which animals they like, you can create a controlled practice exercise with a Loilo card that has the an-

imal vocabulary items (Figure 4). In this card, there is a picture of a zoo and students select five animals from the sixteen available to move into their zoo. They then interview each other, asking questions such as “What animals do you like?” and “I like dogs, pandas, sheep, giraffes, and hippos.” If their speaking partner has the same animal in their own zoo, they get a point. They continue the activity for five to eight minutes, and the student with the most points at the end is the winner. Other speaking activities at this stage involve the students moving vocabulary items on their screens into categories or images that they then compare with another student to see if they have the same item in the same place.

**Figure 4**  
Information Gap Activity Card



Bingo sheets can also be easily made by making a 3x3 grid in a card (Figure 5). I recommend importing about twelve images for a 3x3 board so there are a few images left over. Students choose nine of the images to move into the grid template and make up a Bingo board. When playing Bingo students use the digital drawing function to cross out word items. Ognib can also be played (Ognib is Bingo spelt backwards). In order to play, students first form pairs and each student makes up their Bingo board that they hide from their partner’s line of sight. The students then take turns to say a vocabulary item which then both they and their partner cross out. The student who gets bingo first loses. The advantage of Ognib is that the students practice saying the vocabulary as opposed to just listening to it as in Bingo. In the past, I have played these games on paper, but I have found that doing them on LoiLo has the following advantages:

- Markings can be easily deleted with the press of a button to repeat the activity.
- Vocabulary items can be easily rearranged after each round.

- The digital version saves both time and money in reducing preparation time and foregoing any need for printing.

As a result of these advantages, students get to play more within the time given and they enjoy it more, while getting increased practice in the target language, which is a win-win for learning.

**Figure 5**  
Bingo Card



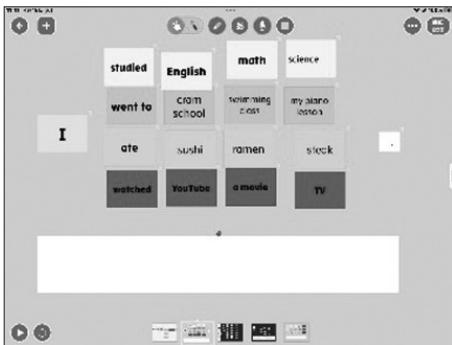
Another activity similar to those above (i.e., the manipulation of language items) is sentence arranging (*narabikae* in Japanese). Sentence arranging is used within Eiken tests that are regularly offered in Japan so being able to practice this quickly and effortlessly on LoiLo is very useful. Essentially, words within a sentence are mixed up and the students need to arrange these words into the correct order. For this activity, you can create a card and place a few smaller cards within it. Then write one word on each card for a predetermined sentence and mix them up. Next, you share this activity with your students who then must move the cards into the correct order to construct the correct predetermined sentence (e.g., /brother/swimming/My/went/yesterday→My brother went swimming yesterday).

A related activity is question or sentence building (Figures 6 and 7). Students are given a selection of possible words to create a question or sentence. The teacher says a question or sentence in Japanese and their students must select from the words given to create the English equivalent. This resource can also be used later in fluency activities when students are encouraged to create original questions and/or sentences from those they have already learned. Other similar activities that can be done in this manner are cloze exercises, matching exercises, ranking or categorizing exercises, and dictogloss listening activities. Essentially, many of the activities that are offered in complementary workbooks for the main textbook can now be replicated in a digital format.

**Figure 6**  
*Question Building*

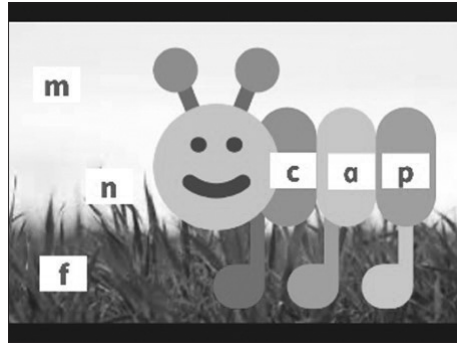


**Figure 7**  
*Sentence Building*



For lower grades, manipulation of items works well for creating phonics boards (Figure 8). When doing this with your students, you sound out the phonemes for a word (usually consonant-vowel-consonant words at first) and your students must select from the letters provided to create the word. I recommend standing at the rear of the class during this activity so you can clearly see each student's screen. This is an excellent way to quickly assess whether your students are learning how to identify and select individual phoneme sounds and make their first steps towards spelling out words. My students enjoy the simplicity of this exercise, and their feelings of achievement from having spelt out English words. This activity can gradually be made more difficult by increasing the number of letters to choose from and/or increasing the length of the words to spell. Once your students know how to write the alphabet, you can ask them to write the word out rather than arrange it on the screen. This activity is therefore an excellent bridge between the listening and saying stage of phonics instruction and the listening and writing stage.

**Figure 8**  
*Phonics Board*



### Audio with LoLoNote

The third feature of LoLo is its audio functions (Figure 9). There are two aspects to this, listening and recording. For listening, you can record the pronunciation of each word or text. Students can then listen to this and practice saying those words or the text. They can change the speed of the audio to make it faster or slower. For recording, students can record their own speaking and submit it. There is a feature in the recording function where you can set a time limit (the recording will be cut off if the text is not said in the allotted time). You can therefore dictate the time within which a text should be recited (I usually set this at the rate of two words per second but may make the time longer depending on the text and the level of my students). With these audio features you can assign pronunciation work or reading practice for homework and check their pronunciation, reading ability, and reading speed during your own office time.

**Figure 9**  
*Audio Functions*



### Conclusion

I have outlined how LoLo has made my teaching job better and how it has expedited my students'



learning. I used to spend hours making paper-based resources for my lessons - flashcards, game cards, bingo sheets, and board games. Also, I needed time to store and then find those resources, and then get them ready for my lessons. LoiLo is a platform which stores all those activities in one digital place. I have found that it has helped me to create and deliver many common teaching and learning tasks in my language classroom, such as information gap activities, sentence-arranging activities, pronunciation practice, and phonics instruction more easily. While LoiLo is not the only platform which can perform some or all of these tasks, it is one of the most common, at least in Japan. It is possible to make information gap activities on Keynote, for example, but LoiLo makes the sharing and collating of these resources much more efficient. While I have introduced some of my favorite features about LoiLo there are still many other things you can do with it in your classroom. I therefore encourage curious readers to read more broadly on the platform and, if possible, to try it out for themselves. Hopefully, more of our students can have more expedited learning experiences by doing this!

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