

# Using EdTech Apps in “Cram Schools”: Creativity vs. Cramming?

Eikoh has become the first “cram school” in Japan to introduce LoiLoNote School into its classrooms in an attempt to make exam revision more fun, memorable and engaging.

## Background

In April 2016, major Japanese “cram school” chain Eikoh Seminar High School “Navio” introduced LoiLoNote School (LNS) into its classrooms. Cram schools such as Eikoh offer a range of educational services, but specialize in entrance test review classes for students who wish to go on to the next stage of education. For example, intensive tuition to high school students who wish to get into a top university by doing well in the university entrance examinations.

Eikoh was founded in 1980 to offer educational services to elementary school students, but has since expanded its business and now boasts elementary, junior high and high school divisions as well as classes for adults. By 2014, it had over 420 classrooms and 70,000 students of all ages all over Japan. The High School Section “Navio” was founded in 2015 and currently has 34 schools located in and around Tokyo.

From March 2016, LNS has been introduced on approximately 5000 iPads at all 34 schools of Eikoh Seminar High School Section “Navio”. Eikoh plans to use the app in both group and individual tutoring across all subjects. School-wide introduction of LoiLoNote School has been carried out at many public and private schools across Japan, but this is the first time that such widespread introduction has occurred at a cram school.

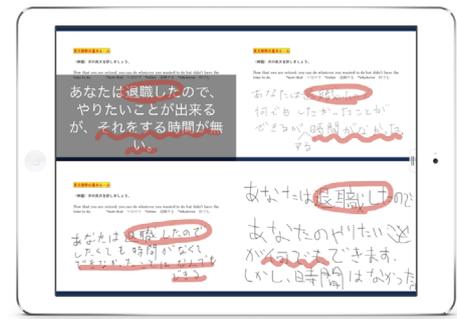
## LoiLoNote School’s Application

Tutors at Eikoh are already utilizing LNS to make exam study classes more fun, engaging and memorable. For example, drilling their students on English grammar, a vital and traditionally difficult part of university entrance exams. The illustration shows a Card from a class in which the tutor used LNS to help students hone their knowledge of the basic rules of translation.



The tutor sent all students a Card with the instruction to translate the following English sentence into Japanese: “Now that you are retired, you can do whatever you wanted to do but didn’t have the time to do.” This sentence is particularly challenging for native Japanese speakers as it contains verbs in several different tenses (“you can”, “you wanted”, “didn’t have the time”), yet a distinctive feature of the Japanese language is that it only has two tenses (present and past)! The Card also gave some hints on vocabulary, specifically, the English words for “now that”, “retire”, and “whatever”.

Students worked alone to produce their own translation, write it by hand on it, and submit the Card to the tutor. The tutor then used students' answers as a springboard to give corrections, feedback and advice. Parts that are correct are circled, wavy lines indicate incorrect parts, and a straight line indicates the best student's correct translation.



## Benefits for Students

Students can “cram” for their exam but also have fun while doing it by creating and sharing their own English sentences with their peers and tutor. Furthermore, a major bonus for students is that they can easily see other students' work and thereby learn from their peers, while tutors can get an instant overview of students' understanding and build up a handy digital portfolio of all their answers.

Most cases of tablet-enabled teaching and learning up until now have focused on fostering students' abilities to think and express themselves independently, so many educators have been under the impression that tablets are not suitable for “serious” study such as exam revision. However, Eikoh's use of tablets disputes this myth. Now that tablets have started to spread into cram schools it will be possible to demonstrate that they are also effective for improving students' exam skills.

## A Voice from the Classroom

A spokesperson from Eikoh Seminar High School Section “Navio” said:

“As the dissemination of ICT into education continues, at Eikoh Seminar we introduced use of iPad mini into home learning in fiscal 2013-14, and we have since been using it to improve students' understanding and retention rate of learning content. By introducing LoiLoNote School, it has become possible to use the iPad mini in classes, too. We pride ourselves on making lessons that place importance on dialogue and conversation with and among students, so we are looking forward to being able to offer a new style of interactive lessons using LoiLoNote School”