Lingt

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PRODUCT AT A GLANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Type</th>
<th>Online platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language(s)</td>
<td>The platform's interface is in English, and it supports all natural languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>All proficiency levels are supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Asynchronous listening, speaking, reading, and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Format</td>
<td>The website works with all major available browsers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating System(s)</td>
<td>Works across all major web browsers on desktop and mobile devices. It performs much better on a desktop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware Requirements</td>
<td>A modern, web-enabled computing device with a web browser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary Software or Hardware</td>
<td>External microphone and speakers or headphones are recommended for the desktop interface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td><a href="https://www.lingt.com/tutorial">https://www.lingt.com/tutorial</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>The platform offers a tiered subscription model, with free limited functionality. Full features are available at $14/month, billed annually. Institutional subscriptions are also available (<a href="https://www.lingt.com/pricing">https://www.lingt.com/pricing</a>)</td>
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General Description

Lingt is a browser-based platform that helps language educators create listening and speaking assignments. Its intuitive activity wizard features a handful of multimedia prompts and response templates that allow even less experienced educators to create and assign pedagogically effective activities. Upon their completion, activities are listed in Lingt’s “Grade book,” which can play a role in classroom management by facilitating instructor feedback.

Lingt’s design seems most suitable for the kind of asynchronous, aural practice employed in today’s flipped and hybrid models of language instruction. Even though the platform’s simplicity significantly flattens the learning curve, users who experience technical difficulties may always turn to the easily accessible tutorial videos, or reach out to technical support for assistance.

Along its intuitive interface, another one of Lingt’s strengths is its availability. The platform is system-agnostic, and is accessible via all modern web browsers. For the purpose of the current review, Lingt was tested in Chrome, Safari, Firefox, Edge, and Opera—without any noticeable differences in performance among them. This review is based on the Chrome environment and examines the “free” distribution resource, which allows the creation of up to 10 assignments for up to 20 registered students.

Lingt relies on speakers and a microphone to facilitate the user experience. While the configuration of audio peripherals on most computers will be sufficient, a setup consisting of an external microphone and satellite speakers may be a useful addition. Before interacting with the platform, users should ensure that their browsers permit the use of a microphone.

Finally, Lingt’s simple and transparent layout is paired with an intuitive, drag-and-drop interface—a design choice that will be particularly appreciated by educators with less technical backgrounds. As such, the platform features two modes, one for the instructor and one for the students.

Evaluation

Technological Features: Instructor Access

Registration is mandatory for all instructors who wish to use Lingt. Instructors may set up an account with the platform by clicking on the sign-up button in the upper right-hand corner of the home page and completing the registration form. The school name, although optional, allows educators to collaborate with institutional colleagues who also use Lingt in their courses.

The registration allows for class creation and activity development. Listed in the panel on the left, the “Classes” option provides a useful way to organize activities into groups. New classes can be added with the “+” button and
managed via the panel at the right-hand side of the screen, just below the top bar (see Figure 1). Once created, classes may be hidden from student view, renamed, or deleted. A useful way to think about classes may be in terms of folders containing activities, where deleting a class does not mean deleting its contents—it rather removes the class label and moves the activities into the “Archive” (Figure 1).

Once created, a class can be populated with activities. Clicking on the “+” icon situated on the horizontal taskbar opens the activity wizard, where each activity can be structured by arranging the elements from the panel on the left (Figure 2) into an instructional sequence. The elements are divided into two categories, “Content” and “Prompts.” The content category includes the following activity types.

1. Voice: records the audio of the activity prompt.
2. Text: creates a text field to compose a written prompt.
3. Image: uploads a locally stored image.
4. Video: includes a video in the activity prompt. Lingt does not provide support for locally stored video files, but it does accept video URLs (currently only from YouTube).
5. Mp3: uploads locally stored audio files in the mp3 format.

The prompts category lists the two ways in which learners may respond to a prompt.

1. Speak: creates a button facilitating an oral response to the prompt.
2. Write: creates a text box facilitating a written response to the prompt.

**Figure 1:** The instructor view of the class manager menu.
With both the prompt and the response elements in place, an activity can be activated by assigning it to a class. To that end, a calendar widget will appear, where a due date can be declared. The activated task is available under the selected class, from where it may be shared with students via the personalized instructor link located in the upper right-hand corner of the top taskbar.

Lastly, it is important to point out two additional features vital to basic activity management. Displayed in the left panel (Figure 1), under the list of classes, are the “Archive” and “Search my school” links. The former connects to the bank of all activities created across all classes. Once created, each activity is archived until it is deleted. There is no limit to the number of activities that can be archived, and only those activities that are currently active will be counted against the activity limit. “Search my school” is a useful complement to the archive, as it allows for browsing through and trading activities developed by other educators within the same home institution.

**Technological Features: Student Access**

Students can access activities via a personalized instructor URL. Visiting the link displays the list of all visible classes in the panel on the left. From these, students may select the one that is most relevant. Clicking on a class reveals a list of currently assigned activities (Figure 3) that students can work on in any order they choose. At this time, the platform does not generate dedicated URLs for individual assignments. Each activity submission requires that students provide their first and last name. The email address, though optional, is useful if students wish to receive instructor feedback for that
specific submission. Students do not need to create an account with Lingt in order to use the platform.

**Technological Features: Instructor Feedback and Class Management**

All of Lingt’s class management features are accessible from the instructor panel. Incoming student responses are indicated by the counter immediately to the right of each activity title (Figure 1). Clicking on an activity opens the management tool containing students’ responses, all conveniently displayed in the panel on the left. The “Quick view” feature enables a bird’s eye view of all the responses submitted for the particular activity. Clicking on the name in the panel displays that student’s reply, to which instructors may respond with one of three feedback types: written, oral, or iconic.

If a student provided an email address, instructor feedback can be immediately relayed. Otherwise, it can be saved and shared via a dedicated URL at a later time. Lingt stores all student responses as well as instructor feedback until they are deleted via the trash bin icon located in the upper right-hand corner of the activity submission pane.

**Teacher Fit**

Lingt’s support for various types of multimedia texts makes it particularly applicable in contexts where scaffolded interactions with authentic digital texts stand at the center of the learning process (Paesani et al., 2016). The platform
affords plenty of room to incorporate authentic video content, and while its current preference for YouTube may feel restrictive, it does highlight the significance of authentic emic text (Sockett, 2013). Still, it seems that Lingt would benefit from expanding the range of video media available for use within activity prompts. As video content is constantly evolving, its more recent flavors (e.g., podcasts, gifs, TikTok clips, etc.), with their own unique genres, should also be considered. At the very least, it would be useful for Lingt to support material from other video-hosting platforms (e.g., Vimeo, Twitch, Vevo, etc.). While a number of educators might also welcome the option to upload their own video materials, the inclusion of that functionality would elevate the platform’s complexity, and might even reduce its accessibility by increasing the costs of server-side maintenance.

In addition to expanding the array of supported video types, Lingt’s developers might also wish to consider incorporating support for additional audio-only media, such as podcasts, which have been present in language instruction for over a decade now (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Lastly, the collection of available prompt objects could be extended by a few other media types, such as maps, 3D objects, or XR artifacts. Making these media types available as drag-and-drop elements would increase the pedagogical efficacy of the platform, with little adverse impact on its simplicity.

Much like learning materials design, software development revolves around trade-offs. The decision to keep Lingt’s interface uncomplicated is partially reflected in the linear layout of activities, which some educators may find too plain. However, it is useful to keep in mind that introducing more sophisticated design and scaffolding options would likely increase the tool’s complexity, resulting in a steeper learning curve and possibly discouraging some users.

If task scaffolding is an area where greater complexity should be approached cautiously, Lingt’s class management functionality would be well served by expanding its features. When it comes to class management, simplicity tends to play to Lingt’s disadvantage. Whereas in today’s educational technology landscape written and spoken feedback options are quite standard, alone they may no longer be sufficient. In that sense, Lingt’s evaluative efficacy would be improved by the addition of grading or scoring. Retained in a transparent grade book and accessible to students along with instructor feedback, such grades or scores might help to contextualize student progress and assist instructors with further assessments and evaluation. One could even consider implementing rubrics, whose applicability in the performance-based context of oral proficiency training has been well documented (Dunbar et al., 2006). Such rubrics could either come already preconfigured and ready to be populated, or they could be developed by the instructor within the platform. Approached in this way, an expanded feedback and class management system not only does
not need to increase the platform’s overall complexity, but it may also facilitate more meaningful assessment.

With support for grading and evaluation currently unavailable, instructors are likely to turn to third-party services or learning management systems (LMSs). But even though links to the activities developed in Lingt can be easily shared via an LMS, they still require users to toggle between different instructional environments. Such interfacing, with content spread across multiple platforms, may be inconvenient. Luckily, this drawback can be easily addressed by integrating a third-party platform into an LMS, which is not something that Lingt supports at the moment. One way to respond to this limitation could be for Lingt to generate the code for an iframe object to be pasted into the LMS’s HTML editor. When properly configured, an iframe could funnel the data directly from Lingt, displaying the content in the LMS for a much smoother and more user-friendly experience.

**Learner Fit**

Lingt’s design makes it an attractive solution for speaking and listening proficiency practice outside the classroom. By allowing instructors to shift some of this practice toward individual practice, the platform has the potential to free up much needed classroom time. Here, it is worth keeping in mind that at the moment Lingt provides only scant support for communicative tasks. Not only is the platform asynchronous by design, but it also furnishes no way for multiple students to simultaneously and collaboratively engage in an activity.

Much like educators, learners are sure to find Lingt intuitive and convenient. Its reliance on the web browser dispenses with the need to install additional software. Hardware configuration at the student end is likewise minimal. All activities are easily accessible with a dedicated URL, where they can be retrieved in fewer than three clicks. When working with the materials, students are allowed to make multiple attempts, which helps to ease pressure (Goh & Burns, 2012). Since the activities are accessible from any web-enabled device, students may access them in their own time and at their own leisure. The opportunity to practice at home may be preferred by students who are naturally shy, and who may find the virtual setting motivating. Distancing students from the kinds of social stressors associated with classroom instruction—be this in-person or remotely—may help to lower their affective filter and facilitate greater spoken proficiency (Goh & Burns, 2012).
Summary

Lingt is an accessible, convenient, and browser-agnostic solution. While it supports both desktop and mobile devices, it is not really optimized for mobile use. Running it in a mobile browser comes at the cost of a diminished user experience. With no dedicated mobile application to date, it is therefore more sensible to run Lingt in an environment for which the platform was designed—a full-screen desktop browser.

Lingt’s simplicity and transparency are certainly its strengths. Following a quick and unobtrusive registration, the user is prompted to the main panel which sets out the platform’s functionality. The simplicity of the layout is mirrored in the clarity of its interface. All icons are designed to unambiguously convey the platform’s affordances and functionalities. When it comes to materials development, the drag-and-drop interface makes the process seamless and intuitive. All developed activities are shared via a single dedicated URL, which simplifies learner access and makes it easy to distribute the content via email or the LMS.

Many students will welcome the fact that registration with the platform is not required. Likewise, the activity completion and submission processes are relatively seamless, if a bit tedious, considering that students’ first and last name are required with each submission. The matter of instructor feedback is also solved in an elegant and simple fashion, with either oral or written options available, which are dispensed directly via email or a dedicated URL.

Overall, Lingt places simplicity before nuance. This trade-off may seem particularly satisfying to those instructors who are conscious of the degree to which their classrooms are saturated with complex technology. In that sense, Lingt is effective; it works out of the box, requires no local installation, configuration, or additional components. The non-invasive registration is required only for instructors—and for good reason. The experience is complemented by a feedback and class management functionality, which, while elegant, may leave some educators wishing for more complex solutions.

References


**Producer Details**

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**Reviewer Information**

Simon Zuberek is the Senior Educational Technologist at the Language Resource Center at Columbia University, where he helps to foster language study through thoughtful and creative application of instructional technology. He is also a graduate student in Computational Linguistics at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. His academic interests reside at the intersection of computer-assisted language learning and applications of natural language processing in the foreign language classroom. Feel free to visit his website at Zuberek.net.