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Implementation of Top Notch with MyEnglishLab and perceptions of student outcomes: Examining three institutions in Mexico

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

In the introduction, we provide a brief background to the initiative behind this study and a description of Top Notch and its components, before outlining the study's research questions, its sample and the methods used to collect and analyse data.

Background

In 2013, Pearson made a commitment to efficacy: to identify the outcomes that matter most to students and educators, and to have a greater impact on improving those outcomes. A key part of that commitment was to publish, by 2018, audited research regarding the impact of the use of our products on outcomes.

In 2017, the Global Impact Evaluation team, part of the Global Efficacy & Research team at Pearson, designed and embarked on a series of studies on Top Notch and its counterpart, Speakout, both of which are used by tertiary and private language schools (PLSs) worldwide. The studies aimed to examine the implementation, perceived impact and relationship between each product and intended student outcomes, across different countries and multiple sites.

Description of Top Notch with MyEnglishLab

Top Notch is an English language course for adults (in American English). It is used in private language schools (PLSs), universities and other tertiary institutions across the world. It is now in its third edition (2015), although the second edition (2012) is still in use in some countries. This six-level course includes: 1. Top Notch Fundamentals (Starter); 2. Top Notch Level 1 (Elementary); 3. Top Notch Level 2 (Pre-intermediate); 4. Top Notch Level 3 (Intermediate); 5. Summit Level 1 (Upper Intermediate), and 6. Summit Level 2 (Advanced).

The course components are:

- **Students' Book** – 90 to 120 hours of learning material available in split or full editions (the split editions come with a split workbook or a split MEL access code)
- **Classroom audio CDs** – audio materials to use in class
- **Workbook** – additional exercises to consolidate learning in print
- **MyEnglishLab (student and teacher versions)** – a platform with an array of exercises to consolidate learning. It includes meaningful feedback on wrong answers, remedial grammar exercises, grammar and pronunciation coach videos and auto-graded achievement tests
- **Teachers' Book** – detailed interleaved lesson plans, language culture notes, answer keys and more
- **ActiveTeach** – a disc for front-of-class use, which includes a digital version of the Students' Book, digital grammar exercises, videos, photocopiable activities for every unit, plus unit, mid-course and end-of-course tests
- **Audio and extra activities on English.com** – online grammar, vocabulary, reading, and listening practice activities, plus downloadable classroom audio files
- **Full-course placement tests** – printable or online versions

MEL is an optional component and is designed to support Top Notch by:

- providing students with the opportunity to work whenever they want, using the resources most likely to enhance their learning of course material
- helping students develop the skills to become responsible and autonomous students
- allowing students work at their own pace and to track their progress

MEL content can be assigned for the whole class, groups or individuals (Vymetalkova, 2016; Vasbieva and Klimova, 2015; Pearson, 2014a; 2014b). The use of MEL allows for the blending of classroom learning with synchronous and/or asynchronous outside-the-class learning. It has the potential to build a bridge, whereby teaching and technology support learning and inform each other.

Overall, Top Notch aims to support students to:

- engage with the materials and have a positive learning experience
- develop positive learning behaviours when using the materials
- progress in learning English
- be ready for the next stage of their learning in English
- achieve their goal(s)

The present study

The present study is an exploratory study which set out to answer the following questions:

- What are students' attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL when compared to other instructional experiences?
- What are teachers' attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL and of its use?
- How are courses implemented when using Top Notch with MEL and why do institutions engage with it in the first place?
- Why and how do students and teachers use MEL?
- What can we learn about teaching and learning from the MEL data?
- What is the perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on students, teachers and institutions?

The present study is not an evaluation of practice. Pearson aims to keep Top Notch flexible so that teachers are able to make their own choices on how to implement it. The flexibility in implementation, together with the fact that Top Notch with MEL is less widely used across countries and institutions, made it imperative, as a first step, to explore institutions' approach to implementing Top Notch with MEL, and teachers' and students' experiences and perceived impact when using the materials.

Implementation studies have the potential to improve learner outcomes by allowing us to know what works where, when and why. They are key to informing teaching and learning by providing evidence on which products and services are likely to 'work' within a particular context, institution and classroom. Implementation research is rooted in capturing the real-life experiences and insights of students and teachers to develop an evidence-informed understanding of the factors that can enable or impede intended and unintended outcomes. Variability across settings, cultures, institutional preferences or priorities, professional development and infrastructure can all affect the implementation of, and outcomes associated with, products and services.

This study examines the implementation of Top Notch in three institutions in Mexico. Given that two of the institutions are anonymous, we use Institution 1, Institution 2 and Institution 3 to refer to them. Institution 3 is Universidad Interamericana para el Desarrollo (UNID).

Full results for the study are presented in Appendix B.

Sample

Given resources and timelines, just three institutions were sampled for this study. Stratified sampling was used to account for potential variation in practice. To derive a potential sample, a number of criteria were developed, as seen in Table 1. In hierarchical order, the non-negotiable criteria for selection were as follows:

- Institutions used the most up-to-date version of Top Notch.
- They used the full Top Notch package (Students' Book, MEL and ActiveTeach).
- At least two of the institutions had been using the full package for more than a year.

To ensure triangulation of the data collected for the sampling, and to make sure that the data were accurate and current, four approaches were used:

1. Using the non-negotiable criteria, targeted searches were conducted in the sales databases that hold institutions' information related to Top Notch.
2. Searches identified institutions using the MEL platform. This information was corroborated with the sales data to point us to institutions with higher student activity using MEL.
3. Direct conversations were held between our Mexico efficacy lead and sales representatives, who have an in-depth and up-to-date knowledge of institutional practices and issues.
4. Institutions were identified by the Mexico efficacy lead, who also has in-depth knowledge of the institutions through research and the marketing activities that she leads.

The information collected was recorded in an Excel spreadsheet for each institution and for each of the criteria. Only five institutions met the non-negotiable criteria. All the other institutions were still using the previous Top Notch version. Table 1 provides a summary of the initial criteria, the final criteria used and the reasons behind the decisions leading to the final sample.

Table 1: Original and final sampling criteria

Criteria type	Original inclusion criteria	Inclusions and criteria met
	Institutional criteria per country	
Type of adoption[1] and experience in using Top Notch (non-negotiable criteria)	• The most recent edition is used by the institution. • The full package is used, including the: Students' Book, Teachers' Book (whether using the print version or PDFs in ActiveTeach), MEL and ActiveTeach. • Institutions using the workbook will be included in the study, but the workbook is not an essential component for selection. • At least two institutions with more than one-year's experience of using the Top Notch package.	• Five institutions were selected as they matched the majority of the criteria. One institution was not approached because it was facing internal challenges at the time of the research. Of the remaining four institutions, the first three that agreed to take part in the research were chosen. • Two of the institutions selected had more than one-year's experience of using the Top Notch package.
Size of adoption by institution	• Institutions with the highest number of students (for example, serving university students and not in-service company courses, which have small numbers of students and are also hard to access). • At least one institution with one of the highest numbers of students using Top Notch, one medium and one small.	• These criteria were abandoned given the small number of institutions to select from.
Levels taught	• Ideally, focus should be placed on courses that have the largest number of students. • If possible, one institution whose program includes all Top Notch levels (preferable criterion).	• In the institutions selected, the large majority of students were concentrated in Fundamentals and Level 1. Fundamentals and Level 1 students participated in focus groups.
Type of institution	• Institutional variation is preferable.	• All institutions are PLSs. Two were part of public institutions and one of a private university.

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[1] Adoption is defined as the number of books sold by institution.

Criteria type	Original inclusion criteria	Inclusions and criteria met
Institutional criteria per country		
Institutional effectiveness	• Rating of effectiveness by an external regulatory body. • If the above criterion cannot be applied, we should consider the following: two institutions that are perceived to have influence on others; their reputation in the country; institutions' success in national exams; their support of government initiatives and associations; the number of accreditations they are awarded; the number of students that complete their courses, and the level students reach when they complete their courses.	• These criteria were abandoned given the small number of institutions to select from.
Geographical spread	• Institutions are located in different regions.	• Two of the institutions are located in the same region
Length of courses	• At least one or two institutions teach full-length and short courses.	• Institutions offer mainly short courses (one, two or four months), with enrolments taking place monthly.
Teacher		
Experience	• New and experienced teachers. Experienced teachers should have more than one year working with Top Notch.	• All teacher criteria were abandoned to reduce institutional burden.
Comfort with technology	• At least one teacher who the institution believes is comfortable with technology and has used MEL effectively to deliver Top Notch lessons.	
Course experience	• At least one teacher by institution who has experience of how the course was taught before Top Notch.	
Courses taught	• Teachers who teach long and short courses.	

Methods

We used a multiple case-study design to conduct the study. To conceptualize the study design and manage the development of the research instruments, we were guided by the Consolidated Framework of Implementation Research (CFIR) devised in 2009. The CFIR appeared relatively exhaustive. We undertook an exercise to reduce the number of areas to be examined to better fit with the study's aims and to allow themes to be explored in depth.

A brief outline of the three overarching categories of investigation and of a small sample of the sub-categories is provided below. The first two categories were part of the CFIR framework, details of which can be found in Appendix A. We added a third category, which referred to perceptions of impact, given that it was an important part of our research questions:

- The 'what' of the intervention: components used to teach English, structural and processual.
- The 'why' and 'how' of the intervention: the intervention characteristics; inner setting, such as the priority placed on the use of Top Notch with MEL; institutional goals and whether and how they are enacted, and the usefulness of the intervention, etc.
- The perceived impact of the intervention: on the department/institution as a whole; on students' and teachers' access and engagement, and on student achievement, etc.

Methods used to collect the data included: a student questionnaire, a teacher questionnaire, a pre-questionnaire filled in by the English co-ordinators, staff interviews, student focus groups and student MEL data analysis.

Student and teacher questionnaires

Development of the questionnaires

The student and teacher questionnaires were developed with two aims in mind:

1. They could be used in different countries (Mexico, Peru, and Colombia for Top Notch and Turkey and Poland for a previous study on a similar product).
2. They would elicit robust evidence to address the aims of the study.

To achieve these aims, we were guided by the conceptual framework used for the study:

- We acknowledged, evaluated and, where appropriate, adapted or revised questions already used in questionnaires developed within Pearson for similar research purposes.
- We were guided by questionnaires used in other research studies (for example, Dorneyei with Taguchi 2010; national student questionnaires used by universities, etc.).
- We consulted the Pearson product development teams and local Pearson efficacy leads, who have a deep understanding of both the products and the local context in which the products operate.
- We took design advice from other researchers in our Impact & Evaluation team.
- We elicited feedback from co-ordinators or teachers and students through a pilot.

The development of the student and teacher questionnaires was supported by a group of key stakeholders who had the knowledge and experience to support the robustness of the instruments. Table 2 outlines the individuals involved in the process, their knowledge and expertise and the tasks they performed.

After feedback was sought and contextual information was adapted, the student questionnaire was translated into Polish and Spanish by the Poland, Mexico and Colombia efficacy leads and was piloted. Pilots involved one round in Poland and two rounds in Colombia, including three institutions and 18 students in total.[2] Following the pilots, relevant adjustments were made. Draft and final student questionnaires were completed by the Impact & Evaluation team in English and were then transferred to the final student questionnaire for Mexico in Spanish. The teacher questionnaire was in English and, due to time constraints, was not piloted.

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[2] Pilots included 15 students from Colombia (five in the first round of piloting and 10 in the second round) and three students from Poland.

Table 2: Stakeholders involved in the development of the questionnaire, experience and task performed

Stakeholder	Experience	Task performed
English, Global Impact & Evaluation team: Elpida Ahtaridou	• Expertise in methodological and quantitative and qualitative instrument design • Expertise in product research for different purposes and for the different stages of product development	• Designed the questionnaire • Reviewed previously developed instruments used in internal and external research and their related reports • Decided on which questions might be appropriate for reuse • Drafted new questions
Top Notch portfolio manager: Sherri Pemberton	• In-depth knowledge of Top Notch and of the different country needs and issues in relation to its use and delivery	• Provided feedback on previously used questions from internal Pearson questionnaires • Reviewed questionnaire items and drafted new items, when appropriate
Efficacy geography lead: Veronica Valdes	• Experience in developing and conducting research • Deep understanding of the study aims and of individual institutions' needs, and issues related to the delivery of Top Notch	• Provided feedback on previously used questions from internal Pearson questionnaires • Reviewed questionnaire items • Translated and culturally adapted the student questionnaire
Co-ordinators, teachers and students	• In-depth knowledge of Top Notch in their institution and related issues • Understanding of terminology used in the institution and by their students related to Top Notch	• Piloted the student questionnaire • Provided feedback on potential issues with questions and wording •

Questionnaire structure and content

The first page of the questionnaires explained informed consent, gave a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and use of data, confidentiality, data-protection procedures and the voluntary nature of participation. In brief, the student questionnaire aimed to draw out information about:

- the course students were attending
- their motivation for learning English
- their comfort with the use of technology
- the use and frequency of different Top Notch components in class
- the usefulness of different components and features

- perceptions of the impact of Top Notch and of its components on access, learning behaviours and attitudes, performance, and preparation for their next stage in their learning and ultimate goal
- the likelihood of recommending Top Notch and MEL to other students

The teacher questionnaire aimed to gather similar data to the student questionnaire and gain further information on teaching practices followed in the classroom and the training available to teachers.

The student questionnaire comprised 25 questions and the teacher questionnaire 42 questions. The majority of questions were closed, using a four-point Likert scale that included a number of sub-questions. Open-ended questions were also used to gather student views on the majority of useful features, benefits, challenges and areas for improvement.

Administration, collection and analysis of the questionnaires

An online student questionnaire designed in Google Forms was administered in one institution and print copies were administered in the others, as requested by the institutions themselves. The online questionnaire was distributed by the institutions via email to all students using Top Notch. Print copies of the student questionnaire were distributed to students by their teachers in June 2017. Distribution was opportunistic. Students were informed of the research and of its purpose in advance, and their participation was voluntary. The teacher questionnaire was constructed using Google Forms in English and was distributed via email by all institutions.

All the student and teacher questionnaires filled in online were automatically returned to the research team. The print questionnaires filled in by students were collected by teachers and handed to the researcher on the day of their visit. Spanish native speakers, who also spoke English at a proficient level, inputted each of the print questionnaires in Google Forms in English.

Student and teacher datasets were received in Microsoft Excel or .csv files. The data were imported in the R platform (R Core Team, 2017) using standard input/output commands of the readxl package (Wickham, H. and Bryan, 2017). ,The following processes for data-cleaning were applied:

1. The number of columns, the number of rows and the type of each of the variables were confirmed for each dataset.
2. The data were scanned for suspiciously large numbers of missing information, unexpected values and other possible irregularities.
3. For each dataset, the online questionnaires were checked to confirm that there were no missing questions.
4. The value labels for each of the variables were confirmed

A total of 651 student questionnaires were returned filled in: 210 from Institution 1; 244 from Institution 2, and 197 from Institution 3. Across the three institutions, students reported studying at five different levels, with the largest proportion (56%, 346/613) studying at the basic levels, 30% (183/613) at intermediate levels and the remainder at advanced. The majority of respondents from Institution 1 and Institution 3 reported studying at basic levels. 47% (74/182) from Institution 1 reported studying at Level 1 and a further 29% (53/182) at Fundamentals. 64% (123/193) of students from Institution 3 reported studying at Level 1. There was more variability at Institution 2, with 29% (70/238) of students studying at Fundamentals and the same proportion (68/238) at Summit 1 level.

Most students appear to attend short courses lasting between one, two and four months (98%, 597/607). 48% (82/172) of students from Institution 1 and 58% (139/238) of students from Institution 2 said they attended one-month courses, and 45% from Institution 1 (45%, 77/172) and 38% (90/238) from Institution 2 took two-month courses. At Institution 3, almost all students reported attending a four-month course (99%, 194/197).

Overall, half of the students (50%, 308/619) were at the beginning of their course and almost equal proportions were mid-way through (26%, 165/619) or at the end (24% 146/619) of their courses. Arguably, given the short duration of the courses, we would not expect a wide difference in students' perceptions based on the length of time they were studying.

Students who completed a questionnaire may or may not have participated in the focus groups.

Table 3 provides a summary of student questionnaire respondents by institution and level.

Table 3: Number of student responses analysed by institution and level, student questionnaire

	Institution 1	Institution 2	Institution 3	Total
Course attended				
Fundamentals	53	68	5	126
Top Notch Level 1	74	23	123	220
Top Notch Level 2	26	32	65	123
Top Notch Level 3	15	45	0	60
Summit Level 1	14	70	0	84
Total	182 (30%)	238 (39%)	193 (31%)	613 (100%)
Course duration				
1 month	82	139	0	221
2 months	77	90	0	167
3 months	4	6	2	12
4 months	2	1	194	197
6 months	4	1	0	5
1 year	3	1	1	5
Total	172 (28%)	238 (39%)	197 (33%)	607 (100%)
Length of time on course				
Beginning of the course	90	34	184	308
Middle of the course	76	80	9	165
End of the course	21	124	1	146
Total	187 (30%)	238 (39%)	194 (31%)	619 (100%)

We received a total of 53 responses to the teacher questionnaire: 11 (21%) from Institution 1, 36 (68%) from Institution 2 and six (11%) from Institution 3. As regards representation from the institutions themselves, for Institution 2, the 36 teachers represent 13% of the total number of teachers teaching using Top Notch with MEL (36/271) and for Institution 3, 86% (6/7). We were unable to obtain the total number of teachers using Top Notch with MEL at Institution 1. All teacher questionnaires received were used in the analysis.

Just above half of the teachers who responded to this question taught in basic level classes (27/52). The majority of the remaining teachers (25/52) taught at Intermediate level and fewer taught at advanced levels. Nearly half of teachers had been teaching for more than six years (25 of the respondents), whilst 15 teachers had up to two years' teaching experience. The majority of teachers across the institutions seem to be relatively experienced. Teacher experience in teaching with Top Notch with MEL however was relatively limited, with 90% (43/48 teachers) reporting up to one year of experience and only 10% (5/48 teachers) two years and above. Table 3 gives relevant details.

Table 4: Teachers' years of experience in teaching and years of experience in teaching with Top Notch with MEL, teacher questionnaire

Institution	Teaching experience in years					Teaching experience using Top Notch in years			
	Up to 2	3 - 5	6 – 10	Above 10	Total	1	2	3 or more	Total
Institution 1	7	3	0	1	11	10	0	0	10
Institution 2	7	8	11	10	36	31	0	1	32
Institution 3	1	2	1	2	6	2	1	3	6
Total	15 27%	13 25%	12 23 %	13 25 %	53 100 %[3]	43 90%	1 2%	4 8%	48 100%

Teachers were also asked to rate their confidence in teaching English and comfort with technology on a scale from 1 to 10. Overall, the large majority of teachers felt relatively confident in teaching English, and also reported relatively high levels of comfort with using technology. Table 4 outlines teacher responses.

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[3] Percentages have been rounded. In cases where the total was 101%, after more than one of the percentages was rounded, one of the percentages was rounded down. This made no difference to the results.

Table 5: Teacher self-reported confidence in teaching English and their comfort with technology, teacher questionnaire

Institution	Confidence in teaching English						Comfort with technology							
	Rating						Rating							
	6	7	8	9	10	Total	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Institution 1	1	3	1	2	4	11	0	0	0	2	3	1	5	11
Institution 2	0	2	4	14	16	36	1	1	1	3	10	11	9	36
Institution 3	0	0	2	4	0	6	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	6
Total	1 2%	5 9%	7 13%	20 38%	20 38%	53 100%	1 2%	2 4%	1 2%	5 9%	15 28%	14 26%	15 28%	53 100 %

For both questionnaires and for each question with discrete answers, responses were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). Where appropriate, frequency tables, cross-tabulations, visualisations and descriptive statistics were produced using standard commands of the sjPlot package (Lüdecke, 2017) and of the tidyverse package (Wickham, 2017). Inferential statistics (for example, t-tests, correlations) were produced using standard R base functions, but more advanced analyses (for example, reliability analysis for Cronbach's alpha and Rasch analysis) were run using the psych package (Revelle, 2017) and the TAM package (Robitzsch et al., 2017). Due to time constraints, responses to the open-ended questions for both the student and teacher questionnaires were not analysed.

Co-ordinator pre-questionnaire

The co-ordinator pre-questionnaire aimed to gain an understanding of the context, course structure and implementation model used in the different institutions before the day of the visit. It also supported the development of more targeted questions to be asked during the visit. In more detail, data collected through the pre-questionnaire focused on:

- Context: factual information about the student and teacher numbers using Top Notch with MEL, the number of classes offered and the length of courses offered.

- Classroom time: details on how classroom time was structured, including the number of face-to-face lessons weekly, the length of class time, the structure of the lessons, preparation required by teachers and students before the lesson, etc.
- Assessment: how assessment, both formal and informal, was structured, including an understanding of what type of tests students took and the conditions under which they completed them.
- Homework: whether or not students were required to complete homework, the place and suggested time for completing homework, whether homework was obligatory, if students were allowed one or more attempts in MEL and other details on how MEL was used.
- Tracking student use of MEL: how teachers tracked student use of MEL and what they did with the data they collected.
- Tracking student performance: how student performance was tracked, who was responsible for tracking it and the use of the performance data collected.

The co-ordinator pre-questionnaire followed the design processes and quality-control mechanisms outlined in the student and teacher questionnaire section. The pre-questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions. Co-ordinators were sent the pre-questionnaire at least a month before the day of the visit and were asked to return it two weeks before the visit. To reduce the burden on co-ordinators, they were advised to leave the open-ended questions blank if they felt that they had no time to fill them in.

Pre-questionnaires for two out of the three institutions were collected.

Student focus groups and staff interviews

The design and quality assurance mechanisms for the focus groups and interviews followed the same process as the student questionnaires. Student focus groups and one-to-one interviews with teachers were held on the institution premises in June 2017. Teacher interviews were conducted by a researcher from the Global Impact & Evaluation team and student focus groups by Pearson's Mexico efficacy lead. No student or teacher was excluded from taking part. All students and teachers chosen by the institutions were interviewed.

The institution explained the purpose of the study and the procedure to all potential participants, and teachers and students had the opportunity to decline. No incentives for participating were offered, and both the institution and the research participants could withdraw from the study at any point during the research project. Those who agreed to take part were asked to sign a consent form and agreed to the focus groups/interviews being recorded.

Student focus groups

Institutions were asked to arrange two student focus group with five to 10 students in each group. Students were selected randomly from those students who agreed to take part in the study and from classes held on the day of the visit. The visit was arranged based on the availability of classes and a convenient time for the institutions.

A total of 24 students was reached in three focus groups: eight from Institution 1, 10 from Institution 2 and six from Institution 3. Participants' ages ranged from teenagers to young adults. Focus groups were conducted in English. The interviewers were native Spanish speakers and spoke in Spanish when needed. Students who took part in the focus groups may or may not have also filled in a student questionnaire.

Teacher interviews

A total of 17 staff interviews were conducted, each lasting 45 minutes to one hour. Some of the interviews were conducted one-to-one and others were with three to five teachers at the same time. All interviews were conducted in English. Teachers who took part in the interviews may or may not have also filled in a teacher questionnaire.

Table 6: Summary of staff interviews conducted by institution and role

Institution	Staff role		
	Director	Co-ordinator	Teacher
Institution 1		1	2
Institution 2	1	1	4
Institution 3	1	1	6
Total per role	2	3	12
Total interviews	17		

To further support the reliability of the teacher interviews, only slight differences between the interview schedules for each role (director, co-ordinator and teacher) were made, with the interviewer asking follow-up questions for clarification when necessary.

Analysis of interview and focus-group data

Audio recordings from the focus groups and interviews were transcribed in full and transferred into the NVivo qualitative analysis software. Two researchers worked on the coding of the data. The first researcher provided the initial coding based on the CFRI framework used to guide the study, initially deductively, (see Braun and Clarke, 2006). The second researcher completed the coding across all transcripts.

The initial coding included 12 primary codes and 42 secondary codes. After the coding structure was created in NVivo, the two researchers coded the same three transcripts, separately. The three transcripts were selected by the first researcher at random and represented 10% of the total interview transcripts available (Hodson, 1999). They were between 10 and 20 pages long (Miles and Huberman, 1884). The aim of the exercise was twofold: 1. To derive a final coding structure and assess the degree of agreement, and 2. To support consistency in the coding approach between the two researchers.

The deductive coding structure was treated as an overall structure rather than a strict outline within which the researchers needed to fit the data. Thus, as the researchers read the transcripts, they adapted the structure to better suit the research questions and to include first and second order codes that had risen inductively from the data. Discussion between the two researchers resolved any coding disagreements and involved moving, deleting, merging, splitting or renaming codes within the hierarchy. This process resulted in a final coding structure of seven first codes and 30 secondary and third order codes.

At the outset, the researchers agreed they would use a unitisation strategy which focused on 'meaning units'. This meant that codable units of text varied in length from a few lines to a whole paragraph. Key to the coding was that contextual information was included to further support researchers in reaching common ground in their coding decisions. So, paragraphs before and after the coded text were included for context. At times, the data within the code related to more than one first and/or secondary codes. In this way, a balance was sought between condensing data for analysis and retaining the uniqueness of meaning.

The proportion agreement method was used to understand agreement between the two researchers. Although this method comes with limitations – it does not take into account, for example, that researchers might agree occasionally by chance (Bernard 2000), more complex methods were not deemed appropriate given that:

1. Not all of our codes had equal probability of being used.
2. Multiple codings on a text unit, which we followed, creates problems for calculating agreement between researchers with some statistics because they require that only one code is applied to a unit of text (Burla et al. 2008).

3. Our aim, from the outset, was not to generate variables for use in statistical analysis, but rather to systematically classify and retrieve text using clear, distinct definitions.
4. This was an exploratory study for which other researchers have argued that the simple proportion agreement method is an acceptable approach (Kurasaki 2000).

Overall, the two researchers were relatively aligned in assigning codes and in the process used to derive codes. This meant that they were satisfied in proceeding with coding the full set of transcripts without replicating the activity. The relative agreement between the researchers could have been due to:

1. the knowledge and experience they built through using the same coding system in three similar research projects
2. their in-depth knowledge of the research and of its aims and objectives from the outset
3. the fitness of purpose of the CFRI framework sections used
4. the clear structure of the product components and features examined
5. the simplicity of the coding system and the clear and explicit definitions given to the secondary codes so that meaning was not sacrificed in favour of simplicity. Despite the relatively large number of codes, they were relatively distinct in their definition

Patterns were identified not only by looking at repeated occurrences but also by similarity, 'declaration' and confirmation, missing patterns expected to be present and co-occurrences. Data collected from the other sources used in this study and findings from that data also supported the development of patterns. In addition, findings from four similar studies on Top Notch and its English counterpart, Speakout, conducted at the same time as this research, supported the development and our understanding of different patterns. These studies sought to answer the same questions as this research project and, overall, used the same research instruments to collect their data. Finally, consideration was given to whether emerging patterns appeared to be congruent with prior hypotheses and relevant literature (Hopkins and Ahtaridou, 2009; Quartaroli, 2009).

MEL student data
A framework was developed to extract and report on the MEL student data. The framework aimed to collect use and performance data as outlined in Table 6. Based on the data received, it was not always possible or appropriate to follow all the analyses outlined below, which meant making adaptations.

Table 7: Summary of the framework that guided MEL data extraction

Item	Data collection, analysis and presentation
Assignments and practices[4]	- Number of assignments/practices and tests assigned - Percentage of completions by institution, level and class - Average number of completions by institution, level, class and individual student from the total number assigned
Time on task[5]	Average of student time on task on assignments/practices and tests by institution, level, class and student
Attempts	Number of attempts on assignments/practices by institution and level
Assignments/practice scores	- Average percentage achieved in first, last and highest attempt by institution, level and class - Percentage of students achieving within different score boundaries by institution
Test scores	- Average percentage achieved on test scores by institution, level and class - Percentage of students achieving within different score boundaries
Progress	- Improvement between scores on first and highest attempts at assignments/practices - Relationship between individual average assignment/practice scores and percentage of assignments/practices completed - Relationship between individual average test scores and number of assignments/practices completed
Reliability/validity	- Correlation between average student score on assignment/practices - Correlation between average student practice scores per unit - In the case where many correlations were computed, the results were presented in the form of quartiles to avoid the presentation of over-long tables

Data were extracted in July 2017 from Institutions 2 and 3 only. We were unable to collect the relevant information to access MEL student data from Institution 1. Due to the manual extraction of the MEL data and the short timeframe in which to extract it, a total of 20 classes by institution was agreed for analysis. The sampling strategy involved two steps:

- stratified sampling to include all level courses offered in the institutions, most recently completed courses and courses with more than five students
- randomly selected classes from the remaining sample

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[4] MEL records student scores on assignments and practices. Exercises available in the system can be assigned by teachers. These exercises automatically show as assignments. Exercises not assigned show as practices. Although some exercises might show as practices, they might have been assigned to students verbally by their teachers in class, something that seems to happen often. It is not possible to know which practices have been assigned by teachers and which might have been undertaken by students of their own accord.

[5] Time on task is purely the time spent on assignments/practices and tests, not sign-in time.

A total of 46 classes were extracted into .csv files: 27 classes from Institution 2 and 19 from Institution 3. In some cases, it was not possible to sample 20 classes because of the small number of classes or students. Classes extracted were completed in early 2017 and included one- and four-month courses (see Table 7 for more details). The 46 classes included valid data for 803 students – 441 from Institution 2 and 362 from Institution 3.

Table 8: Summary of the number of classes extracted by institution and level, MEL data

	No. of classes			
	Fundamentals	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Institution 2	7	7	6	7
Institution 3	5	7	7	N/A
Total	12	14	13	7

Analysis of assignments/practices and tests

Student performance on practice/assignments and tests was analysed. Statistical means and other descriptive statistics were calculated for each analysis. Pearson correlations were used to investigate relationships between variables (between test scores and number of practices completed, for example). Spearman correlations were used when the sample sizes were small and when the distribution of data was skewed.

Student performance was analysed using the score boundaries set by the platform: 90–100% (A), 80–89% (B), 70–79% (C), 60–69% (D), 50–59% (E) and 0–49% (F).

All scores of 0% were excluded from the analysis. The reasons for this exclusion included:

1. Students are given multiple attempts to answer assignment questions, so it is highly unlikely that a 0 score represents a student who has tried to complete an assignment multiple times and has failed each time.
2. A student has received a 0% score because they have not submitted an assignment/practice or have not submitted it on time. So, the student has made no attempt to complete an assignment/practice.
3. A teacher might not have marked a student's response to open-ended questions.

In all the above cases, we are confident that 0% does not correspond to the real ability of a student. Therefore, including 0% scores in the overall analysis would have artificially skewed the distribution of the scores. For transparency, analysis including the 0% scores is included in the appendices.

For each practice/assignment, the database reported one overall score per student. There was no information in the data regarding individual items.

Assignments/practices

Assignment scores are reported based on the highest attempt (MEL captures the first, last and highest attempts). We decided to use the highest attempt because we wanted to understand the progress students had made by the end of the course, instead of recording their average performance from the beginning to the end of the course. In addition, a comparison of the highest and last attempt scores showed that there was no difference between them in terms of student performance.

From the 803 students included in the files received, 796 students completed assignments: 445 from Institution 2 and 351 from Institution 3. From those 796 students, 70 were excluded because their assignments were either all missing or all had a 0% score (23 from Institution 2 and 47 from Institution 3). Thus, the total number of students whose data were analysed was 726. A total of 45,218 assignments were originally included in the database, and a total of 26,483 were analysed. For Institution 2, a total of 13,494 assignments were originally included in the dataset and 3,299 (24%) were excluded because they scored 0%. A total of 31,724 assignments were completed by Institution 3 students, and 15,436 (49%) were excluded as they also scored 0%.

Table 9: Assignment analysis: number of students whose data were collected and analysed and number of assignments completed and excluded, MEL data

Level	Total number of students		Total number of assignments		
	Collected	Analysed	Completed	Excluded having a 0% score	Analysed
Institution 2	445	422	13,494	3,299 (24%)	10,195
Institution 3	351	304	31,724	15,436 (49%)	16,288
Total	796	726	45,218	18,735 (41%)	26,483

For practices, data were collected from 796 students: 445 from Institution 2 and 351 from Institution 3. Five students were excluded – one student from Institution 2 and four from Institution 3, making the total number of students whose data were analysed 336. A total of 6,039 practices were included in the original file, of which 5,767 were analysed. For Institution 2, a total of 2,984 practices were originally included in the dataset and a total of 41 (1%) were excluded as they recorded a score of 0%. A total of 3,055 practices were completed by Institution 3 students, and a total of 231 (8%) were excluded as they also scored 0%.

Table 10: Practice analysis: number of students whose data were collected and analysed and number of practices completed and excluded, MEL data

Level	Total number of students		Total number of practices		
	Collected	Analysed	Completed	Excluded having a 0% score	Analysed
Institution 2	176	175	2,984	41 (1%)	2,943
Institution 3	165	161	3,055	231 (8%)	2,824
Total	341	336	6,039	272 (5%)	5,767

Analysis of student progress on assignments/practices

To gain an insight into student progress on assignments/practices, we analysed data for 703 students (from the .cvs files received). We removed all practices or assignments included in the files that were not attempted at least twice or that had a 0% or 100% score. Exclusions included four from Institution 2 and eight from Institution 3 who had all 0% or 100% scores in all assignments/practices, and a total of 2,287 assignments/practices that had a 0% or 100% score (see Table 10). After exclusions were applied, a total of 12,903 assignments and practices (6,019 from Institution 2 and 6,884 from Institution 3) were analysed.

Table 11: Student data for progress on assignments/practices collected and analysed, and assignments/practices completed and excluded

Level	Total number of students		Total number of practices and assignments		
	MEL data collected	MEL data analysed	Completed	Excluded having a 0% or 100% score	Analysed
Institution 2	400	396	6,611	592 (9%) (445 zero scores and 147 100% scores)	6,019
Institution 3	315	307	8,579	1,695 (20%) (1,585 zero scores and 110 100% score)	6,884
Total	715	703	15,190	2,287 (15%)	12,903

Analysis of student test scores

Overall, data from 449 students from Institution 2 and 354 students from Institution 3 were included in the .csv files. Tests were completed by 142 Institution 2 and 240 Institution 3 students. As for the assignments analysis, 0% scores were removed. This meant that we excluded 485 tests (86 from Institution 2 and 399 from Institution 3, or 13% of the total 3,832 tests completed) and analysed 3,347. Overall, data from 133 Institution 2 and 200 Institution 3 students was included in the analysis. Nine Institution 2 and 40 Institution 3 students were removed from the analysis.

Reliability and validity of MEL assignments/practices/tests

To investigate the reliability and validity of student scores from assignments/practices and tests, we estimated the correlation between average practice/assignment scores and the percentage of practice/assignments completed and the correlation between the average unit practice/assignment.

To gauge the internal consistency of unit scores as a measurement of student performance, we computed the correlations between the average practice/assignment score on different units. The first step was to compute, for each student, the average practice/assignment score for all the

exercises/assignments within each unit. Then, these average practice/assignment scores for each student and for each unit were correlated between them across all students.

When appropriate, both Spearman and Pearson correlations were computed and presented to accommodate for skewed distributions of the data. The effect of outliers was also investigated wherever appropriate. Removing a limited number of outliers did not change the values of the correlations significantly.

Method for deriving findings on perceptions of impact

To derive findings on the perceptual impact statements, the following method was used:

- Student questionnaire results took prominence. This is because we believe that students are the most important voice in the learning process. Everything above 50% was seen as the majority. If the majority of the questionnaire questions on the same outcome, such as access, showed that above 50% of respondents had a positive view, then the outcome was also considered to be positive. 70% and above was seen as a 'very positive' outcome. When results were between 50% and 70%, the outcome or the component(s) assessed were seen to need some level of improvement. When the results of two out of the three main Top Notch with MEL components (Students' Book, ActiveTeach or MEL) or the majority of features and/or skills for each of the component was positive, then the overall finding about the outcome category was also seen to be positive.
- In the same realm, if fewer than half of the areas under investigation relating to the component features and/or skills was below 50% in the student questionnaire, the outcome was considered not positive. When questionnaire results were skewed by one institution, this is mentioned in the report and is taken into account to derive overall findings.
- The approach to the teacher data was the same as that used for the student data. When students and teacher data agreed, the outcome was seen as positive. When student and teacher data disagreed, based on the number of disagreements found when compared to the whole, a decision was made. In both cases, when individual components, features or skills had negative results, this was clearly stated in the relevant section of the report.
- When data from the student focus groups and teacher interviews agreed with the student and teacher questionnaire results, the outcome was considered positive. When there was disagreement between the two, if the finding did not derive from a strong pattern, then the outcome was still considered positive. If the finding derived from a strong pattern, then results were considered mixed or the outcome negative.
- If student focus groups and teacher interviews pointed to what one would consider a 'deal breaker' (the organisation switching to another product, or students found to be not using the product and able to provide a number of reasons that pointed to their dissatisfaction), even if

the questionnaire results were positive, the outcome or the feature/skill was seen to have not had a positive impact, and this is mentioned clearly in the findings.

- Four researchers who worked on the Top Notch with MEL and Speakout with MEL research studies conducted in 2017 (which had the same research questions and used the same research instruments) read the results multiple times and independently applied the method outlined above. When there were disagreements, the method was reapplied by each of the researchers. Subsequent meetings took place to reach a consensus.

Discussion of Findings

In this section, we discuss the study results. We then make recommendations for both the institutions in the study and for Pearson, before addressing potential issues relating to the findings, their generalisability and areas for future research.

The discussion is based on the data outlined in the results section and includes data from the student and teacher questionnaires, the co-ordinator pre-questionnaires, the student focus groups, the teacher interviews and the MEL student data analyses.

A total of 651 student questionnaires were returned filled in: 210 from Institution 1; 244 from Institution 2, and 197 from Institution 3. The majority of students were studying at basic levels lasting between one, two and four months (98%, 597/607 of students reported), half were at the beginning of their course and the other half mid-way or at the end of their course.

Teacher perspectives derive predominantly from teachers in Institution 2, who represent the 13% of the total teachers using Top Notch with MEL (36/271) in their institution. Teachers who filled in the questionnaire from Institution 3 represent 86% (6/7) of the total teacher population in their institution. We were unable to obtain the total number of teachers using Top Notch with MEL from Institution 1. Most teachers were experienced in teaching English but new to teaching using Top Notch with MEL (one year in).

MEL data were obtained and analysed for Institutions 2 and 3. We were unable to collect the relevant information from Institution 1 to access student MEL data. Due to the manual extraction of the MEL data and the short timeframe in which to extract it, 20 classes per institution were agreed for analysis, giving a snapshot of student use and performance.

When findings are not presented for an institution, this is because no noteworthy differences were identified between them.

Findings are grouped under the relevant research question in this order:

- student attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL
- teacher attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL
- implementation of Top Notch with MEL
- findings for teaching and learning from the MEL data
- perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on students
- perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on teachers, teaching and the institution.

Student attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL

> **Finding 1: The majority of students report that they like to learn using Top Notch with MEL. They report that classes that use Top Notch with MEL are more engaging and enjoyable than classes that do not, and that they prefer completing assignments in MEL to those in print.**

In the student survey, nearly 90% (464/522) of students liked the combination of teacher instruction and independent practice using MEL, and 60% (310/515) said they preferred completing practices in MEL to doing them in print. In addition, 78% (442/569) of students reported that they were more engaged, 72% (412/569) that they were more motivated and 68% (381/564) that they enjoyed learning more in classes that used MEL compared to classes that did not.

While the largest proportion of students responded positively, there is a group of students who need to be further convinced about the benefits of Top Notch with MEL. This group of students reported preferring a more traditional course delivery. For example, nearly 40% (205/515) of students said that they still preferred the print workbook. When comparing classes using Top Notch with MEL to those that didn't, 32% (183/564) seemed to enjoy more the classes that didn't use Top Notch with MEL and 27% (157/590) were more motivated by them. This indicates that there is room for the value of Top Notch with MEL to be further demonstrated to students. A concerted effort by Pearson and by institutions seems to be needed through, for example, creating materials and opportunities that raise awareness and tailor support to students who need it the most (such as those who are not as comfortable using technology, don't have access to the relevant equipment outside their institution, etc.)

Teacher attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL

> **Finding 2: Teachers are in favour of using MEL, and the majority make it an integral part of their students' learning experience. However, infrastructure availability and competence with technology means that some teachers are unable to harness the full benefit of Top Notch with MEL.**

Across the three institutions, the majority of students reported that their teachers were in favour of MEL (71%, 353/497). An even larger proportion (81%, 423/521) reported that their teacher had made MEL an integral part of their learning. Interview and focus group data paint a similar picture. Teachers noted that MEL supported student practice outside the classroom, especially because it could be accessed anywhere, anytime. They also appreciated the opportunities offered by MEL to more easily monitor student progress and found MEL's assessments useful. The multimedia resources were also seen as useful and helped students access information in new ways that supported greater reinforcement and retention of the material.

There were some challenges to taking full advantage of Top Notch with MEL resources, however. These challenges were related to institutional infrastructure, including limited internet access and lack of access to resources such as speakers, monitors or interactive whiteboards.

Implementation of Top Notch with MEL

> **Finding 3: Data suggests that institutions chose Top Notch with MEL because it aligned with their institutions' objectives to: a) provide blended learning opportunities for synchronous and/or asynchronous outside-the-classroom learning and b) to motivate and engage students. Top Notch with MEL also seems to be chosen as a way to raise the profile of the institutions by promoting innovation and adding value over other English language courses.**

Across the three institutions, the following were reported as reasons for choosing Top Notch with MEL.

- It supports learner motivation and engagement: Student motivation was instrumental, mainly for employment and degree requirements. Given that integrative rather than instrumental motivation is a strong impetus for successful language learning, helping students engage with learning was important to the institutions. Teachers thought that Top Notch with MEL could motivate and engage students, drawing on their familiarity with, and use of, technology in their daily lives.

- It increases practice time and is a bridge between home and classroom learning: Teachers suggested that varying course structures at each institution (for example, those in courses that meet once a week) and students' competing commitments outside the class meant that students didn't necessarily have enough time to practise in the classroom to make the needed progress towards the next level of their learning. Implementing Top Notch with MEL had the potential to create an engaging path to supporting learning any time, any place. It also allowed for a wider range of practices to be accessed outside the class.

- It increases the institution's profile in terms of innovation: All three institutions face some competition for students. Interviews with teachers suggested that offering English classes using Top Notch with MEL meant their institution was seen as innovative and gave their students added value over other English language courses. Courses build English skills but also technology skills. In the case of Institution 2, the university's commitment to the use of technology made Top Notch with MEL well-aligned to its vision.

> **Finding 4: Key factors influencing the level of implementation of Top Notch with MEL are: the availability of technology infrastructure; standardisation of teaching and learning and of the curriculum within the department, and training for teachers and students on technology, pedagogy and the use of MEL as part of instruction. Important factors influencing these include senior leadership commitment to the use of technology; teacher and student buy-in to using Top Notch with MEL, and the process followed and resources offered by the institution to encourage implementation.**

Investment in technology infrastructure is important to the implementation of Top Notch with MEL, given that the key components of Top Notch rely on being connected to the internet or projecting visual or audio material. Across the three institutions, teachers had used ActiveTeach and MEL more when instructional technology was available. Institution 2 has recently invested in wifi in classrooms, interactive whiteboards and computer labs. This has facilitated greater use of Top Notch components at Institution 2 courses. Access to technology in the classroom (such as interactive whiteboards, internet connectivity and other audio-visual equipment) was less available at Institutions 1 and 3.

Standardisation of practices is also important. The degree to which institutions guide their staff and articulate expectations regarding the roll-out of a new programme also influences the level of implementation. Considerations include whether all teachers are clear about the implementation model; whether all teachers follow that model; whether there is consistency of use, and whether there are consequences for not following established norms.

In Mexico, variations in implementation were observed. These variations seem to be related, in part, to whether teachers were encouraged or required to use Top Notch with MEL. The decision to adopt Top Notch was made by the administration at each institution for slightly different reasons: because of positive impressions of the products at Institution 1, and as a system-wide decision across the chain of schools at Institutions 2 and 3. Teachers at Institution 1 and 3 have the greatest autonomy to craft their own courses, including materials and assessments, which leads to greater and lesser uptake of various components of Top Notch with MEL. Teachers' decisions are dependent on the availability of the infrastructure needed to use components in the classroom or computer lab, or for their use at home. At Institution 2, a manual was developed to set out standardised pacing and an assessment schedule. Part of the assessment includes scores from three MEL quizzes and homework. Both quizzes and homework scores count towards students' final end-of-course grade in Fundamentals and Level 1.

A third input that seemed to be related to implementation levels was training on Top Notch with MEL (both in terms of technology and pedagogy). Training for teachers and students on MEL varied in terms of provider and content. For teachers, the level of training seemed related to the degree of use of certain components (such as ActiveTeach). Overall, there wasn't a clear relationship between comfort with technology and implementation, as teachers at all three institutions rated themselves comfortable with technology (80-88% selected a rating of between 8 and 10 on a scale of 1-10).

Training varied across the three institutions. Institution 2 described the most comprehensive training plan with multiple, iterative training in both classroom technologies and in integrating technology into teaching practice. Training has been going on for more than a year, using a cascade model. It includes aspects such as: how a teacher's role changes when Top Notch with MEL is used (from a teacher to a facilitator) and what this means for them; course pacing; integrating technology into classes; selecting materials for different student needs from the array of resources available, and specific use of MEL (including an instructional video).

Among the teachers who completed the questionnaire, all were trained by Pearson or by a colleague. Institution 2 also conducted a questionnaire of their faculty to determine needs and gaps. The teachers' Book (online and print) was also seen an important part of training.

In interviews, teachers requested more authentic training opportunities (such as coaching support in their class). For teachers at all three institutions, expanded training would help maximise the use of all the components of Top Notch with MEL, as the majority of teachers responding to the questionnaire indicated limited previous teaching experience using Top Notch: overall, 90% (43/48) indicated only one year of experience using Top Notch with MEL, although Institution 3 had 50% (3/6) of teachers with three or more years of experience using Top Notch materials. Importantly, 88% (43/49) teachers in the questionnaire suggested that their training was focused on technical aspects of MEL and a relatively small majority (58%, 29/50) that their training also included discussions on pedagogy using Top Notch with MEL. Institutional variation was observed.

Students were introduced to Top Notch with MEL either by teachers providing in-class orientation or students learning on their own, often by completing assignments and assessments. Based on questionnaire results, 33% (3/9) of teachers at Institution 1 and 50% (3/6) of teachers at Institution 3 reported that students received an orientation from teachers, while other teachers had students learn on their own or through handouts. At Institution 2, 77% (27/35) of teachers reported that their students received a teacher-led orientation. Students on Fundamentals, Basic levels and Level 1 seem to need the most support in training on Top Notch and MEL. Evidence from both teachers and students demonstrates that these students battle with an array of challenges including:

Cultural barriers regarding learning: the traditional approach being that of the teacher leading the class and students as 'passive' recipients of learning, for example. In the case of Top Notch with MEL, the teaching and student roles are different. Teachers have to also act as facilitators of learning and students have to take more control of their learning.

Study skills support: for example, using different types of skills such as taking control of one's learning and the responsibility for searching for materials is challenging. All teacher questionnaire respondents across the three institutions suggested that they provided study skills support. Teachers at Institution 1 and 3 provided more intense support than those at Institution 2. Based on the questionnaire results only, this seems to be due to the different levels at which teachers taught. At Institution 1 and 3, the

majority of teachers taught Fundamentals and Basic levels, while at Institution 2, the majority of teachers taught at Intermediate level.

Personal commitments outside studying: outside commitments may interfere with students' ability to complete courses as expected (this applies to all students across levels). In interviews, teachers commented that their students had limited time to do homework due to family and work commitments.

> **Finding 5: The Students' Book was the main Top Notch component used at the three institutions in Mexico, according to students and teachers. The use of MEL was required by two institutions and ActiveTeach was required by one institution. Thus, the implementation and integration of these components and of their different features varied. Variation seems to be dependent on whether the use of certain components is required at an institutional level, and on the availability of relevant infrastructure.**

Components used

Teachers and students reported using all the Top Notch components across the three institutions, but there was variability in the degree to which each was used in courses. Based on the student and teacher questionnaire and student focus group and teacher interview data, the Students' Book is a common core component at all three institutions. Beyond the Students' Book, different Top Notch components comprise what is considered core and optional. At Institution 1, the Students' Book is a core component and other components are used at the teachers' discretion. At Institution 2, the Students' Book, ActiveTeach, MEL and also the classroom audio programme and extra practice activities on English.com appear to be core. At Institution 3, it is the Students' Book and MEL that students suggest are the core components of their learning.
In more detail:

The Students' Book was the core component used for the delivery of Top Notch at the three institutions. Between 83% (151/182) and 100% (194/194) of students in the questionnaire from the three institutions reported using the Students' Book in their course or that its use was required. In addition, across the three institutions, 69% (36/52) of teachers reported using the Students' Book three or more times a week.

Top Notch was considered the main material for the class by the majority of teachers in all three institutions. The largest proportion of teachers (92%, 33/36) using Top Notch as the main or the only material in their classrooms was at Institution 2 and Institution 3. At Institution 1, practice seems to vary between classes, with some teachers using Top Notch as the main material and others using it as a supplement based on what teachers perceive as 'missing' areas. The main areas for which Top Notch

materials are used as a supplement were grammar and further variety in terms of activities, including ones that foster more cooperation between students.

ActiveTeach is a requirement for teachers at Institution 2, whereas its implementation at Institutions 1 and 3 varies. Such variability may reflect differences in the infrastructure and resources available to teachers in the three institutions as well as the standardisation of teaching practices. From those who responded to the questions about how they used ActiveTeach, 66% (29/44) agreed/strongly agreed that they used ActiveTeach to prepare classes, 77% (36/47) reported using it throughout their lessons, and 85% (40/47) said they used an interactive whiteboard.

MEL is well used at two of the three institutions: 94% (229/244) of Institution 2 students said it was required in their courses and 96% (187/194) at Institution 3 suggested they used it. Teacher responses agree: 97% (35/36) at Institution 2 and 83% (5/6) at Institution 3 said that MEL was required in their classes. The majority also suggested that they made it an integral part of their teaching. Fewer than half of students who responded to this question from Institution 1 (42%, 77/182) reported that they used MEL in their courses and 20% (2/10) of teachers that they made MEL an integral part of teaching.

The extra practice activities and the classroom audio programme on English.com were also core components at Institution 2 (78% (191/244) and 81% (197/244) of students reported that they used this component.

A summary of the core and non-core components at the three institutions in Mexico is provided in Table 12. (See Appendix C for more details.)

Table 12: Top Notch core and non-core components at three institutions in Mexico, student questionnaire and teacher interviews

Core components	Most used[1]	Less used[2]
• **Students' Book:** Among students, between 83% (151/182) at Institution 1 and 100% (194/194) at Institution 3 report using the Students' Book in their course. • **ActiveTeach in one institution only**: Teachers at Institution 2 are required to use ActiveTeach. • **MEL in two of the three institutions:** Between 94% (229/244) of Institution 2 students use MEL in their courses (92%, 225/244 indicate that it is required), and 96% (187/194) at Institution 3. • **Extra practice activities on English.com in one institution only:** 78% (191/244) of Institution 2 students reported that they use this component, with 57% (138/244) indicating it is compulsory. • **Classroom audio programme on English.com/topnotch3e in one institution only:** The programme is reported to be used the majority of at Institution 2 (81%, 197/244).	• **Classroom audio programme on English.com/topnotch3 e in one institution:** 51% (92/182) of students at Institution 1 reported using the classroom audio programme in their courses. • **Print workbook in one institution:** 65% (158/244) of students at Institution 2 use the print workbook in their courses. • **Top Notch Go app audio at one institution only:** At Institution 2, 64% (155/244) of students reported that they use this component.	• **MEL in one of the three institutions:** 42% (77/182) of students at Institution 1 reported using it. • **Print workbook:** At Institution 1 (18%, 32/182) and Institution 3 (24%, 47/194) the use of the print workbook was relatively low, according to the student survey data. • **Classroom audio programme on English.com/topnotch3e** in one institution: 20% (39/194) of students said they use it at Institution 3. • **Extra practice on English.com in two institutions:** 13% (23/182) of students at Institution 1 reported using it and 15% (30/194) at Institution 3. • **Top Notch Go app**: overall reported use is low: Institution 1 shows 12% of students using it (22/182); 11% at Institution 3 (22/194).
	• **ActiveTeach:** Teachers at Institution 1 and Institution 3 seem to use ActiveTeach at their discretion.	

Notes: (1) 'Core component' here means >70% of students; (2) 'The 'most used' means 50–70% of students use it, and (3) 'Less used' means <50% of students use it.

Teaching and learning

Pair-work and small group-work is used in half or more classes at each institution. Almost half of teachers (47%, 24/51) also report using MEL in class three or more times a week. Further, grammar (67-71% of teachers), writing (62-70%), and vocabulary exercises (54-67%) seem to be mostly used across institutions. Using MEL for communication is another way to engage students and teachers with the platform, as well as raising its visibility. Over half of teachers (52%, 26/50) indicate that they find it useful/very useful to communicate with students online.

Assessment

Assessment practices varied across the three institutions. Across the three institutions MEL is used both as homework and for practice. Some teachers use MEL in class too. At Institution 2, where MEL is required as part of standardised practices, 89% (32/36) of teachers indicate that they use its unit tests across levels, followed by 67% at Institution 3 (4/6) and 25% at Institution 1 (2/8). For classroom-based formative assessments, at Institution 2 a mixture of ActiveTeach, MEL and teacher-devised assessments are used in at least half of the lessons. In Institutions 1 and 3, MEL practice is used less, especially in Institution 1 where teachers reported devising their own assessments.

Monitoring and feedback

An important feature of Top Notch is that students and teachers can use the gradebook's monitoring function. Do teachers regularly check performance on MEL and talk with students about it? Are students required to check their own progress? Teachers at Institutions 2 and 3 appeared to use the gradebook relatively uniformly: 95% (40/42) reported that they used the gradebook weekly. Those teachers who used the gradebook highlighted its positive impact on their teaching. One teacher found it really helpful to identify mistakes and areas for improvement, which they used to track individual students' progress. However, the benefits and the process of checking student progress in the gradebook need to be further articulated in some cases, especially through training.

Although students indicated in focus groups that they appreciated the feedback on their performance through the platform, the frequent use of the gradebook to monitor their progress has not yet become common practice for the majority of students at Institutions 1 and 3. There was substantial variability between institutions regarding the number of students who reported that they did not check their progress in MEL. More specifically, 64% (107/167) of Institution 1 students and 44% (80/183) at Institution 3 said that they did not check their gradebook. However, only 10% (23/235) of Institution 2 students reported not using the gradebook, and three-quarters reported using it at least once a week.

Student performance on MEL

> **Finding 6: There are indications that teachers can confidently use student scores from assignments and tests in MEL for formative assessment purposes. Evidence suggests that MEL assignments and tests provide reliable measures of student progress. Further investigation, however, would be helpful.**

Only 18% (4,730/26,452) of assignments were attempted more than twice. This suggests that most students were not simply repeating the exercises until they were given the answer. Thus, teachers can consider student scores to be reflective of their actual performance. Moreover, assignments and practices seem to be relatively reliable indicators of student performance. There are indications that the average performance of students on assignments/practices in one unit could be used as an indication of their future performance in another unit.

For Institution 2, the correlations for assignments mainly ranged between 0.17 (1st quartile) and 0.55 (3rd quartile), with an average of 0.34 (21 out of 48 correlations – 44% – were statistically significant at the 0.05 level). However, around a quarter of the correlations are based on a sample size of fewer than 20 students, which may have affected their statistical significance. The correlations for Institution 3 mainly ranged between 0.40 (1st quartile) and 0.62 (3rd quartile), with an average of 0.51 (94 out of 123 correlations – 76% – were statistically significant at the 0.05 level).

> **Finding 7: The more assignments and practices students complete, the better their scores, data suggests. Students also benefit from attempting the same task more than once, as practice helps them improve. Understanding the factors influencing the variability between the average improvement of classes would be helpful.**

There is evidence that students should be encouraged to complete MEL assignments/practices for learning purposes. Apart from some exceptions, overall data indicates that a higher number of assignment completions is associated with higher scores. In 10 out of 12 cases, there was a statistically significant and positive correlation between the average assignment score and the percentage of assignments completed (coefficients ranged between 0.26 to 0.72 across the two institutions).

Progress from a student's first to highest attempt is also noteworthy. At Institution 2, improvements on assignments ranged from 22 to 29 percentage points and for practices from 26 to 37 percentage points between the levels. For Institution 3, improvements on assignments ranged from 24 to 35 percentage points and on practices from 34 to 48 percentage points between levels. In both institutions, there was, in some cases, substantial variability on the average improvement made on assignments in different classes. This suggests that the effect of attempting the same task again does

not benefit students from different classes in the same way. This could be a result of the different implementation strategies related to Top Notch and MEL employed by different teachers in different classes.

Perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on students

> **Finding 8: Overall, Top Notch and its components are accessible and engaging, data suggests. More than 77% of students and teachers report that the Students' Book, ActiveTeach and MEL are accessible. 84% of students also find Top Notch with MEL engaging, with student focus groups and teacher interviews pointing to the relevance of the Students' Book to a wide audience, as well as ActiveTeach's interactivity and MEL's usefulness. Challenges that limit access include difficulty in affording MEL, and limited equipment and internet availability at institutional level. To further support engagement, it was suggested that materials could be developed for younger audiences, Top Notch songs could be reviewed and a wider variety of activities included in MEL.**

- Student and teacher responses to the questionnaires, interviews and focus groups indicate that Top Notch and its components are accessible and engaging. Between 79% and 96% of students and teachers report that the Students' Book is up-to-date, interesting, at the appropriate level, culturally relevant, relevant to real life and easy to navigate. Furthermore, 81% (444/548) and 65% (327/503) of students agreed/strongly agreed that the English.com website and Top Notch Go app were easy to access. Moreover, the majority of students suggested that using Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly helped them to engage with learning English (84%, 488/580). In line with the above is the students' NPS score for Top Notch with MEL, which is +8, suggesting that students are likely to recommend it to a friend.

- Students in the focus groups commented that the content was digestible and interesting, and was presented in a visually appealing format and structure. They were positive about the practical nature of the material.

- There is room for improvement, however, as students and teachers also noted some challenges related to engagement and some possible updates required. For example, there were suggestions that some of the material did not resonate with young adult students. A teacher at Institution 3 suggested that some of the materials (for example, those that talked about foreign travel or business) were not as relevant. Teachers also felt that some of the videos were out-of-date and for this reason students disregarded this material. Some teachers and students also noted that, for those students who had completed Fundamentals and Basic levels, the

overlapping content between the two levels was dis-engaging. Lastly, 66% (31/47) of teachers found the Top Notch songs little/not at all useful and suggested that they needed updating.

- As regards ActiveTeach, teachers reported that it was accessible, easy to navigate and engaging. Specifically, 90% (43/48) of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that it was easy to access ActiveTeach, and 85% (39/46) that it was easy to download its content. However, 39% (18/46) report not using ActiveTeach because they had problems with the software. This finding is in contrast with the previous two survey responses and the teacher interviews, where no issues related to Active Teach's access were recorded but rather a lack of relevant classroom equipment to use it and lack of awareness or training on how certain functions of ActiveTeach could be used. Based on the above, we assume that this discrepancy is due to the questionnaire design. Respondents to the questionnaire, who might not be using ActiveTeach in their classroom, chose the answer "*I do not use ActiveTeach because I had too many problems with the software*" because a standalone "*I do not use ActiveTeach*" option or any other similar options were not available. Findings from other studies on Top Notch with MEL in Peru and Colombia also show mixed results for this question. Future research using the same questionnaire should revise the answer options and further investigate how respondents interpret them.

- 92% (45/49) of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that there was a good variety of support materials in ActiveTeach and they noted the usefulness of the audio and video scripts in helping students to improve their skills, clarify meaning and practise. Teachers also noted the usefulness of the flashcards and of the printable activities in reinforcing learning. They highlighted the usefulness of the many interactive elements of ActiveTeach, particularly the games, which provided a fun way for students to learn something new. One teacher commented that the games helped with the dynamic of the class, while other teachers noted that engaging elements, such as the grammar coach, provided simulations of real situations for students to practise their English.

- MEL is reported to be similarly accessible to the other Top Notch components and engaging too. Between 77% and 94% of students and teachers reported that it was easy to access MEL on a computer or laptop and that it was easy to access and assign assignments, and to navigate its content. The majority of students (66%, 382/581) and teachers (78%, 40/51) also suggested that they could easily access MEL on their smartphone or tablet. Teachers noted that the activities in MEL were useful, in particular, the array of practices available and teachers' ability to monitor student progress. Teachers also noted the usefulness of the grammar coach. Students were positive about the additional practice opportunities, particularly to hone pronunciation/speaking and listening skills and expand their vocabulary.

- The majority of students, 92% (466/507), suggest that MEL is engaging and 75% (393/521) that they enjoy learning by completing assignments in the platform. Students' NPS score is +15,

suggesting that they are likely to recommend MEL to a friend. A teacher commented that MEL easily engaged students and that the content was clear and functional. Flexible access seems to support engagement: 89% (446/501) of students indicated that accessing MEL at any time and place they wanted was useful/very useful. These findings fit with the focus group data, especially for students who took courses on top of work and family duties. As regards improving MEL, students and teachers recommended adding more variety to the exercises.

Challenges to the overall accessibility of Top Notch with MEL reported were:

- the lack of relevant technology infrastructure at the institution
- technical issues, such as weak wifi, being unable to access materials or record audio, and system freezes. Teachers reported that, when they shared technical issues with Pearson, Pearson was responsive and helpful
- delays in receiving student access codes, which resulted in issues with initial registration for one of the institutions

In the case of Mexico, assignment/practice completion rates cannot be used as a proxy of engagement. This is because, amongst other reasons, the implementation model used in both institutions is such that, as the platform is currently set, we are unable to control for a number of teaching practices taking place in different classes. This makes it impossible to make reliable connections between assignment/practice completion rates and engagement. Data analysed on the use of MEL, however, is useful as it points to variation in implementation practices. The analysis has highlighted improvements that could be made to the platform so that we are able to understand different implementation practices in the future – that is, any extraneous factor that might affect the results of a study. Until such improvements are made, data also suggest future research needs to first understand the implementation model used before any analysis of student MEL data from institutions is completed.

> **Finding 9: Top Notch with MEL supports the development of positive learning behaviours. The majority of students (81% and above) suggest that their confidence, enjoyment and motivation to learn English has increased since using Top Notch with MEL. Students also point to increased confidence in their speaking, reading, listening and writing skills. The use of MEL in particular also encourages students to take more responsibility for their own learning and helps to develop their self-monitoring skills. Further support on how to best teach and assess speaking, however, is needed.**

Evidence across different data sources used in this study demonstrates a range of positive student behaviours that may be associated with Top Notch with MEL. The majority of students (86%, 504/589) report that, since using Top Notch with MEL, their confidence to learn English has increased. The majority of students also agree/strongly agree that since using Top Notch with MEL their confidence

has increased in reading (89%, 525/590), listening (84%, 495/587), writing (85%, 502/588) and speaking (81%, 478/588). In line with these findings are students' responses regarding the extent to which Top Notch with MEL has supported their confidence in these skills. Between 82% and 85% of students in the questionnaire indicated that the package significantly/very significantly helped them improve their confidence in reading, listening, writing and speaking.

Furthermore, the majority of teachers reported that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly supported the goal for their students to increase their confidence in learning English (65%, 33/51). The majority also reported that it supported their goal for their students to increase their confidence in reading (65%, 33/51), listening (69%, 35/51) and writing (54%, 27/50). However, fewer than half of teachers (47%, 24/51) reported that the package had significantly/very significantly supported their goal to increase students' confidence in speaking English. This survey finding contrasts with student perceptions noted earlier and teacher comments regarding support for speaking. Specifically, most teachers positively noted the extra speaking practice for students using MEL, which allowed them to record and listen to themselves. Only one teacher disagreed and suggested that their students did not like to record themselves because they were concerned about making a mistake that their teacher would hear on the recording. Despite the disagreement in the data, support for teaching and assessing speaking is a theme across other similar studies on Top Notch with MEL, thus, it is a recurrent pattern and one which needs to be taken seriously.

As regards student motivation, the majority of students indicated that Top Notch with MEL had significantly/very significantly supported improvements in their motivation to learn English (82%, 477/579). The majority of teachers (64%, 32/50) also indicated that Top Notch with MEL was useful/very useful to motivate students with meaningful activities, and 59% (29/49) that it supported their needs as a teacher to engage students with interesting content. Teachers noted that courses that integrated technology appealed to students, and the majority of students surveyed (81%, 466/578) reported that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly helped them enjoy learning English. Overall, teachers were largely positive. However, only 44% (22/50) felt that using the package supported their goal of increasing student motivation significantly/very significantly, and only 47% (23/49) of teachers felt that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly supported the goal of helping students enjoy learning English.

MEL also fosters student independence, self-assessment and self-monitoring, teachers suggested. They noted that students needed to make decisions about the when and what of their learning, meet deadlines, and decide on the volume of exercises and assignments they complete. The MEL gradebook also helps with self-monitoring: 88% (438/498) of students reported that it was useful/very useful to see a summary of their grades and track their progress on MEL. However, for students to truly take control of their learning, teachers noted that a cultural shift was required, with students becoming less dependent on their teachers.

Finding 10: More than 73% of students suggest that Top Notch with MEL is supporting improvements in English language skills, including in speaking, listening, vocabulary, writing and grammar. Views were mixed about the way that MEL's auto-scoring system is set.

Top Notch with MEL is associated with supporting improvements in students' skills, based on student and teacher questionnaire, student focus group and teacher interview data. Students noted the many ways in which Top Notch with MEL supported their learning. For example, the majority of students (73%, 425/582) indicated that Top Notch with MEL had significantly/very significantly supported them in improving their English, and between 81% and 87% said that it had significantly/very significantly helped them improve their vocabulary, grammar, listening, writing and speaking skills. In interviews, students attributed these improvements to the variety of materials available in the package. In particular, data suggested, the combination of video and audio resources facilitated greater understanding as well as more opportunities for practice.

Students and teachers agreed that MEL supported the development of all English language skills too. Data indicates the following.

- Between 90% and 95% of students suggested that the grammar exercises, writing, vocabulary and vocabulary flashcards, and the pronunciation coach videos are useful/very useful in supporting learning.

- 85% of students agreed/strongly agreed that MEL helps students understand content learnt in class (446/522).

- The majority of students (87%, 505/578), and teachers (86%, 43/50) agreed/strongly agreed that there is a good variety of exercises.

- 89% (510/572) of students and 78% (38/49) of teachers suggested that there is a good variety of tests in MEL.

- 92% (465/503) of students found repeating exercises until they got a better grade useful/very useful. 69% of teachers (35/51) agreed.

- 88% (438/498) of students found the grade summaries and 91% (460/503) the ability to check answers immediately useful/very useful to their learning. Overall, students were positive about feedback provided by MEL, which some used to improve their learning. Students also noted the relationship between practice using MEL and outcomes.

- Teacher and student views of the auto-scoring system were mixed. While some teachers viewed it as a reinforcement of grammar rules, students overall viewed it as a problem. Students were dissatisfied that their answers would be marked incorrectly if, for example, there was a punctuation or capitalisation error, when the purpose of the exercise was to develop an unrelated skill. Although some teachers were sympathetic, many noted that these types of student errors had been previously overlooked and focusing attention on these through MEL helped students prepare for the next level of their learning.

- It would be useful to have further data on student performance. This is because, amongst other reasons, MEL assignments/practices comprise one piece of a wider assessment system. Students also take other formative and summative assessments, but we only had access to their MEL scores. It is important that we cross-reference student scores from MEL with more standardised assessments as well as having a more detailed insight into the conditions under which students complete these MEL exercises. Overall student performance in MEL was high for assignments and practices, as shown by their average scores. For Institution 2, the average assignment score is 89%, the average practice score is 93% and the average test score is 85%. For Institution 3, the average assignment score is 85%, the average practice score is 84% and the average test score is 72%. However, in both institutions, there was substantial variability between the average class performance. For example, for Institution 2, for classes, average performance on assignments and tests ranges between 77% and 99% and for practices 40% and 100%. For Institution 3, for classes, average performance on assignments ranges between 76% and 95%, for practices 63% and 100%, and for tests 63% and 80%.

> **Finding 11: Overall, Top Notch with MEL prepares students well for their next stage in their English studies and for achieving their goals, data suggests. There are improvements to be made however, especially as regards differentiation and grammar difficulty, according to teachers.**

The majority of students in the questionnaire (84%, 482/573) reported that Top Notch with MEL had significantly/very significantly helped them prepare for the next level of their English studies and 86% (493/576) to achieve their goal. In addition, the majority of teachers in the questionnaire (55%, 27/49) suggested that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly helped them support student progress according to their aptitude. However, fewer than half of teachers suggested that it had significantly/very significantly helped them support students in passing high stakes external exams (43%, 20/47), and 51% (25/49) that it helped little/not at all their goal for their students to make progress in English according to their age/level. Further investigation is needed on teacher responses as regards Top Notch with MEL's support for student progress by age/level, especially given that mixed ability classes are the norm.

Although the majority of teachers (55%, 27/49) suggested that Top Notch with MEL helped them differentiate teaching in mixed ability classes, it was suggested that it also needs to consider providing further materials to support students who are taking external exams. The relatively negative response by teachers in this case is not as worrying, as Top Notch with MEL is not designed for this purpose, though aims to support it as much as possible. At least one teacher at two of the institutions also viewed grammar in Top Notch with MEL as less challenging than in other similar books, especially after the Intermediate level. Teachers at each institution described using additional non-Top Notch with MEL materials to supplement their teaching to address the perceived gap, as well as to differentiate instruction, given the mixed ability groups they taught.

Perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL on teachers and institutions

> **Finding 12: The majority of teachers report that Top Notch with MEL help increase their confidence in teaching English and increases the confidence of new teachers. They also report that Top Notch with MEL supports teaching in many ways, helps with effective lesson planning and assessment, and reduces lesson preparation time and assessment workload. However, teachers need further help in understanding the pedagogy related to Top Notch with MEL.**

Survey and teacher interview data indicated that, for the most part, Top Notch with MEL supports teachers and teaching in many ways. The majority of teacher responses for most of the Top Notch with MEL components and materials are positive, although further investigation is required into the, at times, sizeable number of teachers who express a less favourable view. The relative tension in teachers' responses is also evident in the NPS scores and their likelihood to recommend Top Notch with MEL or MEL to a colleague (NPS score for the former is -2 and for the latter –3).

Teacher responses to the survey and in interviews suggested that Top Notch with MEL:
- Increased their confidence in teaching English: 55% (28/51) of teachers chose significantly/very significantly in the questionnaire.

- Increased the confidence in teaching English of teachers new to the profession: 64% (30/47) of teachers mentioned this in the questionnaire.

- Supported effective lesson planning (57%, 28/49) and reduced lesson preparation time (63%, 32/51): Referring to ActiveTeach in particular, 66% (29/44) of teachers reported using it to prepare for classes. According to interviewees, fewer activities needed to be printed out or created, and all resources were located in one place. A teacher noted that Top Notch with MEL simplified many processes that they previously had to do manually, and that classes were now more enjoyable for both themselves and their students. The lesson planner, oral progress charts, printable extension activities and methodology section were also deemed useful/very useful by between 62% and 71% of teachers.

- Supported teaching in different ways: according to teachers in the questionnaire, Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly helped them differentiate teaching in mixed ability classes (55%, 27/49); to fill in classroom hours with work related activities (60%, 30/50); engage students with interesting content (59%, 29/49), and to also motivate students with meaningful activities (64%, 32/50). Additionally, 87% (39/45) of teachers indicated that being able to display all the different ActiveTeach activities had improved the quality of their lessons and between 77% and 81% found Top Notch TV, games, audio and video transcripts and flashcard

player useful/very useful to their teaching. Teachers also found that they had more time to complete other activities with students in class because of the efficiencies of MEL (marking homework and tests, students completing tests at home). They reported using classroom time differently to incorporate additional teaching and learning strategies, such as games during contact time, to make learning more fun.

- Supported assessment and reduced the assessment workload: significantly/very significantly by assessing student performance effectively (65%, 33/51 of teachers in the questionnaire reported) and by using an automated grading system (65%, 32/49), which alongside the easy assigning of homework in MEL, according to interviewees, saves them time. For 88% (42/48) and 74% (31/42) of teachers, the unit, and mid-term and final review tests in MEL were deemed useful/very useful, respectively.

In contrast to the above, the majority of teachers suggested that Top Notch's support for understanding the pedagogy was not useful (59%, 30/51). Furthermore, teachers in the interviews mentioned that drilling down to individual student performance was time-consuming.

> **Finding 13: Teachers' views on the impact of Top Notch with MEL across the English departments appear to be mixed. Further investigation is required to understand how institutional implementation can further support Top Notch with MEL's impact, especially in increasing conversations about teaching English and in encouraging collaboration amongst teachers.**

- More than half of teachers (56%, 27/48) suggested that Top Notch with MEL had supported improvements in teaching English and had encouraged consistency in teaching English across the department (55%, 26/47). Fewer than half of teachers who responded to the questionnaire, however, indicated that Top Notch with MEL had supported increases in conversations about teaching English (43%, 20/47) and that it encouraged further collaboration among teachers in the department (43%, 20/47).

Recommendations

Recommendations will be provided to the institutions and to the relevant Pearson teams directly.

Generalisability of findings, limitations and future research

This section explains the main limitations of the research and outlines potential areas for future research.

- Findings are based on specific implementation models carried out with specific samples of students and teachers in specific cultural context and settings. Further research should aim to replicate findings in similar contexts and with a similar sample, to identify whether their results are consistent with the results of this study. Further research should also aim to expand our understanding of the repertoire of implementation models so that using Top Notch is better understood in different contexts, settings and countries. A better representation of students and teachers from all the institutions to be studied should be also considered.

- Findings are based on triangulating inferences across different evidence sources. Rather than provide precise answers, the aim is to allow Pearson to use the data to screen major occurrences and major trends across institutions for decision-making and to develop an understanding of the different implementation models (Ewell, 2009; McCormick and McClenney, 2012; Pike, 2013). Furthermore, self-report methods are known to be vulnerable to both unreliability and bias. Self-reported perceptions of impact on achievement and progression do not provide objective evidence of impact. This is more of a limitation for evidencing student achievement and progression than for student access and experience, where self-reported perceptions are extremely valuable. Further research should seek to incorporate objective external measures of achievement and progress, to compare outcomes for users and non-users and to control for potentially confounding factors such as prior achievement. Additionally, individual student level analysis will allow us to understand the relationship between student use and performance. Moreover, we were unable to control for prior achievement for all samples in the study. Addition of an indicator for socioeconomic status as a covariate would also strengthen the study.

- At times, data from the student focus groups and from the interviews are presented from the students' perspective only, or from the teachers' perspective only. At times these findings are corroborated by the students' and/or teachers' questionnaires. When findings from the student focus groups and from the teacher interviews are not corroborated with each other, or with either the student questionnaire or the teacher questionnaire data, they should be treated with caution and become items for follow-up questioning in future research.

- Due to time constraints, analysis that allowed the bundling of answers referring to the same category, i.e. usefulness of MEL or student confidence, to derive a standardized index was not performed. This type of analysis will provide us with a more reliable estimate of the construct and will also allow for comparisons across different institutions and countries. Future research could carry out further analysis by looking at different variables in the student and teacher questionnaires, i.e. student motivation to learn or teacher confidence in teaching English and usage. Lastly, responses to open-ended questions in the student questionnaires were not analysed. Analysing these would further enrich our understanding of the themes explored in this study.

- Between and within classroom variation needs further investigation.

- A more rigorous design would compare the performance of students using Top Notch with MEL to students not using Top Notch with MEL, and students would either be randomly assigned to treatment conditions or would be matched to students in the other group on important background characteristics, such as prior achievement and demographic factors.

- Future research should aim to either control for implementation or understand implementation first, before analysing MEL data.

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Appendix A: Consolidated Framework of Implementation Research (CFIR)

	Construct	Short description
	I. Intervention characteristics	
A	Intervention source	• Perception of key stakeholders about whether the intervention is externally or internally developed
B	Evidence strength and quality	• Stakeholder perceptions of the quality and validity of evidence supporting the belief that the intervention will have desired outcomes
C	Relative advantage	• Stakeholder perception of the advantage of implementing the intervention versus an alternative solution
D	Adaptability	• The degree to which an intervention can be adapted, tailored, refined or reinvented to meet local needs
E	Trialability	• The ability to test the intervention on a small scale in the organisation and to be able to reverse course (undo implementation) if warranted
F	Complexity	• Perceived difficulty of implementation, reflected by duration, scope, radicalness, disruptiveness, centrality and intricacy and number of steps required to implement
G	Design quality and packaging	• Perceived excellence in how the intervention is bundled, presented and assembled
H	Cost	• Costs of the intervention and costs associated with implementing the intervention including investment, supply and opportunity costs
	II. Outer setting	
A	Individual needs and resources	• The extent to which individual needs, as well as barriers and facilitators to meet those needs, are accurately known and prioritised by the organisation
B	Cosmopolitanism	• The degree to which an organisation is networked with other external organisations
C	Peer pressure	• Mimetic or competitive pressure to implement an intervention, typically because the majority of or other key peer or competing organisations have already implemented or are in a bid for a competitive edge
D	External policy and incentives	• A broad construct that includes external strategies to spread interventions, including policy and regulations (governmental or other central entity), external mandates, recommendations and guidelines, pay-for-performance, collaboratives and public or benchmark reporting
	III. Inner setting	
A	Structural characteristics	• The social architecture, age, maturity and size of an organisation

B	Networks and communications	• The nature and quality of webs of social networks and the nature and quality of formal and informal communications within an organisation
C	Culture	• Norms, values and basic assumptions of a given organisation
D	Implementation climate	• The absorptive capacity for change, shared receptivity of involved individuals to an intervention and the extent to which use of that intervention will be rewarded, supported and expected within their organisation
1	Tension for change	• The degree to which stakeholders perceive the current situation as intolerable or needing change
2	Compatibility	• The degree of tangible fit between meaning and values attached to the intervention by involved individuals, how those align with individuals' own norms, values and perceived risks and needs, and how the intervention fits with existing workflows and systems
3	Relative priority	• Individuals' shared perception of the importance of the implementation within the organisation
4	Organisational incentives and rewards	• Extrinsic incentives such as goal-sharing awards, performance reviews, promotions and rises in salary and less tangible incentives such as increased stature or respect
5	Goals and feedback	• The degree to which goals are clearly communicated, acted upon and fed back to staff, and alignment of that feedback with goals
6	Learning climate	• A climate in which (a) leaders express their own fallibility and need for team members' assistance and input; (b) team members feel that they are essential, valued and knowledgeable partners in the change process; (c) individuals feel psychologically safe to try new methods, and (d) there is sufficient time and space for reflective thinking and evaluation
E	Readiness for implementation	• Tangible and immediate indicators of organisational commitment to its decision to implement an intervention
1	Leadership engagement	• Commitment, involvement and accountability of leaders and managers with the implementation
2	Available resources	• The level of resources dedicated for implementation and ongoing operations, including money, training, education, physical space and time
3	Access to knowledge and information	• Ease of access to digestible information and knowledge about the intervention and how to incorporate it into work tasks
IV. Characteristics of individuals		
A	Knowledge and beliefs about the intervention	• Individual attitudes toward and value placed on the intervention as well as familiarity with facts, truths and principles related to the intervention
B	Self-efficacy	• Individual belief in their own capabilities to execute courses of action to achieve implementation goals
C	Individual stage of change	• Characterisation of the phase an individual is in as they progress toward skilled, enthusiastic and sustained use of the intervention

D	Individual identification with organisation	• A broad construct related to how individuals perceive the organisation and their relationship and degree of commitment with that organisation
E	Other personal attributes	• A broad construct to include other personal traits such as tolerance of ambiguity, intellectual ability, motivation, values, competence, capacity and learning style
V. Process		
A	Planning	• The degree to which a scheme or method of behaviour and tasks for implementing an intervention are developed in advance, and the quality of those schemes or methods
B	Engaging	• Attracting and involving appropriate individuals in the implementation and use of the intervention through a combined strategy of social marketing, education, role modelling, training and other similar activities
1	Opinion leaders	• Individuals in an organisation who have formal or informal influence on the attitudes and beliefs of their colleagues with respect to implementing the intervention
2	Formally appointed internal implementation leaders	• Individuals from within the organisation who have been formally appointed with responsibility for implementing an intervention as co-ordinator, project manager, team leader or other similar role
3	Champions	• Individuals who dedicate themselves to supporting, marketing, overcoming indifference or resistance that the intervention may provoke in an organisation
4	External change agents	• Individuals who are affiliated with an outside entity who formally influence or facilitate intervention decisions in a desirable direction
C	Executing	• Carrying out or accomplishing the implementation according to plan
D	Reflecting and evaluating	• Quantitative and qualitative feedback about the progress and quality of implementation accompanied with regular personal and team debriefing about progress and experience

Appendix B: Full results

This section provides the results from the analysis of the data collected for this study, including student and teacher questionnaires, co-ordinator pre-questionnaires, student focus groups, teacher interviews and MEL student data.

A total of 651 student questionnaires were returned filled in: 210 from Institution 1; 244 from Institution 2, and 197 from Institution 3. The majority of students were studying at basic levels lasting between one, two and four months (98%, 597/607 of students reported), half were at the beginning of their course and the other half mid-way or at the end of their course. Teacher perspectives derive predominantly from teachers from Institution 2, who represent the 13% of the total teachers using Top Notch with MEL (36/271) in their institution. Teachers who filled in the questionnaire from Institution 3 represent the 86% (6/7) of the total teacher population using Top Notch with MEL in their institution.

We were unable to obtain the total number of teachers using Top Notch with MEL from Institution 1. Most teachers were experienced in teaching English but new to teaching using Top Notch with MEL (one year in). MEL data were obtained and analysed for Institutions 2 and 3. We were unable to collect the relevant information from Institution 1 to access students' MEL data. Due to the manual extraction of the MEL data and the short timeframe in which to extract it, a total of 20 classes per institution was agreed for analysis, giving a snapshot of student use and performance.

When findings are not presented for an institution, this is because no noteworthy differences were identified between them.

Findings are presented thematically as follows.

- Student attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL
- Teacher attitudes towards Top Notch with MEL
- Implementation of Top Notch with MEL, including the reasons for engaging with Top Notch with MEL, institutions' readiness for implementation, the teaching and learning and assessment approach (especially relating to MEL) and the training and support for teachers and students
- Student and teacher use of MEL
- Findings for teaching and learning from the MEL data
- Student and teacher perceptions of the impact of Top Notch with MEL on students, teachers, teaching and the institution.

Student attitudes to Top Notch and MEL

Students prefer and enjoy Top Notch with MEL to other instructional approaches and prefer using MEL to the printed workbook, data suggests. In the survey, we find:

- 89% (464/522) of students like the combination of teacher instruction and independent MEL practice in learning English

- 78% (442/569) are more engaged in classes using Top Notch with MEL than those who do not use these

- 72% (412/569) are more motivated in classes using Top Notch with MEL than those who do not use these

- 70% (36/512) of students agree/strongly agree that their English would improve further if they were to use MEL more in class

- 68% (381/564) enjoy classes using Top Notch with MEL more than other class

- 60% (310/515) agree/strongly agree that they would rather complete exercises in MEL than in the print workbook

In the focus groups, students noted that multimedia, visual and audio elements used inside and outside the class enhanced their learning experience by providing new or different types of learning.

It should be noted, however, that while students were largely positive about Top Notch with MEL, when it was compared to other courses, a sizeable minority disagreed with some statements. For example, 32% (183/564) of students disagreed/strongly disagreed that they enjoyed classes in which Top Notch with MEL was used compared to other classes. A further 28% (157/569) of students also disagreed/strongly disagreed that they were more motivated in classes that used Top Notch with MEL compared to those that didn't. In addition, 40% (205/515) disagreed/strongly disagreed that they would rather complete exercises in MEL than in the print workbook.

Teacher attitudes to Top Notch and MEL

Overall, 83% (44/53) of teachers who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they required their students to use MEL. The majority of students (71%, 353/497) indicated that their teachers were in favour of MEL, and 81% (423/521) indicated that their teacher had made MEL an integral part of their learning.

Overall, teachers in the interviews at all three institutions were positive about MEL, noting how it supported student practice outside the classroom, assessment and monitoring. Teachers were in favour of the extra practice time that MEL provided for students and that practice could be accomplished anywhere. Teachers also commented on the ease of monitoring student work.

Implementation of Top Notch with MEL

Institution 1

Institution 1 is a higher and postgraduate education public university for the tourism sector, which aims to contribute to developing and promoting sustainable tourism in the country responsibly, ethically and with social commitment. Institution 1 serves approximately 4,000 students a year.

The research took place in the Faculty of Tourism and its language centre, which has been operating for more than 15 years. The language centre offers courses in Fundamentals, Levels 1, 2, 3 and Summit Level 1. During 2017, approximately 643 students were enrolled in Fundamentals and Level 1 classes, spread evenly across the two levels. Student ages range from 18 to 22, and there are also English classes offered to the community. There were six teachers in Fundamentals and seven teaching Level 1. Top Notch's third edition and MEL have been used since January 2016. All courses require face-to-face instruction. Courses last 40 hours in total and vary in their schedule – two to four hours a day or five hours on a Saturday.

Students suggested that one of the key reasons for learning English was because it was a requirement for obtaining their degree. They also thought that being able to communicate in English would help them find a good job.

Reasons for implementing Top Notch with MEL

Senior leadership at the university had previous experience of using Top Notch with MEL and saw potentially positive benefits. Senior leadership believed that Top Notch with MEL could support students, especially with speaking. Interviews suggest that, whilst students may come with some

knowledge of English through media and previous coursework, teachers noted gaps in student knowledge in speaking and grammar that needed to be filled. Teachers noted that increasing student exposure to English was seen as key to achieving this, given that there was minimal exposure outside the university.

Readiness for implementation

Teachers at Institution 1 were mixed in their enthusiasm regarding a move to using Top Notch with MEL to teach English. Interviews suggested that training from Pearson and from within the institution, and equipping classrooms with interactive whiteboards and internet access would help them in implementing Top Notch with MEL. Some students were unable to buy the book because of financial constraints.

Teaching and learning

Institution 1 teachers reported that students spoke in English in the majority of lessons. Teachers discussed several priorities for student learning using Top Notch with MEL, including improving their speaking, grammar, listening and writing skills and expanding their vocabulary. Teachers also noted the importance of the additional, independent practice facilitated through MEL.

The majority of Top Notch with MEL components were being implemented to some degree in Institution 1 classes (see Table 11). Among teachers who completed the survey (N = 11), more than half (55%, 6/11) indicated that Top Notch materials were the main materials used in the class, while 45% (5/11) indicated that Top Notch was a supplement to their curriculum. Student data shows the most used materials to be the Students' Book (83%, 151/182), the classroom audio programme on English.com (51%, 92/182) and MEL (42%, 77/182).

Table B1: Top Notch materials used at Institution 1, student survey

Institution 1 (N=182)		
	N	%
Top Notch Students' Book	151	83%
Classroom audio programme on English.com/topnotch3e	92	51%
MEL	77	42%
Workbook	32	18%
Extra practice activities on English.com/topnotch3e	23	13%
Top Notch Go app	22	12%

Teachers at Institution 1 have autonomy in their approach to teaching and learning. Their responses to the survey suggest that the following are used in classrooms (see also Figure 1):

- Learning new content: The majority of teachers (90%, 9/10) reported that students watch and listen to teacher demonstrations and explanations in almost every lesson.

- Practice: Students practise in the Students' Book in almost every lesson (80%, 8/10); 38% (3/8) of teachers report using the print workbook in almost every lesson, while 63% (5/8) use it never or hardly ever. MEL is used in the classroom by 33% (3/9) of teachers who report using it in half or more of the lessons. 44% (4/9) report having students complete language exercises in MEL in about a quarter of lessons. Slightly more than half (55%, 6/11) of teachers report that students work with teachers in guided writing processes in almost every lesson.

- Study skills: The majority of lessons support students in learning to use the language resources provided by Top Notch with MEL (27% in every lesson, with 65% in half or three-quarters of lessons).

- Teaching approach to practice/production: Teachers report using a variety of strategies in almost every lesson. Whole-class discussions (55%), pair-work (46%) and individual work (37%) are most common.

Figure B1: Student activities during class at Institution 1, teacher survey
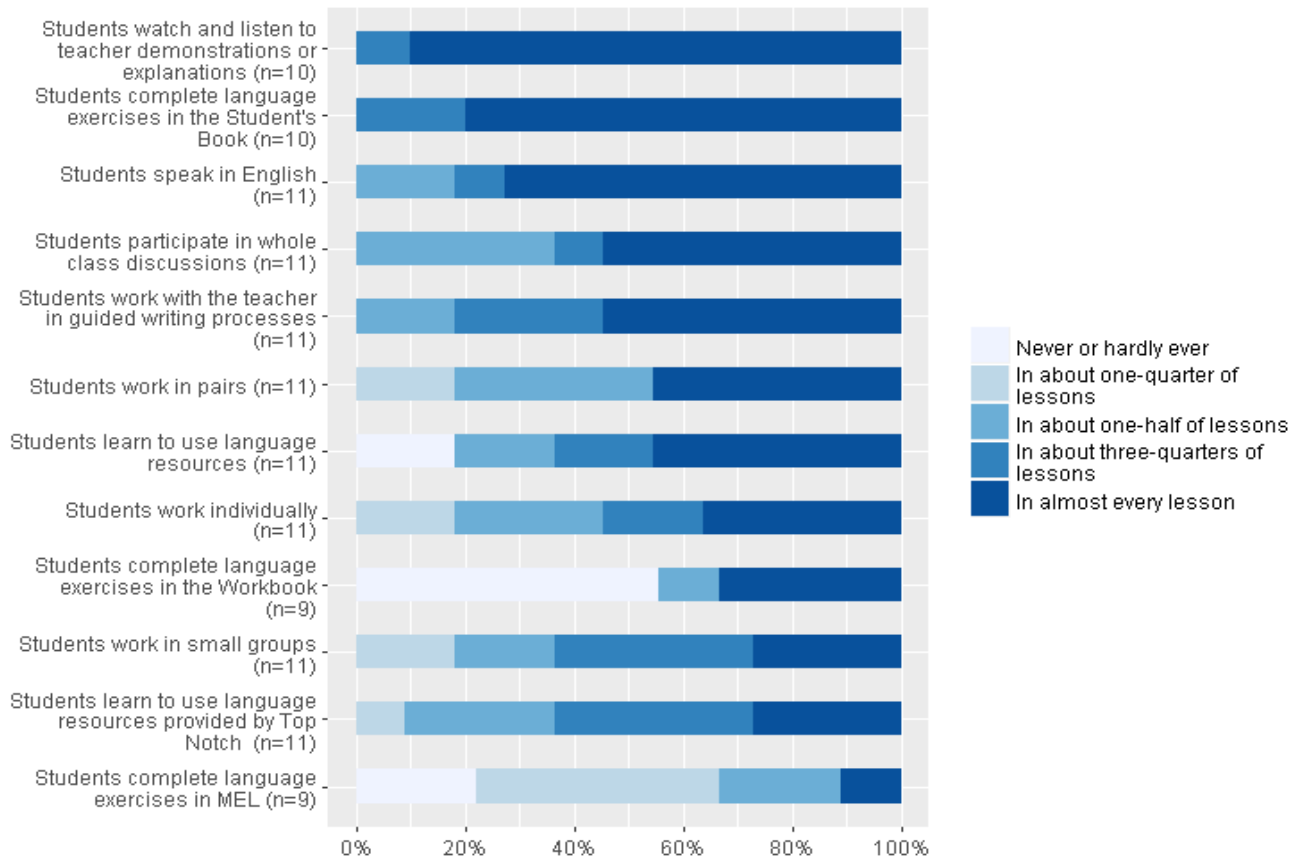
There are also assignments that students must complete, either in class or outside of class on their own. These assignments include:

● Homework: Teachers reports of reviewing homework in class varied by the type of assignment. 70% of teachers reported reviewing completed homework from the Students' Book in almost every lesson; while 44% reviewed homework from the workbook in almost every lesson. Only 22% of teachers reported reviewing MEL assignments with them in almost every lesson, while another 22% reported never/hardly ever doing so.

● Assessment: Reports of in-class assessments varied. Among survey respondents, 40% reported administering a test or quiz developed themselves in almost every lesson, while only 20% reported administering a test or quiz using ActiveTeach, and 22% reported using MEL for that purpose in almost every lesson.

Figure B2: Teacher activities during class at Institution 1
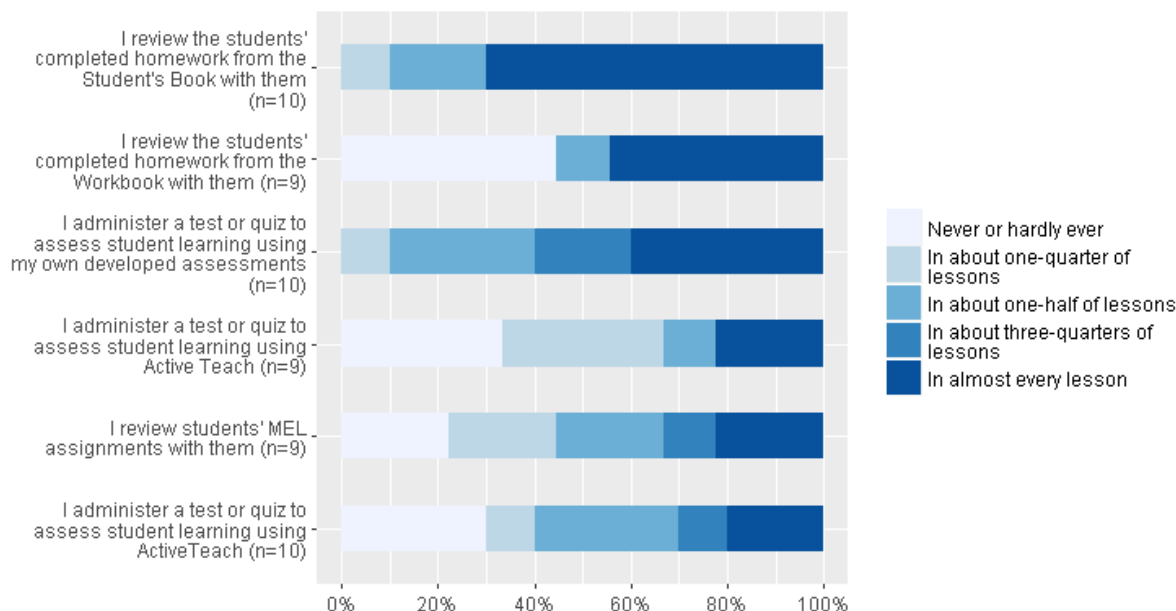
As regards MEL in particular, 67% of teachers suggested that they required the use of the grammar exercises, 62% the writing exercises and 56% the vocabulary exercises. Unit tests are a course requirement according to only 25% of teachers, and students are encouraged to complete them by 62% of teachers. 38% of teachers suggested requiring the use of mid-course tests and end-of-course tests. Students are also required to track their progress online or are encouraged to do so, according to 33% and 56% of teachers respectively.

Other components are more often encouraged but not required. Specifically, the pronunciation coach (by 67% of teachers), grammar coach videos (by 62% of teachers), playing a game (by 44% of teachers), communicating with the teacher online (by 50% of teachers) and vocabulary flashcards (by 62% of teachers).

Figure B3: MEL activities during class at Institution 1, teacher survey
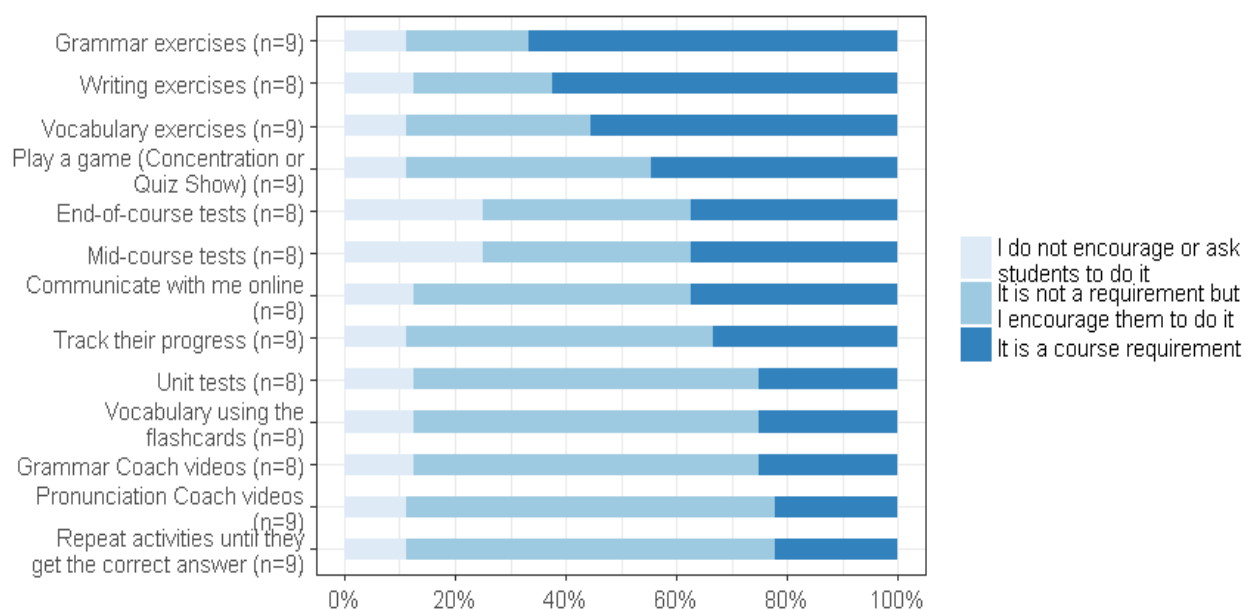
Assessment and MEL

Teachers use formal and informal assessments throughout the course, with MEL contributing to teachers' formative judgments.

Table B2: Institution 1's approach to assessment, teacher interviews

Formal	Informal
• **Two written tests per term** (40% each): A midterm and a final exam. Tests are developed by teachers based on the main topics covered in the classroom. • **An oral presentation** (20%): The oral presentation is part of the student project, which is delivered at the end of the term. The aim is for students to demonstrate the use of English in a real-life context.	• Weekly or daily quizzes • Topic presentations • **Homework**: Sometimes worksheets, MEL and/or the print workbook • For MEL practices: • Teachers encourage students to use MEL to consolidate their knowledge and improve fluency, and get instant feedback on their performance. • In some classes, students are asked to complete seven exercises per unit, but these are not obligatory. They are considered supporting activities to improve learners' skills. (Students report that not all teachers ask them to use MEL). • Teachers, in their interviews report tracking use once a week.

Training and ongoing support for teachers

The majority of teachers who responded to the survey (74%, 37/50) asked for more training on MEL, and 70% (7/10) suggested they learnt how to use it themselves. Teachers who participated in interviews also indicated that they taught themselves or learnt parts of how to do things from other teachers. Teachers noted that additional formal training could help them with planning lessons, with finding resources more easily (which would save them time) and in using additional features and tools (e.g., creating and managing a group). As far as the content of training, more than half of teachers reported that their training focused on the technical aspects of MEL (56%).

Table B3: Institution 1 training for teachers on MEL, teacher survey

Institution 1	N = 10	%
A Pearson representative trained me (only)[6]	1	10%
Combination of training from colleagues from my institution and using handouts	1	10%
I was given instructions through handouts (only)	1	10%
I was not trained on how to use MEL; I learned myself (only)	7	70%
Total	10	100%

Training and ongoing support for students

Teachers' approaches to helping students use MEL vary. The majority of teachers who responded to the survey reported that they provided instructions to their students through handouts (56%, 5/9). As well as getting handouts, some students also received training from their instructor or another teacher at the institution (33%, 3/9). Some students learn MEL on their own (33%, 3/9).

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[6] Teachers were given an array of responses. In the table only the responses ticked by teachers are included.

Table B4: Institution 1 student training on MEL as reported by teachers, teacher survey

Type of training on MEL	N = 9	%
I give my students instructions through handouts (only)	3	33%
I give my students instructions through handouts and teachers from my institution train students on how to use MEL.	1	11%
I conduct a MEL orientation in class and I give my students instructions through handouts	1	11%
Teachers from my institution train students on how to use MEL.	1	11%
I do not introduce students to MEL; they learn it themselves (only)	3	33%

Institution 2

Institution 2 is one of a chain of language centres, attached to a university, which enrolls about 20,000 students a year. These language centres are in approximately 20 locations throughout Mexico. Their 'Vision 2020' is to be a leader in integrating information technology into English teaching.

In the language centre we visited, during 2016–17, nearly 2,500 students were taught with Top Notch with MEL by more than 100 instructors in about 200 classes. Institution 2 has been using Top Notch since the first edition and introduced MEL in 2017.

Students range in age from 15 to 22, with the average being in their 20s. The school also has a cadre of older students in their 50s. Courses primarily serve university students who need to reach B2 level to graduate and also increase their work opportunities, but there are also classes for community members.

Courses are offered during the day and evening. To complete a level, students have to attend courses for four months or on Saturdays over a six-month period. Students also have the opportunity to complete an 'internal level' within two months and continue the remaining two months at a later stage. Weekday classes are held five days a week for two hours. Saturday classes are five hours. The course is divided into 12 levels, and each level is around 40 hours long. Students take some part of their courses face- to-face, but Institution 2 has moved to a blended education model for English classes.

Increasing student confidence in communicative English is a key goal, alongside an appreciation of the real-life importance of knowing English, data suggested. Teachers also emphasised the importance of

students being able to adapt their knowledge to novel situations rather than memorising static conversations.

According to the focus groups, students enrol in English classes for school or work requirements, to study abroad or to get scholarships. A challenge mentioned by Institution 2 teachers is that students have limited capacity to do homework outside class because of jobs, commuting or family obligations.

Reasons for implementing Top Notch with MEL

Administrators at Institution 2 described the emphasis on a blended learning approach and how Top Notch with MEL aligned with this vision.

Readiness for implementation

With the implementation of MEL, Institution 2's focus on technology has led to infrastructure investments that include wifi classrooms and a computer lab for students who don't have computer/internet access at home. According to administrators, the majority of classrooms have interactive whiteboards, and technology is well integrated into English classes.

As in many institutions, some teachers and students were hesitant in using technology. Teachers noted that students did not have exposure to online courses and exams until university, so learning at Institution 2 required adjustment. For this reason, standardising teaching practices and providing a more consistent learning experience were important.

Teaching and learning

The department has designed a manual for English courses that standardizes many elements of the course, including pacing and the assessment schedule. At the same time, the director of the institution also encourages instructors to develop their own teaching styles and adapt to students' learning needs, preferences, and styles.

Among teachers who completed the survey at Institution 2, the majority (84%) indicated that Top Notch materials were the main materials in their class with some materials used to supplement, and 8% indicated that Top Notch were the only materials in their class. The same percentage (8%) indicated that Top Notch was used as a supplement only. The majority of the components seem to be used as part of the lessons. More than 92% of students report that the Students' Book and MEL are mandatory. Classroom audio is also mandatory (68% of students) as well as extra practice activities on English.com (57%).

Table B5: Students' report of materials used at Institution 2, student survey

	Institution 2 (N = 244)					
	Compulsory		Optional		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Top Notch Students' Book	229	94%	3	1%	232	95%
Top Notch MEL	225	92%	4	2%	229	94%
Classroom audio programme on English.com/topnotch3e	165	68%	32	13%	197	81%
Extra practice activities on English.com/topnotch3e	138	57%	53	22%	191	79%
Top Notch workbook	58	24%	100	41%	158	65%
Top Notch Go audio app	46	19%	109	45%	155	64%

Teachers and administrators described how courses followed lesson-plan principles, e.g., lead-in/warm-up, high challenge, wake up, low challenge and wrap up. Teachers emphasised production and, during class time, speaking. Teacher responses to the survey suggest that the following are used at Institution 2 classrooms:

- Learning new content: The majority of teachers (76%) report that students watch and listen to teacher demonstrations or explanations in half or more of their lessons.

- Practice: Students practise in the Students' Book in the majority of the lessons (97% report using it in half or more lessons). MEL is used relatively frequently too (69% of teachers suggest they use MEL in half of lessons or more) and so is the print workbook, but to a lesser degree (46% of teachers suggest they use it in half or more lessons).

- Study skills: A small majority of lessons support students in using language resources provided by Top Notch (52% used it in half or more lessons).

- Teaching approach to practice/production: Pair-work seems to be the most used method in lessons (52% in three-quarters of lessons or more), while whole-class discussions are also relatively common (42% in three-quarters or more lessons). Small group-work comes next, although is it also used by 22% of teachers in almost every lesson. Individual work features in fewer lessons (only used 28% in three-quarters or more lessons).

Figure B4: Student activities during class at Institution 2, teacher survey
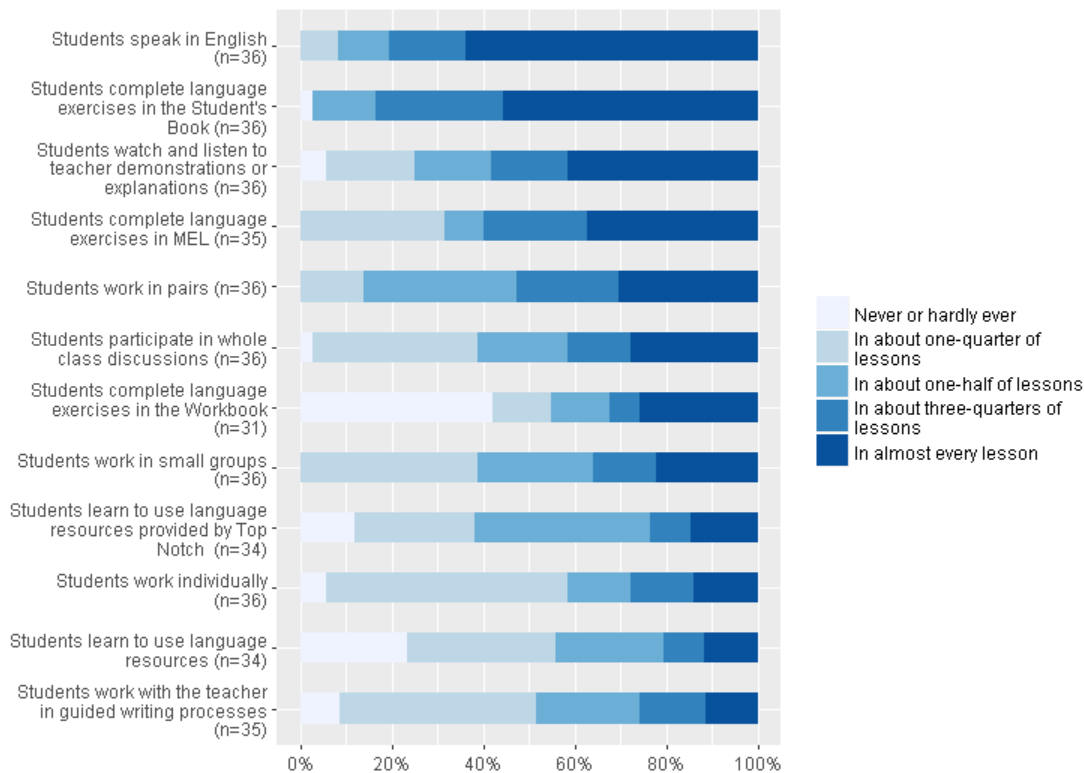
Teachers report the following teacher activities at Institution 2:

- Homework: Teacher reports of reviewing homework in class were varied. 56% report reviewing completed homework from the Students' Book in half or more lessons, while 40% review homework from the workbook in half or more. While 45% of teachers report reviewing MEL assignments with students in half or more lessons, another 23% report never/hardly ever doing so.
- Assessment: Among survey respondents, only 12% reported administering a test or quiz developed by themselves in almost every lesson, while 48% reported administering a test or quiz using ActiveTeach and 48% using MEL.

Figure B5: Teacher activities during class at Institution 2, teacher survey
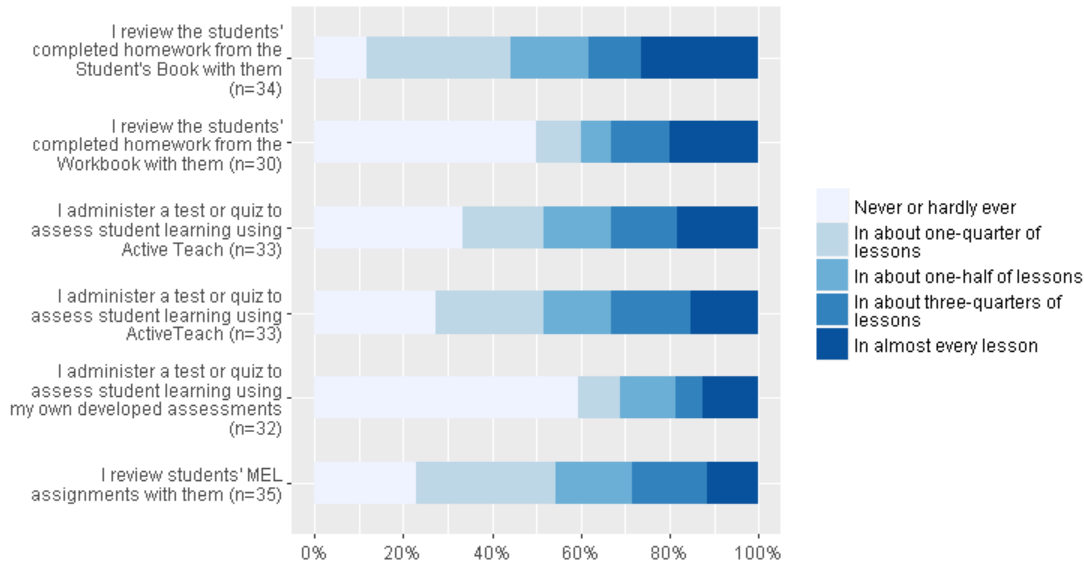
Teachers also report the following use of MEL in their classrooms:

- Assignments: The use of MEL to complete grammar, writing and, to a lesser extent, vocabulary exercises was a course requirement, 71%, 70%, and 54% (respectively) of teachers suggested. Students are also required to track their progress online by more than half of teacher respondents (53%) or are encouraged to do so (37%).

- Tests: Unit tests are a course requirement, 89% of teachers suggested. For other assessments, such as mid- and end-of-course tests, the use of MEL is required, 39% of teachers suggested, but it is neither encouraged nor required, according to 36%.

- Other components: These are often encouraged but not required. Specifically, the pronunciation coach (70%), grammar coach videos (66%), playing a game (65%), communicating with the teacher online and using vocabulary flashcards (54% each).

Figure B6: MEL activities during class at Institution 2, teacher survey
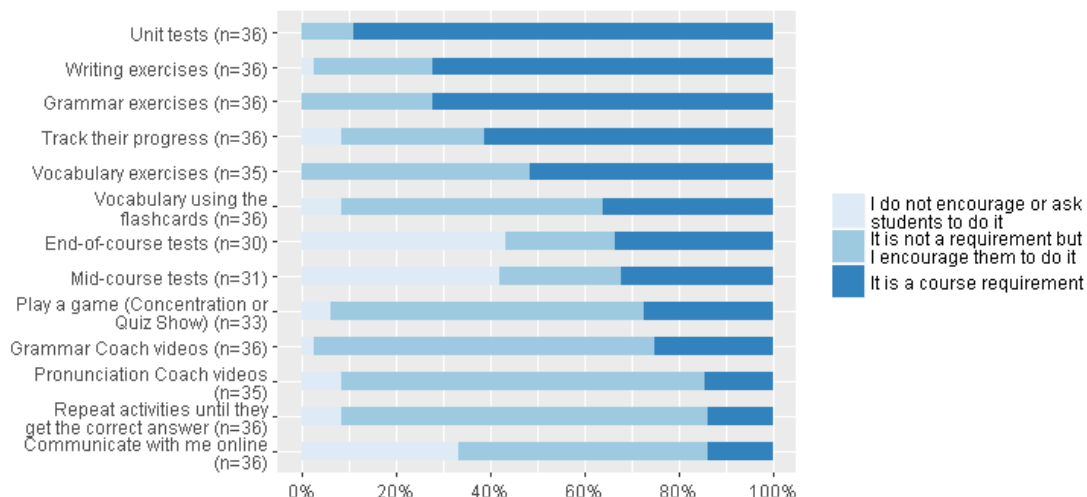
Assessment and MEL

Teachers at Institution 2 have choices in testing leading up to a standardized final exam. At the Fundamentals and Advanced levels, tests are formative and summative, formal and informal. The evaluation system focuses on listening and reading, vocabulary and grammar. The Advanced level adds production, speaking and writing to the assessments, including through formative writing and speaking assessments carried out in MEL.

Table B6: Institution 2's approach to assessment

Assessment type	Fundamentals	Level 1
Counts towards student grade	• **Final exam** covering content of all the units • Three MEL quizzes (10% each) • Homework (via MEL) • Welcome Unit 4, 5–9, 10–14 • Continuous online work	• Final exam • Three **quizzes** (10% each via MEL) • Oral assessment • Writing assignment
Does not count towards student grade	• The *Ten aspects of the ongoing assessment* guide supports teachers with classroom assessment. This involves, **ongoing oral assessment including assessment of non-linguistic skills**, such as cooperation and willingness. Assessments are completed at the end of a level, or once a month.	• Ongoing oral assessment (as per Fundamentals)

Training and ongoing support for teachers

Training at Institution 2 focuses integrating technology into the classroom and on Top Notch with MEL. Training has been carried out for more than a year and includes aspects such as: how teachers' roles change when using Top Notch with MEL (from teacher to facilitator) and what does this mean for them; course pacing; integrating technology into classes, and specific use of MEL (including use of an instructional video).

Institution 2 training occurs in stages. The first priority is to get teachers comfortable with the technology available and then to integrate that into their classes. Training at Institution 2 is seen as continuous to slowly build capacity and improve, with the goal of making teaching collaborative, interactive, and student-centred. Teacher training focused on helping teachers to become more comfortable with the technology, and included training on Active Teach with the smart boards, an introduction to the benefits of using technology, and support in selecting appropriate activities from the available materials. For a few teachers, it was important to make clear that they did not have to use all of the MEL tools and activities in every lesson, but could select those that were most useful for their needs.

To further support teachers, Institution 2 collected feedback through a survey. The survey aimed to gather information on what teachers liked or disliked about the training and to identify gaps and areas for improvement. On interview, administrators emphasised the importance of the manual produced as

part of teacher training to standardize practices and the implementation of Top Notch with MEL. Institution 2 also reported that Pearson staff had been readily available to respond to their needs.

In responding to the survey, many teachers indicated they had been trained by Pearson personnel (28%, 10/36, Pearson only) and by colleagues who had responsibility for MEL (17%, 6/36), by another colleague at the institution (17%, 6/36), or by both (8%, 3/36), with others citing a range of training combinations.

Overall, training was perceived to be helpful, and so was further support. The training was prompt for the majority (79%, (26/33) said it took place before their course), and 71% (25/35) said it allowed them to use MEL effectively. 57% (20/35) said their training included both technical and pedagogical issues, and 71% (25/35) said they needed more support after the training.

Table B7: Institution 2 teacher training on MEL, as reported by teachers

Institution 2	N = 36	%
A Pearson representative trained me (only)[7]	10	27%
A colleague(s) from my institution trained me (only)	6	17%
A colleague who is responsible for all MEL related issues in my institution trained me (only)	6	17%
Combination of: training from Pearson, colleagues from my institution, or using any materials	12	33%
I was given instructions through handouts (only)	1	3%
I watched video tutorials (only)	1	3%
Total	36	100%

Training and ongoing support for students

Overall, 77% (27/35) of teachers reported that the majority of students at Institution 2 received training on MEL from their teacher through an in-class orientation. Other students are trained through a combination of methods, e.g. from other staff and, in some cases, from knowledgeable students (17%, 6/35). Only one teacher reported not introducing students to MEL and that, instead, their students learnt how to use it themselves.

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[7] Teachers were given an array of responses. In the table only the responses ticked by teachers are included.

Table B8: Institution 2 student training on MEL as reported by teachers, teacher survey

Type of training	N=35	%
I conduct a MEL orientation in class (only)	27	77%
Teachers from my institution train students on how to use MEL (only)	1	3%
A combination of: I conduct a MEL orientation in class, a dedicated MEL person in my institution trains students on how to use MEL, teachers from my institution train students on how to use MEL, I ask knowledgeable students to help guide newcomers	6	17%
I do not introduce students to MEL; they learn it themselves (only)	1	3%
Total	35	100%

Note: One response was removed because it provided contradictory responses: both 'I conduct an orientation' and 'I do not introduce students to MEL'.

Institution 3

Institution 3 is part of a growing educational consortium of 49 private institutions throughout Mexico. It currently offers 18 degrees and, during May to August 2017, approximately 22,440 students were enrolled, 4,700 of whom were attending English classes. Its English department has been using Top Notch since 2007 and MEL since 2010. It offers Top Notch Fundamentals and Levels 1 and 2.

Institution 3's mission is to train students to integrate themselves into a changing world. As part of this, they must master English to develop their skills for work. Students at Institution 3 usually prepare for the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). Reasons for studying English cited by students in the focus groups tended to be to increase job opportunities and to reach the required level for their degree. Other reasons were to obtain a fellowship or otherwise to advance one's studies.

An administrator noted that students arrived with a mix of English skills. They take a placement exam to assess their skills, with the majority beginning at Fundamentals. Students who have taken higher levels elsewhere often start on the level below to increase their knowledge, particularly in vocabulary and basic skills.

Reasons for implementing Top Notch with MEL

The selection of Top Notch with MEL was made centrally by Institution 3 for all 49 campuses.

Readiness for implementation

Institution 3 has interactive whiteboards and internet access in the majority of classrooms. Teachers indicated that, although it is a requirement for the course, a proportion of the population entering the university is unable to buy the Students' Book. The policy is that students who don't buy the book are not accepted into the course.

Teaching and learning

Courses at Institution 3 range from 42 hours for Level 1 and Level 2 and 56 hours for Fundamentals. Students meet once a week for three or four hours over 14 weeks.
Among teachers who completed the survey (six), four indicated that Top Notch materials were the main materials used in the class, with some materials to supplement. One indicated that Top Notch was a supplement only and one that Top Notch materials were the only materials used in their class. Overall, teachers noted that they found it a challenge to complete the course in the time allotted and that they ended up making selections so that they could get through the material.

The components of Top Notch with MEL are integrated to varying levels in courses at Institution 3. All students (100%) report using the Students' Book, and 96% report using MEL. The other components are used in 12–24% of courses including extra practice activities, the workbook and the Top Notch Go app.

Table B9: Student report of material used at Institution 3

Materials used	Institution 3 (N = 194)	
	N	%
Top Notch Students' Book	194	100%
Top Notch MEL	187	96%
Top Notch workbook	47	24%
Classroom audio programme on English.com/topnotch3e	39	20%
Extra practice activities on English.com/topnotch3e	30	15%
Top Notch Go app	22	11%
Total	194	100%

Teacher responses to the survey suggest that the following are used in the classrooms:

- Learning new content: 84% of Institution 3 teachers in the questionnaire said that students watched and listened to teacher demonstrations and explanations in three-quarters or more of classes.

- Practice: Students practise in the Students' Book in the majority of the lessons (83% of teachers suggested they use these in half or more lessons). MEL is used relatively frequently too (83% of teachers use it in half of the lessons or more); 51% of teachers suggested they use the print workbook in half of the lessons or more.

- Study skills: The majority of lessons support students to use the language resources provided by Top Notch (83% of teachers report using in half or more lessons).

- Teaching approach to practice/production: Pair-work seems to be the most used way in the majority of lessons (84% of teachers suggested this was used in three-quarters or more lessons), while individual work, small group-work and whole-class discussions are also relatively common (67% of teachers suggested they did this in three-quarters or more lessons).

Figure B7: Student activities during class at Institution 3
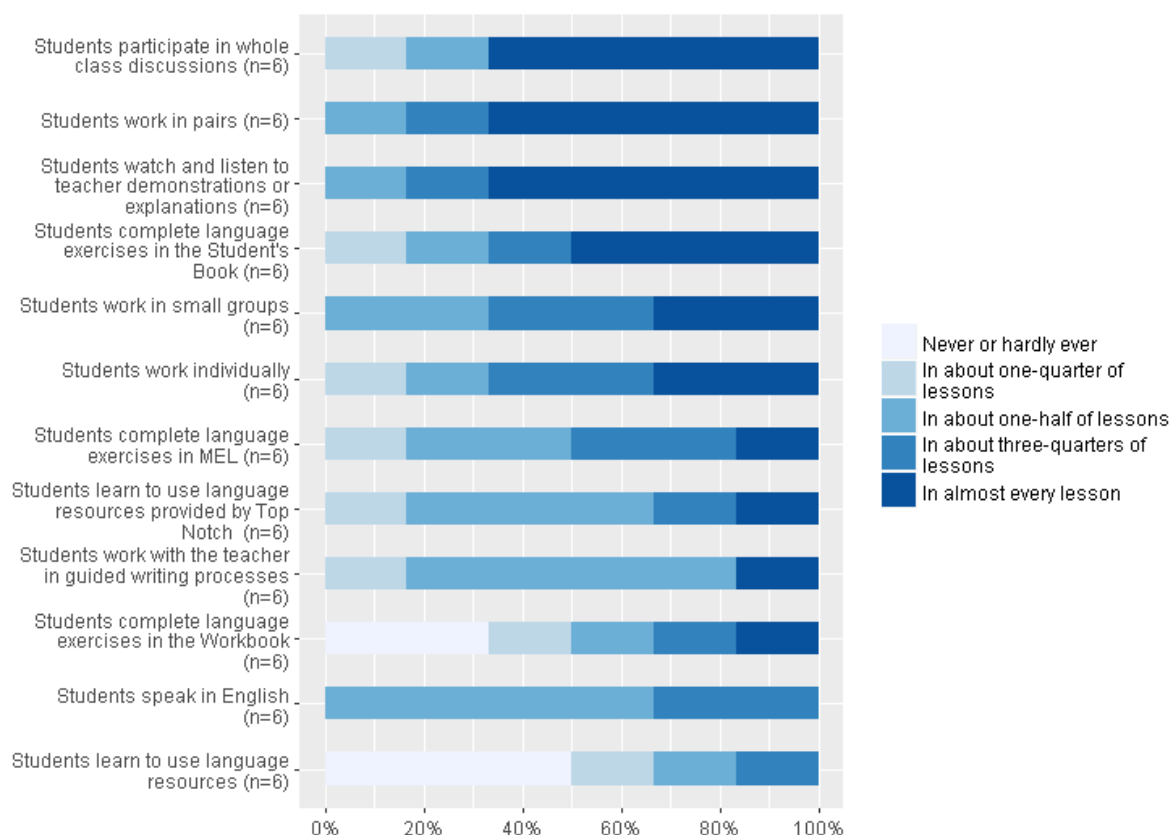
Teachers report the following teaching-related activities at Institution 3:

- Homework: All four teachers who responded to this question said they reviewed completed homework from the Students' Book in half or more of the lessons. Half (50%) reported doing the same for homework from the workbook or MEL assignments.

- Assessment: Reports of in-class assessments vary. Among survey respondents, 66% reported administering a test or quiz developed themselves or using ActiveTeach in half or more lessons. 34% suggest they do so using MEL in half or more lessons.

Figure B8: Teacher activities during class at Institution 3
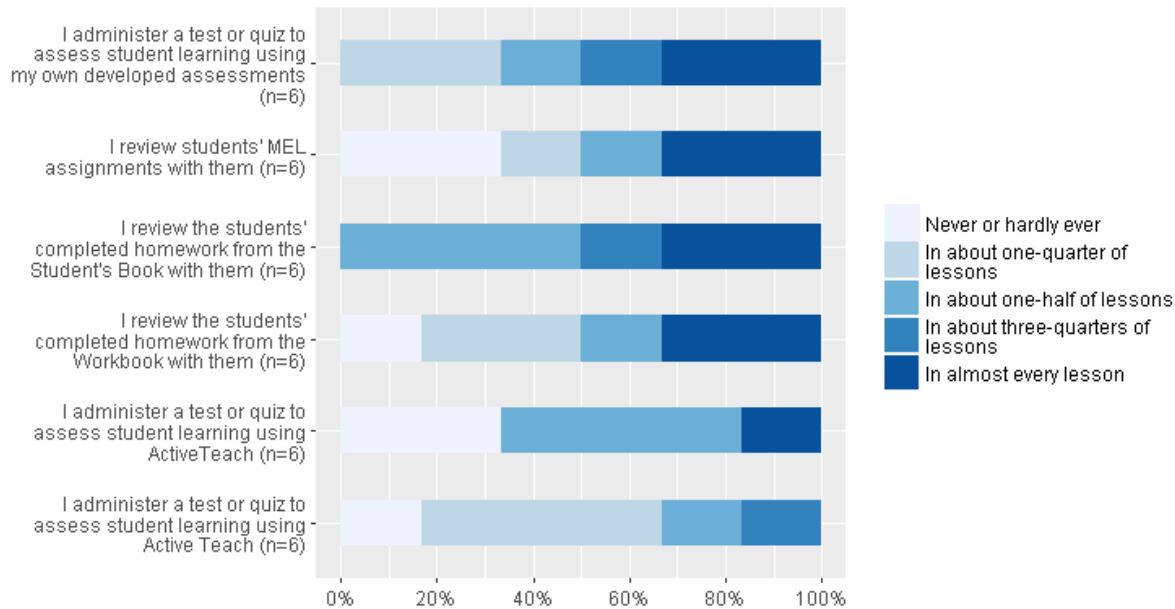
For MEL in particular, 67% of teachers suggested that MEL unit tests, mid-course tests or end-of-course tests were a course requirement. The majority of teachers also reported that the use of MEL to complete grammar, writing and vocabulary exercises – and repeating activities until students got the right answer – was also a course requirement. Other components such as pronunciation coach, grammar coach videos and vocabulary flashcards were required by the majority of teachers who answered the survey. Students were more often encouraged to play a game (83% of teachers suggest) than required to do so (17%). 67% of teachers also reported encouraging students to communicate with their teacher online and 50% to track their progress online.

Figure B9: MEL activities during class at Institution 3
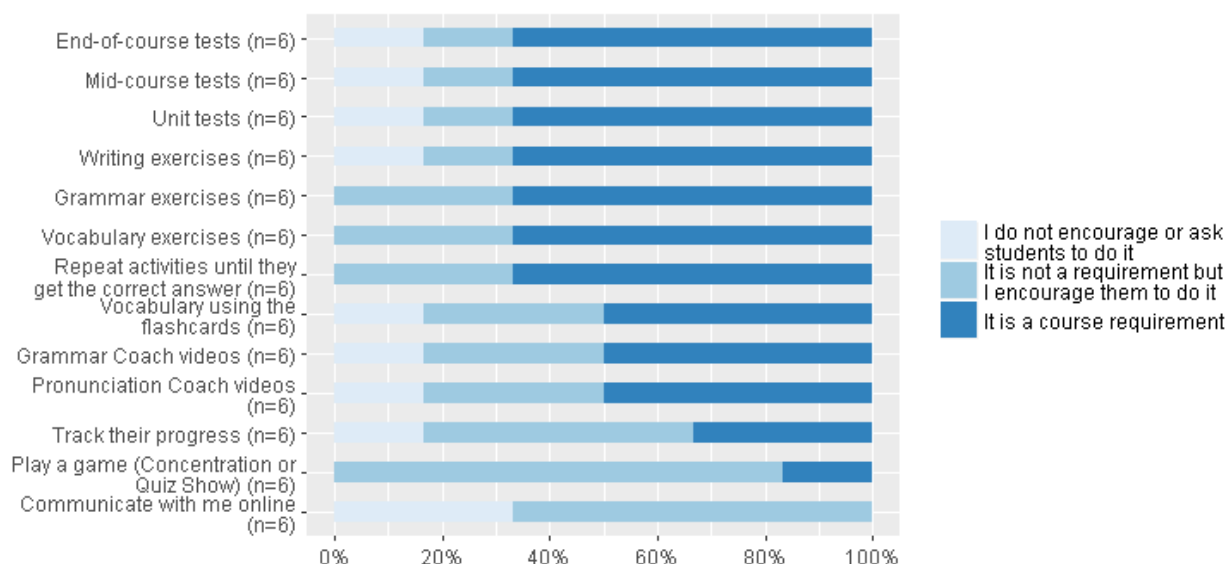
Assessment and MEL

At Institution 3, students take three formal assessments during their 14-week course. Other formal and informal assessments are decided by their teachers. MEL is used for homework and sometimes for practice during class.

Teachers decide whether to use MEL in their courses so, as expected, the use of MEL varies significantly. One teacher, for example, said they did not teach using it, whereas another reported that they liked using technology and had used MEL even before it was introduced at the institution. Four out of six teachers indicated in the survey that MEL was integral to their course, while two considered it to be a supplement.

Training and ongoing support for teachers

In the survey, four out of the six teachers suggested they had received training from a Pearson representative and/or from a colleague. Overall, the majority (N = 5/6) felt that their training allowed them to use MEL effectively, that training covered both technical issues and information about how MEL could support teaching and learning, and that they did not require additional support.

Table B10: Institution 3 teacher training on MEL as reported by teachers

Institution 3	N = 6	%
A Pearson representative trained me (only)[8]	1	17%
A colleague(s) from my institution trained me (only)	1	17%
Combination of training from a Pearson representative and colleagues from my institution	2	32%
I was given instructions through handouts (only)	1	17%
I was not trained on how to use MEL. I learned myself (only)	1	17%
Total	6	100%

Training and ongoing support for students

Student training on MEL is the responsibility of teachers and seems to vary. Half of the teacher respondents (three) suggested that students were introduced to MEL in class through an orientation led by their instructor or that they learnt from other teachers in the institution (3/6). Two teachers said they did not provide any training to students and only helped with registration.

Table B11: Institution 3 student training on MEL as reported by teachers

Type of training	N = 6	%
I conduct a MEL orientation in class, and teachers from my institution train students on how to use MEL	2	33%
I conduct a MEL orientation in class (only)	1	17%
I do not introduce students to MEL. They learn it themselves	2	33%
I help students register and they learn it themselves	1	17%

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[8] Teachers were given an array of responses. In the table, only the responses ticked by teachers are included.

Student and teacher use of MEL

The use of MEL by teachers and students can be used to make inferences about instructor and student access, experience and engagement. In addition, patterns of use and the reasons given for using MEL provide a more nuanced portrait of how learners and instructors are enacting blended instruction. The following section describes the analysis of usage data collected through the student and teacher questionnaires and data extracted from the MEL platform. As already mentioned in the methodology, students and teachers at the three institutions responded to the questionnaires, but we were only able to access MEL student data from Institutions 2 and 3. Analysis of usage data focuses on the reasons for using MEL; student time spent on assignments/practices; student and teacher frequency of using the gradebook; the number of practice/assignment set and completed, and the number of attempts on assignments/practices.

Reasons for using MEL

The majority of students reported that the main reason they use MEL was to complete assigned work (75%, 448/600, see rows 1–3 of Table 22). Around 23% of students (135/600) also reported that they used MEL to do additional unassigned practice. 11% of students suggested they had not used MEL.

Table B12: Students' main reason for using MEL, student survey

Reason for using MEL	N	%
Complete work that has been assigned by my teacher (exercises, assessments, etc.)	313	52%
Complete work that has been assigned by my teacher, plus extra practice (from the same lesson) my teacher didn't assign	107	18%
Complete work that has been assigned by my teacher, plus extra practice (in a future lesson) my teacher didn't assign	28	5%
Do additional practice to develop my skills in listening	32	5%
Do additional practice to develop my skills in reading	16	3%
Do additional practice to develop my skills in speaking	16	3%
Do additional practice to develop my skills in writing	15	2%
I have not used MEL	68	11%
Other	5	1%
Total	600	100%

Student weekly use of MEL

The large majority of students reported using MEL some of the time. More than half of students who responded to this question suggested they used MEL once or twice a week (56%, 339/599) and 24% (143/599) between three and five times a week. 3% (18/599) of students reported using MEL five or more times a week, while 17% (99/599) did not use it at all.

Figure B10: Students' self-reported weekly use of MEL, student survey
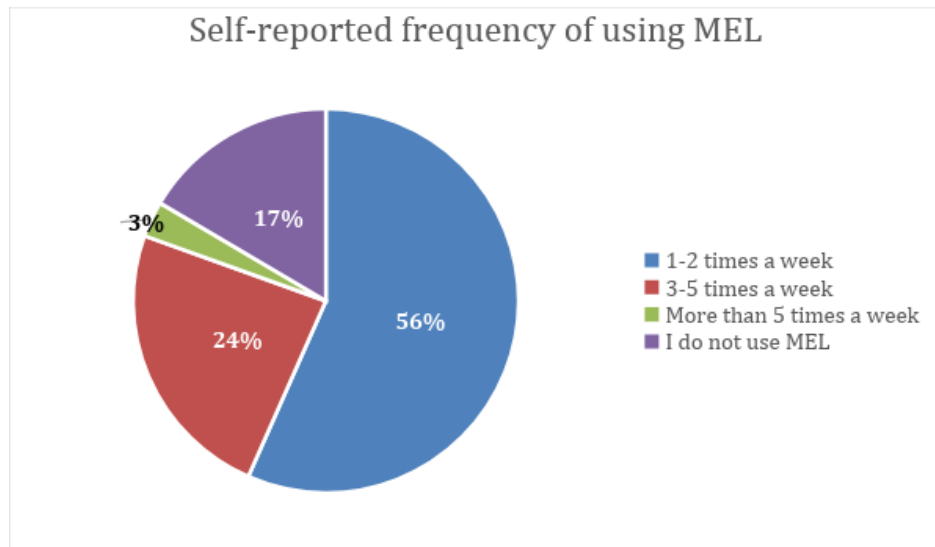
With regards to the time students spent using MEL each week, 28% (170/601) reported spending between one to two hours a week, 22% (132/601) two or more hours weekly and 34% (201/601)[9] one hour or less. There was substantial variability between institutions regarding the number of students who reported not using MEL. 43% of Institution 1 students reported not using MEL, in contrast to no students at Institution 2 and 13% at Institution 3.

Table B13: Student self-reported length of time using MEL weekly by institution, student survey

Institution	30 minutes	1 hour	1–2 hours	2–3 hours	3–4 hours	4 or more hours	I do not use MEL	Total
Institution 1	27 (16%)	25 (15%)	23 (14%)	10 (6%)	4 (2%)	8 (5%)	73 (43%)	170 (100%)
Institution 2	15 (6%)	42 (18%)	99 (42%)	43 (18%)	28 (12%)	11 (5%)	0 (0%)	238 (100%)
Institution 3	47 (24%)	45 (23%)	48 (25%)	19 (10%)	6 (3%)	3 (2%)	25 (13%)	193 (100%)
Total	89 (15%)	112 (19%)	170 (28%)	72 (12%)	38 (6%)	22 (4%)	98 (16%)	601 (100%)

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[9] This totals to 33% due to different categories merging and different rounding across institutions. We use 34% to achieve 100%, given that the 1% difference does not impact on the interpretation of the result.

Using MEL data, we found that, on average, Institution 2 students spent around 4.6 hours on MEL tasks over the duration of their two-month course. There is, however, some variation between levels, ranging from 3.1 hours for Level 3 (Split B) to 6.6 hours for Level 2 (Split B). Institution 3 students spent around seven hours on MEL tasks over the duration of their four-month course. There was variation between levels, ranging from 5.2 hours for Level 2 (Split B) to 11.1 hours for Fundamentals. Overall, with a few exceptions, it seems that it might be the case that the higher the level, the fewer hours students spend on tasks.

Table B14: Average time spent on assignments/practices per level, by institution, MEL data

Institution 2	
Average time spent across levels = 4.6 hours	
Fundamentals	4.8 hours
Level 1 (split A)	4.7 hours
Level 1 (Split B)	4.7 hours
Level 2 (Split A)	4.5 hours
Level 2 (Split B)	6.6 hours
Level 3 (Split A)	3.8 hours
Level 3 (Split B)	3.1 hours
Institution 3	
Average time spent across levels = 7 hours	
Fundamentals	11.1 hours
Level 1 (Split A)	5.8 hours
Level 1 (Split B)	6.9 hours
Level 2 (Split A)	5.2 hours
Level 2 (Split B)	5.2 hours

When separating students into quartiles, we observe substantial differences in the time spent on tasks in the institutions during their course.

Table B15: Institutions 2 and 3: Time on task by students per quartile, MEL data

Least time on task	Less time on task	More time on task	Most time on task
1st quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile	4th quartile
Institution 2			
2.6 hours or less	2.6–4.3 hours	4.3–6.4 hours	6.4 hours or more
Institution 3			
3 hours or less	3–5.8 hours	5.8–8.5 hours	8.5 hours or more

How often students and teachers check the gradebook

The gradebook feature is designed to help students self-assess, an important practice for improving one's learning that, for some learners, can also be motivating. The gradebook also allows teachers to track student progress and personalise learning, which can lead to better learner outcomes. Both the above are known in the literature and are also stated in the qualitative data by students and teachers.

Student use of the gradebook was variable. More than a third of students (35%, 210/585) reported that they did not check their progress in the MEL gradebook and 33% (193/585) that they checked their progress once or twice a week. Fewer students (13%, 75/585) reported checking their progress in the gradebook three times a week or more.

Figure B11: How often students check their progress in the MEL gradebook, student survey
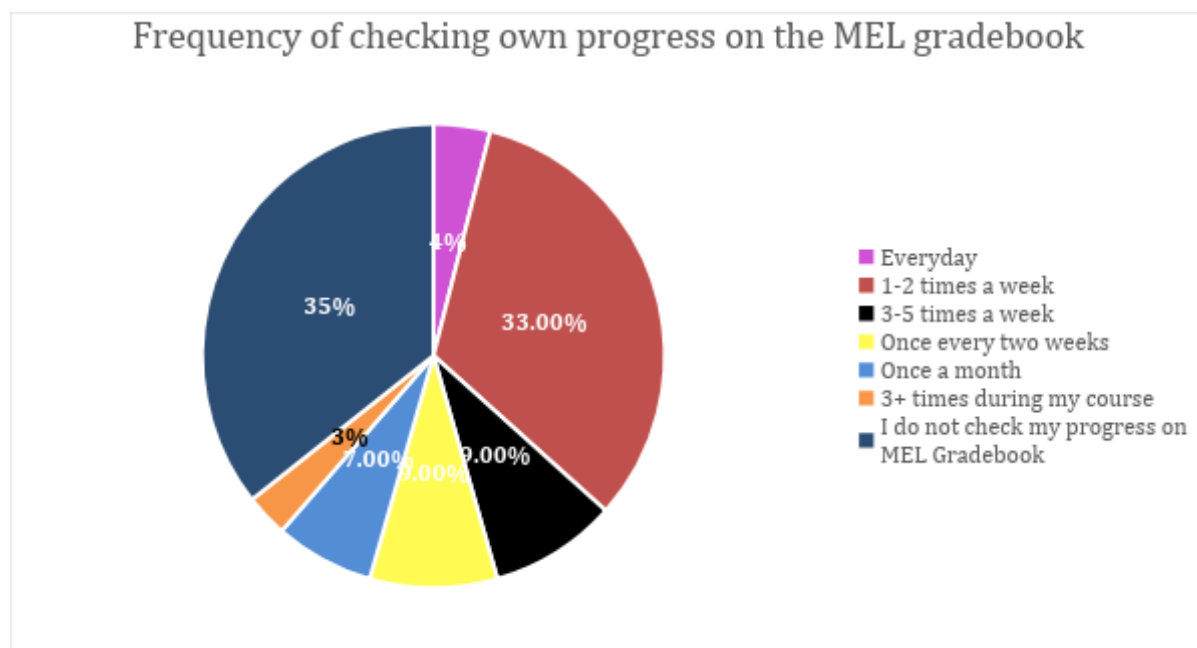
Frequency of checking own progress on the MEL gradebook

Legend:
- Everyday
- 1-2 times a week
- 3-5 times a week
- Once every two weeks
- Once a month
- 3+ times during my course
- I do not check my progress on MEL Gradebook

4%, 35%, 33.00%, 3%, 7.00%, 8.00%, 9.00%

There was substantial variability between institutions regarding the number of students who reported not checking their progress in MEL. 64% (107/167) of Institution 1 students and 44% (80/183) of Institution 3 said that they did not check their gradebook. However, only 10% (23/235) of Institution 2 students reported not using the gradebook.

Table B16: How often in a week students check progress using MEL's gradebook by institution, student survey

Institution	Every day	1–2 times a week	3–5 times a week	Once every two weeks	Once a month	3+ times during my course	I do not check my gradebook	Total
Institution 1	5 (3%)	22 (14%)	7 (4%)	9 (5%)	12 (7%)	5 (3%)	107 (64%)	167 (100%)
Institution 2	13 (6%)	120 (50%)	40 (17%)	25 (11%)	11 (5%)	3 (1%)	23 (10%)	235 (100%)
Institution 3	4 (2%)	51 (28%)	6 (3%)	17 (9%)	18 (10%)	7 (4%)	80 (44%)	183 (100%)
Total	22 (4%)	193 (33%)	53 (9%)	51 (8%)	41 (7%)	15 (3%)	210 (36%)	585 (100%)

79% (41/52) of teachers overall reported that they used the gradebook weekly, with the majority (34%, 18/52) suggesting they checked it three to five times a week. There was variation in the frequency of use between institutions, with all teachers from Institution 2, bar one, indicating using the gradebook weekly.

Table B17: Teacher weekly frequency of checking student progress using MEL's gradebook, teacher survey

	Every day	1–2 times a week	3–5 times a week	Once every two weeks	Once a month	3+ times during my course	I do not check the gradebook	Total
Overall								
Teacher survey respondents	10 (19%)	13 (25%)	18 (34%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	5 (10%)	52 (100%)
By institution								
Institution 1	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	5 (50%)	10 (100%)
Institution 2	9 (25%)	12 (33%)	14 (39%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	36 (100%)
Institution 3	0 (0%)	1 (17%)	2 (33%)	2 (33%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (100%)
Total	10 (19%)	13 (25%)	18 (34%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	5 (10%)	52 (100%)

Number of assignments/practices assigned

Assignments and practices varied substantially between institutions and levels. For example, assignments for Institution 2 ranged between 14 and 56 (per level) and for Institution 3 between 21 and 245 (per level). Practices available to students ranged between 121 and 529 for Institution 2 and between 121 and 529 for Institution 3. Teachers seem to assign students between three and five tests for Institution 2 and between five and nine tests for Institution 3.

At a class level in both institutions, the number of practices assigned does not vary, but it does vary for assignments. For Institution 2, there was substantial variation between assignments set. For example, for seven Fundamentals classes, the number of assignments ranged between 21 and 100. At Institution 3, for Fundamentals, the assignments set ranged between 0 and 450 for five different classes, while differences were not as wide for classes in other levels.

Table B18: Average number of assignments per course level and class at Institution 2, MEL data

	Average number of assignments	Number of classes	Number of assignments assigned in classes
Institution 2			
Fundamentals	43	7	21 to 100
Level 1, Split A	51	3	20, 45 and 76
Level 1, Split B	51	3	33, 43, 49 and 53
Level 2, Split A	42	2	30 and 92
Level 2, Split B	56	4	27, 32, 65 and 74
Level 3, Split A	24	4	5, 24, 27 and 38
Level 3, Split B	14	3	7,12 and 20
Institution 3			
Fundamentals	245	5	0, 6, 265, 400 and 450
Level 1, Split A	72	4	31, 64, 108 and 118
Level 1, Split B	110	3	75, 136 and 166
Level 2, Split A	90	4	6, 57, 135 and 150
Level 2, Split B	21	3	0, 15 and 42

Number of assignments/practices completed

Overall assignment completion rates ranged between 30% to 60% with only one exception. There was substantial variation in assignment completions between levels and institutions. The completion rate for Institution 2 ranged between 10% and 62% for different levels, whereas for Institution 3 it ranged between 31% and 46% for different levels.

Table B19: Assignments/practices and tests set and average number completed, MEL data

	Assignments		Practices		Tests	
	Assigned	**Completed**	**Assigned**	**Completed**	**Assigned**	**Completed**
Institution 2 (all courses last two months)						
Fundamentals	43	25 (58%)	529	15 (3%)	3	3 (100%)
Level 1 (split A)	51	23 (45%)	153	4 (3%)	5	3 (60%)
Level 1 (Split B)	42	24 (57%)	157	3 (2%)	3	3 (100%)
Level 2 (Split A)	56	24 (43%)	162	3 (2%)	3	3 (100%)
Level 2 (Split B)	44	26 (59%)	121	4 (3%)	4	3 (75%)
Level 3 (Split A)	24	11 (46%)	129	3 (2%)	3	3 (100%)
Level 3 (Split B)	14	14 (100%)	137	15 (11%)	3	3 (100%)
Institution 3 (all courses last four months)						
Fundamentals	245	76 (31%)	529	6 (1%)	9	8 (92%)
Level 1 Split A	72	33 (46%)	153	3 (2%)	5	5 (100%)
Level 1 Split B	110	40 (36%)	157	18 (11%)	7	4 (57%)
Level 2 Split A	90	35 (38%)	162	3 (2%)	5	4 (80%)
Level 2 Split B	21	10 (48%)	121	12 (10%)	7	6 (86%)

When separating students into quartiles, we observe substantial differences in assignment/practice completions within institutions.

Table B20: Student assignment completions by quartile, Institutions 2, and 3, MEL data

Least completions	Fewer completions	More completions	Most completions
1st quartile	2nd quartile	3rd quartile	4th quartile
Institution 2			
11 or fewer assignments	11–21 assignments	21–32 assignments	32 or more assignments
Institution 3			
3 or fewer assignments	3–29 assignments	29–58 assignments	58 or more assignments

Number of attempts on assignments/practices

On average, for the whole sample of students, irrespective of institution or level, the majority of assignments were attempted once (55%, 14,595/26,452). 27% (7,127/26,452) of the assignments were completed in two attempts, whilst 18% were (4,730/26,452) attempted more than twice.

Because of the significantly smaller number of practices completed, breaking the information down by level would lead to unreliable results. Therefore, the number of attempts is broken down by institution only. For the whole sample of students, irrespective of institute or level, the majority of practices were attempted once (48%, 2,794/5,765), and 32% (1,831/5,765) were completed in two attempts. 20%, (1,140/5,765) were attempted more than twice.

Table B21: Percentage of number of attempts on assignments per level by institution, MEL data

Level	Number of attempts				
	1	2	3	4	5+
Institution 2					
Fundamentals	1767 (52%)	1037 (30%)	391 (12%)	111 (3%)	(111) 3%
Level 1 (Split A)	708 (60%)	315 (26%)	124 (10%)	22 (2%)	20 (2%)
Level 1 (Split B)	666 (47%)	402 (28%)	285 (20%)	33 (2%)	39 (3%)
Level 2 (Split A)	626 (55%)	284 (25%)	202 (18%)	24 (2%)	6 (0%)
Level 2 (Split B)	787 (41%)	572 (30%)	416 (21%)	43 (2%)	108 (6%)
Level 3 (Split A)	212 (39%)	176 (33%)	83 (15%)	33 (6%)	39 (7%)
Level 3 (Split B)	246 (45%)	199 (37%)	92 (17%)	5 (1%)	1 (0%)
Institution 3					
Fundamentals	5137 (70%)	1634 (22%)	424 (6%)	60 (1%)	49 (1%)
Level 1 Split A	1811 (48%)	1050 (28%)	471 (13%)	183 (5%)	207 (6%)
Level 1 Split B	1320 (58%)	565 (25%)	212 (10%)	75 (3%)	88 (4%)
Level 2 Split A	1095 (44%)	684 (28%)	326 (13%)	167 (7%)	200 (8%)
Level 2 Split B	220 (43%)	209 (41%)	54 (11%)	20 (4%)	6 (1%)

Student Performance on MEL

Student progress on assignments is an indicator of student learning and achievement over time. Performance on MEL assignments is the only source of student performance data that we have from these institutions. In this section, we describe average student performance by institution and assignment type. We are also able to investigate the relationship between completion of assignments and performance (i.e. scores) on those assignments. Finally, we offer evidence that individual assignment scores are relatively reliable indicators of student learning that can be confidently used by instructors to monitor progress over time.

Overall student performance on MEL assignments/practices

Overall, students from the two institutions[10] performed highly on assignments/practices, as is shown by the average scores. Everything above 70% in this report is considered a pass.

- Institution 2: the average assignment score was 89%-90% for practices and 85% for tests. There is some variability between levels and substantial variability between classes within each level. For levels, average performance for assignments ranged between 83% and 93%, for practices between 82% and 95% and for tests between 80% and 94%. For classes, average performance on assignments and tests ranged between 77% and 99% and for practices between 40% and 100%.

- Institution 3: the average assignment score was 84%-85% for practices and 71% for tests. There is some variability between levels and substantial variability between classes within each level. For levels, average performance for assignments ranged between 76% and 88%, for practices between 79% and 89% and for tests between 69% and 74%. For classes, average performance on assignments ranges between 76% and 95%, for practices 63% and 100% and for tests 63% and 80%.

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[10] We were unable to access student MEL data from institution 1.

Table B22: Average practice/assignment score per level, MEL data

Average performance on tasks			
	Assignments	**Practices**	**Tests**
Institution 2			
Fundamentals	93%	95%	84%
Level 1 (split A)	92%	92%	80%
Level 1 (Split B)	88%	92%	83%
Level 2 (Split A)	83%	95%	86%
Level 2 (Split B)	86%	92%	87%
Level 3 (Split A)	86%	84%	82%
Level 3 (Split B)	93%	82%	94%
Institution 3			
Fundamentals	82%	89%	70%
Level 1 Split A	88%	79%	73%
Level 1 Split B	87%	88%	71%
Level 2 Split A	88%	82%	74%
Level 2 Split B	76%	85%	69%

Reporting student performance by score band is important in order to identify the number of learners who fail (score below 70%) or get the top grade (score above 90%).

- Institution 2: 61% of the students scored 90% or above and 8% below 70% in assignments. For practices, 72% of students received an average practice grade higher than 90% and 7% below 70%.

- Institution 3: 49% of the students scored 90% or above and 13% below 70% in assignments. For practices, just under half of students (48%) received an average score of 90% or more and 14% below 70%.

Table B23: Percentage of students achieving within different score bands in MEL assignments/practices, MEL data

Performance band	% of students			
	Assignments		Practices	
	Institution 2	Institution 3	Institution 2	Institution 3
Below 50%	2 (1%)	6 (2%)	1 (1%)	10 (6%)
50–59%	8 (2%)	16 (5%)	3 (2%)	4 (2%)
60–69%	22 (5%)	18 (6%)	7 (4%)	10 (6%)
70–79%	40 (9%)	35 (12%)	6 (3%)	27 (17%)
80–89%	93 (22%)	80 (26%)	31 (18%)	33 (21%)
90–100%	257 (61%)	149 (49%)	127 (72%)	77 (48%)
Total	422 (100%)	304 (100%)	175 (100%)	161 (100%)

Note: See Appendix C for distribution of scores if zeros were included in the analysis.

*Student progress on assignments/practices*

Progress from students' first to highest attempt is as follows:

- Institution 2: improvements on assignments ranged from 22 to 29 percentage points between levels. There was some, and in some cases substantial, variability between the average performance of classes on assignments. For example, the average class improvement on assignments ranged between 15 and 29 percentage points for Fundamentals (seven classes), between 19 and 31 percentage points for Level 1 (seven classes), between 24 and 34 percentage points for Level 2 (six classes) and between 21 and 42 percentage points for Level 3 (seven classes). Improvements on practices ranged from 26 to 37 percentage points between levels.[11]

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[11] There was also some variability (substantial in some cases) between the average performance of classes on practices. However, there is less practice data available at the class level, so we do not present an analysis of improvement by class.

- Institution 3: improvements on assignments ranged from 24 to 35 percentage points between levels. There was some, and in some cases substantial, variability between the average performance of classes on assignments. For example, the average class improvement on assignments ranged between 23 and 34 percentage points for Fundamentals (three classes), between 23 and 39 percentage points for Level 1 (seven classes) and between eight and 41 percentage points for Level 2 (six classes). Improvements on practices ranged from 34 to 48 percentage points between levels.[12] (See Appendix C for more details.)

Figure B12: Average student progress between first and highest attempts by level, MEL data
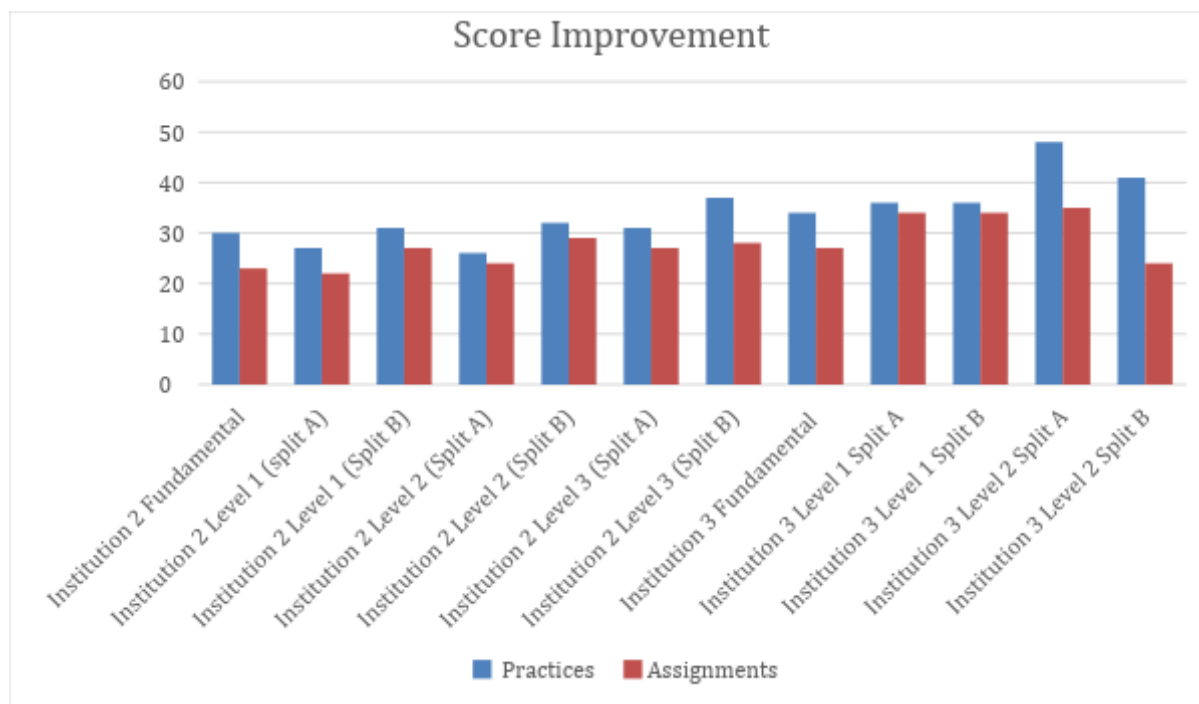
Correlation between average assignment/practice scores and the percentage of assignments/practices completed

Overall (there are some exceptions), data indicates that a higher number of assignments completed is associated with higher scores.[13] In 10 out of 12 cases (see Table 34), there is a statistically significant

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[12] As per footnote 14.

[13] No correlations were calculated for tests because of the small number of tests completed by students.

and positive correlation between the average assignment score and the percentage of assignments completed.

- Institution 2: Six out of seven correlations were statistically significant; the significant correlations ranged from 0.47 to 0.72 (Pearson correlations).

- Institution 3: Four out of five correlations were statistically significant; the significant correlations ranged from 0.26 to 0.65 (Pearson correlations).[14]

Although the statistics related to practices are relatively reliable by institution and by level, they are less reliable when it comes to drawing inferences for individual students due to the small number of practices completed per student, as opposed to the assignments data.

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[14] Both Pearson and Spearman correlations were computed to accommodate for the skewed distributions of the data. Removing a limited number of outliers does not change the values of the correlations significantly.

Table B24: Correlations between the percentage of assignments completed and average assignment score, MEL data

	Assignments		Practices	
	Pearson's r	Spearman's rho	Pearson's r	Spearman's rho
Institution 2				
Fundamentals	r=0.47, p<0.001	rho=0.42, p<0.001	r=-0.04, p=0.770	rho=0.16, p=0.196
Level 1 (split A)	r=0.54, p<0.001	rho=0.61, p<0.001	r=-0.13, p=0.542	rho=-0.03, p=0.878
Level 1 (Split B)	r=0.57, p<0.001	rho=0.58, p<0.001	r=0.63, p=0.003	rho=0.70, p<0.001
Level 2 (Split A)	r=-0.08, p=0.623	rho=-0.11, p=0.483	r=0.08, p=0.802	rho=0.18, p=0.566
Level 2 (Split B)	r=0.72, p<0.001	rho=0.63, p<0.001	r=-0.01, p=0.956	rho=0.23, p=0.200
Level 3 (Split A)	r=0.52, p<0.001	rho=0.56, p<0.001	r=-0.22, p=0.508	rho=-0.10, p=0.769
Level 3 (Split B)	r=0.69, p<0.001	rho=0.56, p<0.001	-	-
Institution 3				
Fundamentals	r=0.34, p=0.008	rho=0.34, p=0.008	r=-0.12, p=0.587	rho=0.01, p=0.998
Level 1 Split A	r=0.65, p<0.001	rho=0.57, p<0.001	r=0.10, p=0.460	rho=0.24, p=0.078
Level 1 Split B	r=0.16, p=0.248	rho=0.22, p=0.110	r=0.47, p=0.004	rho=0.40, p=0.016
Level 2 Split A	r=0.26, p=0.05	rho=0.16, p=0.221	r=0.17, p=0.403	rho=0.16, p=0.452
Level 2 Split B	r=0.40, p=0.02	rho=0.42, p=0.001	r=0.20, p=0.359	rho=0.14, p=0.500

Correlation between the average assignment score per unit

Assignments are relatively reliable indicators of student performance. So, the average performance of learners on assignments of one unit could be used as an indication of their future performance in another unit. For each student, the average assignment/practice score was computed for all exercises of each unit. These average practice/assignment scores for each student and for each unit were then correlated between them, in the same way one may correlate the items of a test. Results show:

- Institution 2: The correlations for assignments mainly range between 0.17 (1st quartile) and 0.55 (3rd quartile), with an average of 0.34 (21 out of 48 correlations, a percentage of 44%, were statistically significant at the 0.05 level). For some units, there were fewer assignments completed and, as a result, the sample size for estimating the correlation coefficient reported here is smaller. Around a quarter of the correlations are based on a sample size of fewer than 20 students, which may have affected the statistical significance of the correlations.

- Institution 3: The correlations for Institution 3 mainly range between 0.40 (1st quartile) and 0.62 (3rd quartile), with an average of 0.51 (94 out of 123 correlations, a percentage of 76%, were statistically significant at the 0.05 level).

Table B25: Correlations between the average scores per unit for assignments, MEL data

	Assignments	
	Institution 2	Institution 3
Average correlation	0.34	0.51
1st quartile	0.17	0.40
2nd quartile	0.30	0.50
3rd quartile	0.55	0.62

Student and teacher perceptions of Top Notch with MEL

This section provides evidence from student and teacher questionnaires, interviews and focus groups on the perceived impact of Top Notch with MEL that maps directly to the learner outcomes of Top Notch with MEL — namely access, engagement, positive learning behaviours, achievement, preparation for the next level in learning and achieving one's goal.

The section considers Top Notch as a whole package and each of its major components individually, outlining their perceived impact on students first and then on teachers, where relevant. Tables 36 to 41 set out student and teacher perceptions of the impact of the Top Notch package and of the Students' Book, ActiveTeach and MEL.

Before presenting Tables 36 to 41, we summarise some institutional factors noted in the data that have affected implementation. These factors related to infrastructure, training, curriculum design, and teaching and learning.

Infrastructure

- Lack of availability of equipment to play audio or project material, or internet connection in classrooms means that teachers and students cannot take full advantage of all the materials offered through Top Notch with MEL.

- Limited infrastructure (such as relevant equipment, internet access or ways to project material) at institutions inhibits teachers from fully implementing MEL, and prevents students from completing certain exercises. 34% (199/581) of students disagreed/strongly disagreed that it was easy to access MEL from their smartphone or tablet, and these difficulties were mainly related to connectivity.

Training

- Some teachers requested further training to increase their familiarity and use of MEL.

Curriculum design

- Teachers at Institution 3 found it difficult to complete the course content because of the limited contact time.

- Some teacher interviews suggested that having formally scheduled planning time designated for teachers to have conversations about Top Notch with MEL would be helpful.

- Use of ActiveTeach for course preparation and in the classroom varies by institution: Institution 1 had lower reported use than Institutions 2 and 3.

Teaching and learning

- Teachers suggested that students' tendency to rely on the direction of their teacher was a barrier to learning using MEL. One teacher explained that this may be a cultural issue, as students in Mexico were not used to independent learning.

Table B26: Top Notch with MEL — perceived impact on student outcomes, across data sources

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access and experiences	
• Students in the focus groups were positive about Top Notch and its components. They liked the content, which they thought was practical, interesting and digestible. They also liked its flexibility and the different ways of learning using different material, from videos to the book. Students also commented that the material was presented in a visually appealing format and structure. One teacher noted that students nowadays were more visual, and they preferred and paid attention to a screen over books. Lastly, an administrator noted the flexibility of Top Notch and MEL materials, where teachers could use as much as they wanted or as students needed. • Regarding ActiveTeach, teachers noted the usefulness of the audio and video scripts to help students improve their skills, clarify meaning and practice. They also noted the usefulness of flashcards and printable activities to reinforce student learning. Finally, they highlighted the usefulness of the games, which provided a fun way for students to learn new things. • MEL is reported to be similarly accessible and useful. Students were overall positive about the additional practice opportunities. • The Net Promoter Score (NPS)[15] is +8, as 34% gave a score of 9 or 10/10 (the 'promoters') and 26% gave a score of 6/10 or below ('detractors'). A further 40% are 'passives' (7 or 8/10).	• It would be beneficial to review the depth of the content included in the training provided by Pearson as well as the support materials for cascading training to other teachers and students. This review could aim to make users more uniformly aware of all various components of the Top Notch package, given that the evidence collected from students and teachers show different levels of familiarity.
Positive learning behaviours	
• The majority of students agreed/strongly agreed that since using Top Notch with MEL their confidence had increased in learning English (86%, 504/589); reading (89%, 525/590); listening (84%, 495/587); writing (85%, 502/588), and speaking (81%, 478/588). • The large majority of students also believed that Top Notch helped them significantly/very significantly to enjoy learning English (81%,	• Further consideration could be given to how Top Notch materials and training help teachers to encourage the development of positive learning behaviours in their students. The data shows 47% (24/51) of teachers thought that Top Notch with MEL had supported significantly/very significantly their goal for students to increase confidence in speaking; 47% (23/49) to enjoy

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[15] The Net Promoter Score is an index

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
466/578); improve their motivation to learn English (82%, 477/579), and engage with learning English (84%, 488/580). • Students reported that it helped significantly/very significantly to improve their confidence in learning English (83%, 478/578, and improve their confidence in speaking English (81%, 470/578). The majority of teachers indicated that the package significantly/very significantly supported their goal to increase student confidence in learning English (65%, 33/51); 65% in reading (33/51); listening (69%, 35/51), and writing (54%, 27/50). • The majority of teachers also indicated that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly supported them in engaging students with interesting content (59%, 29/49) and motivating students with meaningful activities (64%, 32/50). The video clips and games were noted as particularly motivating by all three institutions.	learning English, and 44% (22/50) to motivate them to learn English. • Further updates to the videos would be welcomed by some teachers and students, such as replacing videos featuring flip phones. • A teacher at Institution 3 suggested that further customised materials would help their students to better access content. These customised materials could be used instead of topics that students might not have direct experience of, such as foreign travel or business.
Achievement	
• The majority of students surveyed thought that Top Notch with MEL had significantly/very significantly helped them improve their English (73%, 425/582); improve their vocabulary skills (86%, 499/578); their grammar skills (87%, 503/581); their listening skills (85%, 492/577); their writing skills (86%, 495/578), and their speaking skills (81%, 466/578). • 67% (32/48) of teachers indicated that Top Notch with MEL had significantly/very significantly supported their goals for their students to master course materials.	• Data suggest teachers would appreciate further materials provided by Top Notch to support differentiation. They were currently using other non-Top Notch materials to accommodate the varied needs of their students.
Progression	
• 82% (462/566) of students agreed/strongly agreed that Top Notch with MEL prepared them well for the next level of English study, and 84% (482/573) that it significantly/very significantly did so. • 82% (471/572) of students also indicated that Top Notch with MEL prepared them well to achieve their goal, with 86% (493/576) indicating that it significantly/very significantly did so. • 55% (27/49) of teachers reported that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly supported their goal to help students make progress in English according to their aptitude.	• Providing more exam practice and TOEIC and TOEFL-like questions would benefit students, focus groups suggested. The teacher survey seems to agree – 43% (20/47) of teachers reported that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly supported their goals to prepare students pass high stakes external exams. • One of the recommendations suggested by teachers was further materials to support differentiation according to students' age and level. This need is also evident in the 51% (25/49) of teachers who reported that Top Notch with MEL helped little/not at all

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
	their goal for their students to make progress in English according to their age/level. • Some teachers at Institution 1 and Institution 3 suggested that more explanation or treatment of a particular topic (such as grammar explanations) could be included. Overall, it would be helpful for Top Notch to review its level of challenge, especially as regards grammar.

Table B27: Top Notch: perceived impact on teachers and the institution, teacher survey and interviews

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Teacher access and experience	
• Teachers in the interviews were overall positive about many aspects of Top Notch with MEL. For example, they appreciated the volume and the variety of materials, and the additional time for students to practise.	• A better understanding of teachers' experience would be helpful to increase the likelihood of recommending Top Notch to a friend, given that the NPS is -2, which is a mildly negative score.
Teacher positive learning behaviours	
• More than half (55%, 28/51) of teachers reported that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly increased their confidence in teaching English. 64% (30/47) of teachers suggested that it increased the confidence of teachers new to the profession.	
Teaching	
• Survey results suggest that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly helps teachers assess student performance effectively (65%, 33/51); saves on preparation time (63%, 32/51); fills classroom hours with work-related activities (60%, 30/50); supports lesson planning effectively (57%, 28/49), and helps differentiate teaching (55%, 27/49). • Several teachers noted that the suggestions for further activities, such as games, supported and diversified their teaching. • The majority of teachers saw some benefits to their department as a result of implementing Top Notch with MEL: 56% (27/48) suggest that Top Notch with MEL supports improvements in teaching English across the department, and 55% (26/47) indicate that it encourages consistency in teaching English across the department.	• Teacher training could further focus on providing a more holistic and deeper understanding of how implementing Top Notch with MEL could be achieved for better outcomes. This is supported by evidence that some teachers suggest that Top Notch with MEL has helped little/not at all: understand the pedagogy required (59%, 30/51); differentiate instruction (45%, 22/49); plan lessons effectively (43%, 21/49); fill classroom hours (40%, 20/50); save on preparation time (37%, 19/51); and effectively assess student performance (35%, 18/51). • Better understanding the pedagogy of Top Notch with MEL and how it can be implemented in different contexts and students can further encourage conversations about teaching and collaboration between colleagues, data suggests: 43% (20/47) of teachers indicated that Top Notch with MEL significantly/very significantly supported increases in conversations about teaching English and the same proportion that it encouraged further collaboration amongst teachers in the department.

Pearson

Table B28: Students' Book: perceived impact on students, surveys and interviews

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access and experiences/engagement	
• In the surveys, the great majority of students and teachers gave very positive responses about the content and accessibility of the Students' Book. The majority agree/strongly agree that the book is: up-to-date (96%, 591/615 of students); interesting (93%, 568/609 of students, 90%, 47/52 of teachers); relevant to students' culture despite not having originated in Mexico (87%, 527/609 of students; 86%, 44/51 of teachers); at the appropriate level of difficulty (93%, 568/609 of students; 81%, 42/52 of teachers); relevant to real life (87%, 527/609 of students; 88%, 45/51 of teachers); and easy to navigate (79%, 457/578 of students) • The Students' Book is perceived to be accessible, digestible and interesting by many teachers and engaging to them and students because of its relevance, variety of resources and applied nature. • 81% (444/548) and 65% (327/503) of students agreed/strongly agreed that the English.com website and Top Notch Go app were easy to access respectively.	• Students recommended that making the book more interactive and dynamic could further support engagement.
Achievement	
• The book's exercises are varied and develop all the English skills, according to several teachers. • Teachers attributed improvements in student speaking to the book's variety of speaking exercises (dialogue, discussion, role play) and activities where students have to plan and produce a topic for discussion themselves.	• Teachers and students suggested that more exercises in pronunciation, writing, vocabulary and grammar would be helpful. • Students at Institution 1 suggested that vocabulary specific to their area of study would be useful.

ActiveTeach

As the usage section demonstrates, ActiveTeach appears to be used in all three institutions to some degree. Table 39 presents additional findings on ActiveTeach across the different data sources, including the perceived impact of ActiveTeach on teachers.

Table B29: ActiveTeach: perceived impact on teachers, teacher survey and interviews

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access and experience/engagement	
- Around 90% (43/48) of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that ActiveTeach was easy to access, and 85% (39/46) that it was easy to download its content. 92% (45/49) of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that there was a good variety of support materials in ActiveTeach. - In interviews, teachers said that preparing materials in one location in ActiveTeach saved them time and reduced their workload.	Future research should revise the answer options and further investigate how respondents interpret them, given that the question related to ActiveTeach software was potentially invalid. Thus, we suggest discounting the finding that nearly 39% (18/46) of teachers agree/strongly agree that they don't use ActiveTeach because they have too many problems with the software.
Improving teaching	
66% (29/44) of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that they use ActiveTeach to prepare their lessons. - The majority of teachers who showed the Conversation Activator videos reported that these videos supported students' speaking skills (82%, 37/45). - The majority of teachers who use ActiveTeach in class indicated that being able to display audio, video, vocabulary, grammar activities, and so on had improved the quality of their lessons (87%, 39/45). Teachers find the following useful/very useful to their teaching: *Between 74% and 88% of those surveyed:* the audio and video transcripts (88%, 43/49); the flash cards on the player app (79%, 38/48); the unit tests (88%, 42/48) and mid-term and final review tests (74%, 31/42); Top Notch TV (81%, 39/48); the interactive games (77%, 36/47), and the interactive whiteboard tools (76%, 35/46); *Between 62% and 92% of those surveyed:* the teacher resources (92%, 44/48); the answer keys (88%, 43/49); the getting started guide (85%, 40/47); the printable extension activities (71%, 35/49); the methodology (70%, 33/47); the lesson planner (65%, 31/48), and the oral progress charts (62%, 29/47).	The currency and relevance of the Top Notch songs could be reviewed according to 66% (31/47) of teachers, who reported the Top Notch pop songs as little/not at all useful.

MyEnglishLab

Table B30: MEL: perceived impact on students, across data sources

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access and experience	
- Students agreed/strongly agreed that they could access MEL easily on their computer or laptop (81%, 476/588) and on their smartphone/tablet (66%, 382/581). They also suggested that it was easy to navigate (79%, 457/578) and to access assignments (77%, 445/578) in MEL. - Students like having access to MEL any time and on multiple devices. - Students were positive about the additional practice opportunities, particularly to hone pronunciation/speaking and listening skills and expand vocabulary. - Teachers noted the activities in MEL were useful, in particular the extra practice and the ability for teachers to monitor that practice and check students' progress. Teachers also noted the usefulness of the grammar coach. - Students strongly agree/agree that MEL is engaging (92%, 466/507); they enjoy learning by completing assignments in MEL (75%, 393/521), and there is a good variety of tests and exercises in MEL (89%, 510/572; 87%, 505/578). 71% of students rated their likelihood to recommend Top Notch as 7/10 or higher, with the overall mean score of 7.3. The NPS score is +15, as 44% gave a score of 9 or 10/10 (the 'promoters') and 29% gave a score of 6/10 or below ('detractors'). A further 27% are 'passives' (7 or 8/10).	- Further support with Initial registration could be given as it was problematic for students at Institution 3, who did not receive their access codes at the beginning of their course. - Teachers reported that they would prefer fewer repetitive exercises.
Positive learning behaviours	
- Students' independent skills are nurtured as they are required to take decisions about the when and what of their learning, interviews suggest. - Teachers appreciated the feedback students received through MEL and noted that this placed more responsibility on them to take control of their own learning. - MEL seems to promote self-monitoring and self-assessment, teachers suggested. Students also	

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
appreciated the opportunity to have more than one attempt on tasks and to correct their mistakes. In the survey, 88% (438/498) of students found it useful/very useful to see a summary of their grades and track their progress on MEL. In the focus groups, students were positive about the feedback provided by MEL and that they were quickly able to identify areas that they needed to improve.	
Achievement	
- MEL frees time to support the development of additional English skills, which might have been neglected otherwise, such as speaking. 85% (446/522) of students agree/strongly agree that MEL helps them to understand the content covered in class. - The majority of students in the questionnaire suggested that MEL supported all skills well and found the following useful/very useful: the grammar exercises (95%, 483/506); the writing and vocabulary exercises (94%, 476/506 and 476/504 respectively); the pronunciation coach videos (92%, 466/507); the vocabulary flashcards (90%, 226/252), and the concentration games or quizzes (82%, 207/253). - The majority viewed very positively the usefulness of specific teaching and learning strategies within MEL. The following were deemed useful/very useful to their learning: checking their answers on MEL immediately (91%, 460/503); accessing MEL any time/place they wanted (89%, 446/501); seeing a summary of their grades and progress (88%, 438/498); being able to easily see their assignment completion dates (86%, 434/503); communicating with their teacher online (72%, 353/489), and repeating activities until they get a correct answer (92%, 465/503).	- Student and teacher views on MEL's autoscoring system are relatively mixed. Focus groups suggested that reviewing the autoscoring system to avoid penalising students for punctuation errors or the incorrect use of a contracted or expanded form of auxiliary verbs, when the point of the exercise might have been to improve writing, would further support student engagement. Teachers, however, suggested that such mistakes might have been overlooked in the past but they now received some needed attention. To help students, teachers warned them about how the auto-scoring system worked in advance. They also found themselves placing more emphasis on teaching punctuation and capitalisation than before using MEL. - The benefits of using the email function in MEL could be further communicated in terms of supporting teaching and learning, given that only 48% (24/50) of teachers found this function useful. Consideration of the usefulness of MEL's email function in different contexts and for different purposes should also be given.

Table B31: MEL: perceived impact on teachers, teacher survey and interviews

Evidence of impact and enablers	Suggested improvements
Access and experience	
• The majority of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that it was easy to access MEL from their computer or laptop (94%, 49/52) and from their smartphone or tablet (78%, 40/51). The majority also suggested that it was easy to navigate the content in MEL (78%, 40/51) and to assign students tasks (89%, 40/45). The large majority (94%, 46/49) also reported that it was useful/very useful that they could access MEL whenever and wherever they wanted. • 75% of teachers rated their likelihood of recommending MEL on its own as 7/10 or above, with a mean score of 7.2. However, the NPS score is −3, as 22% chose options 9 or 10/10, but far more (53%) chose 7 or 8 out of 10 (the 'passives'), leaving 25% who are 'detractors' (6/10 or below).	
Teachers and teaching	
• Teachers found that they had more time for other activities with students, because of the efficiencies of MEL (such as marking homework and tests, students completing tests at home). • Many MEL features appear to support assessment according to teachers, including: • a good variety of exercises (86%, 43/50) and tests available (76%, 37/49) • the ability to track progress (96%, 49/51) • the auto-grading. 65% (32/49) of teachers surveyed suggested that the auto-grading significantly/very significantly supported their needs as a teacher. A teacher praised the grading for saving time and allowing them to work on other areas, such as planning • 52% of teachers (26/50) found it useful/very useful to communicate with students online • allowing students to repeat activities (69%, 35/51) • setting completion dates (90%, 44/49) • the unit (88%, 43/49) and mid- and end-of-course tests (67%, 29/43) • Overall, teachers were positive about the ability to track student progress. One explained that they liked the ability to check individual students' progress and mistakes or problem areas.	• Teachers suggested feedback provided in MEL could be more specific so that it further supported students' understanding of their mistakes.

![Pearson logo]

Appendix C: Additional data tables

Table C1: Percentage of students achieving within different score bands in practices and assignments by institution when 0% scores are included in the analysis

Performance band	% of students (zeros not removed from scores)			
	Practices		Assignments	
	Institution 3	Institution 2	Institution 3	Institution 2
Below 50%	15% (N = 24)	2% (N = 3)	51% (N = 181)	23% (N = 104)
50–9%	5% (N = 8)	2% (N = 4)	11% (N = 38)	8% (N = 35)
60–9%	12% (N = 20)	6% (N = 10)	11% (N = 38)	7% (N = 29)
70–9%	16% (N = 27)	7% (N = 12)	9% (N = 33)	11% (N = 49)
80–9%	20% (N = 33)	17% (N = 31)	9% (N = 30)	17% (N = 74)
90–100%	32% (N = 53)	66% (N = 116)	9% (N = 31)	34% (N = 154)
Total	N = 165	N = 176	N = 351	N = 445

Table C2: Average student progress on practices and assignments from first to highest attempt, by level, MEL data

	Progress on practices	Progress on assignments
Institution 2		
Fundamentals	29 (67 → 96)	24 (69 → 93)
Level 1 (split A)	27 (65 → 92)	22 (71 → 93)
Level 1 (Split B)	31 (59 → 90)	27 (61 → 88)
Level 2 (Split A)	26 (67 → 93)	24 (60 → 84)
Level 2 (Split B)	32 (60 → 92)	29 (58 → 87)
Level 3 (Split A)	32 (55 → 87)	28 (60 → 88)
Level 3 (Split B)	37 (52 → 89)	28 (64 → 92)
Institution 3		
Fundamental	34 (60 → 94)	28 (58 → 86)
Level 1 Split A	36 (48 → 84)	34 (59 → 93)
Level 1 Split B	36 (51 → 87)	34 (53 → 87)
Level 2 Split A	48 (45 → 93)	35 (53 → 88)
Level 2 Split B	41 (49 → 90)	24 (56 → 80)

Table C3: Core components and features used, and most and fewest components and features used, by institution

	Institution 1 (N=182)		Institution 2 (N=244)		Institution 3 (N=194)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Classroom audio programme on English.com/topnotch3e	92	51%	197	81%	39	20%
Extra practice activities on English.com/topnotch3e	23	13%	191	78%	30	15%
Top Notch Go app	22	12%	155	64%	22	11%
Top Notch MEL	77	42%	229	94%	187	96%
Top Notch Students' Book	151	83%	232	95%	194	100%
Top Notch workbook	32	18%	158	65%	47	24%