



Pearson

Speakout with MyEnglishLab

Efficacy Research Report

April 3 2018



Contents

- 03 Introduction
- 05 Findings in brief
- 07 Product design and development
- 10 Intended product implementation
- 11 Product research
- 20 Appendix
- 22 PwC assurance report

The corpus of research for this product includes research conducted by our in-house researchers in partnership with customers, and research conducted by third party researchers. All research included in this report meets the standards we have set out for our own efficacy research. These are informed by and aligned with guidance on educational research quality provided by organisations, such as the American Educational Research Association and the What Works Clearinghouse.

Efficacy statements in this report are subject to independent assurance by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC). The PwC assurance report is on page 22 and further details can be found in the [Pearson Efficacy Reporting Framework April 3 2018](#).

Introduction

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 them. Our aspiration is to put learners at the heart of the Pearson strategy; our goal, to help more learners, learn more. Part of our commitment was to publish research regarding the impact of the use of our products on outcomes, and to have the outcomes subject to independent audit. We call this efficacy reporting. There is no rulebook for how to do this, no model to follow. We've had to learn fast during this journey, we've sought guidance from others including external expertise, and we are now some, but not yet all of the way there.

The road taken and the milestone reached

In a first for the education sector, we have published audited efficacy reports on some of our most widely used products. Together, these products represent 18 million learners. This Research Report includes independently audited efficacy statements that have been prepared using the [Pearson Efficacy Reporting Framework dated April 3 2018](#) — which we have used consistently for the Pearson products we are reporting on.

We have sought to use the efficacy reporting process to amplify existing non-Pearson peer reviewed research about our products. We've also sought to foster innovation in efficacy research by conducting new research and placing value on a range of research methods — including implementation studies, correlational and causal designs — ensuring data is collected, analysed and presented to agreed standards at the appropriate stages in each product's lifecycle. The research conducted for this report, and the efficacy statements produced as a result, are designed based on international best practices such as those set out by the American Education Research Association and the What Works Clearinghouse. We have synthesised these into a set of standards we hold ourselves accountable for in our research and reporting. These are set out in the [Pearson Efficacy Reporting Framework dated April 3 2018](#).

Furthermore, we adhere to the same peer-review processes as other high quality research in the education sector. Our work was independently reviewed and validated by SRI International, a well-known non-profit research center, and shared for discussion at research conferences organised by, among others, the American Education Research Association.

Our body of research contains evidence of statistically significant relationships between the use of our products and learner outcomes like student achievement. We want to be clear, though, that efficacy is not a quality a digital product can possess in and of itself. We recognise that implementation — the way a product is integrated into teaching and learning — also has a significant impact on the outcomes that can be achieved. Our reports do not yet capture the full range of intended product outcomes, nor the variety of different ways of implementing our products. What we do know is that the more we can engage with our customers about best practices that can support the integration of learning technologies into their teaching, the more likely they will be to achieve their desired outcomes.

We have commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP ('PwC') to audit the efficacy statements set out in our Research Reports. This is to demonstrate that the statements accurately reflect the research that has been carried out. PwC's audit report can be found at the end of this document.

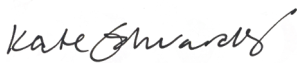
The journey ahead

Delivering on our reporting commitment has never been our ultimate goal; what matters most to us is helping more learners, learn more. Our aspiration is to explore what works, for whom, and why; and to encourage discussion about questions such as: What outcomes matter most to students? What should teaching and learning look like? What evidence should we apply to its design? And how should we evaluate impact?

We are excited to continue partnering with educators and others in the field in order to better understand how interactions between educators, students and learning technology can enhance outcomes. We have also been energised to see others in the education sector begin to focus on efficacy and research — though we recognise that their application in education is still nascent. In order to accelerate the emergence of its full potential we are already developing new ways of partnering with educators, researchers and institutions so we can advance this work together. In doing so, we will continue to advocate for the need to apply rigorous evidence to improve the outcomes of teaching and learning, while also seeking to ensure that evidence captures customers' experiences and is relevant and useful to educators in their practice.

Special thanks

We want to thank all the educators, students, research institutions and organisations we have collaborated with to date. We are spurred on by the growing number of opportunities for us to learn from others in the sector who are beginning to tackle the same challenges. If you are interested in partnering with us on future efficacy research, have feedback or suggestions for how we can improve, or want to discuss your approach to using or researching our products, we would love to hear from you at efficacy@pearson.com. If we, as a sector, tackle this together, we will help more learners learn more.



Kate Edwards

Senior Vice President,
Efficacy and Research, Pearson
April 3 2018

Findings in brief

Following the integration of an online homework tool — MyEnglishLab (MEL) — into our English courseware products, Pearson sought to explore how one of these products, Speakout, was being implemented with MyEnglishLab and perceptions about the impact it was having on learning. Speakout is a comprehensive eight-level General British English course featuring authentic video, audio and texts from the BBC archive.

This Research Report presents findings from two research studies we completed between 2016 and 2017 that focused on the implementation of Speakout with MEL. One study was conducted with an institution in Turkey, selected for its arguably unique deployment of Speakout with MEL in a flipped learning model. The other was conducted with three institutions in Poland, purposefully selected based on whether they were using the full package and latest version of Speakout with MEL.

We chose an implementation study design in each case to understand the range of students' and teachers' experiences using Speakout with MEL and to evaluate their perceptions about the impact of using the product on access and experience, achievement and progression outcomes. The use of digital products is not yet mature in the markets where Speakout with MEL is used, so the data needed for more rigorous research study designs is not yet available.

The findings included in this report are only a sample of the overall findings. The studies collected and analysed a broad range of evidence, including teacher surveys and interviews, student surveys and MEL performance data. The efficacy statements generated from these studies are based exclusively on student survey data, in accordance with the [Pearson Efficacy Reporting Framework dated April 3 2018](#). The full details of all the findings are in our Technical Reports.

The findings appear alongside details of the research studies, including descriptions of the samples studied, methods of analysis, results, limitations and generalisability, and notes on possible future research.

The report also summarises the context surrounding the findings, including the research that informed the design and development of the product, the history of the product in the market, how educators use the product, and its intended outcomes.

The findings are inseparable from their surrounding context and the design of the study that produced them. To learn more about these elements, follow the links to our Technical Reports in the **Research studies** section.

In the context of these two studies, conducted with institutions in Turkey and Poland, Pearson found the following (with illustrative examples of specific results):

Learner access and experience

Student survey data suggests that MyEnglishLab (MEL) is accessible and easy to use.

Between 92% (143 / 156) to 95% (147 / 155) of students surveyed in Turkey agree that they were able to access their account, course, and assignments easily, as well as access MEL easily through their smartphone/tablet.

Positive learning behaviors

Students report that Speakout with MEL helps them to increase their confidence, motivation, and enjoyment of learning English.

74% (142 / 192) of students surveyed in Poland report that Speakout with MEL significantly helps them increase their confidence in learning English. Between 75% (143 / 191) and 76% (145 / 192) of students find that Speakout with MEL helps their confidence in reading and listening significantly increase, respectively.

Timeliness of completion (engagement)

Students find Speakout with MEL engaging.

72% (111 / 154) of students in Turkey enjoy completing their assignments in MyEnglishLab.

Standard of achievement or level of competence

The majority of students believe that MyEnglishLab is useful and helps their learning.

84% (130 / 154) of students in Turkey believe that MEL helps them review materials used in class.

Learner progression

The majority of students report that Speakout with MEL supports their achievement and progression.

84% of students in Poland find that Speakout with MEL helps them prepare for their next level of their English studies.

The complete statements are set out in the box titled "Efficacy statements" on page 13 and 16. These statements have been subject to assurance by PwC, whose report can be found at the end of this Research Report.

Product design and development

Product overview

Speakout 2nd edition is a comprehensive eight-level General British English course featuring authentic video, audio and texts from the BBC archive. It trains students to deal with English as it is spoken in the real world and follows a balanced approach to topics, language development and skills work. Speakout covers grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and skills with a strong focus on spoken and written communication. As well as speaking activities, Speakout also aims to develop the core skills of reading, writing and listening systematically throughout. Speakout is designed to be used in conjunction with online course content, such as that included in MyEnglishLab — a platform offering an array of exercises to consolidate learning.

Speakout with MEL is also designed to enhance and improve the following outcomes:

- Student engagement and learning experiences
- Student confidence — e.g., in speaking and understanding English in the context of everyday life
- Student achievement — e.g., in homework assignments and end of course examination results

The full list of the outcomes this product is intended to support, accompanied by a brief description, can be found in the appendix to this report.

Speakout with MEL also offers resources to support teachers, such as the Teacher's Book. ActiveTeach — a front-of-class tool for lesson preparation and classroom management — allows teachers to engage students as a group, with point-of-use audio, video, and interactive activities.

Foundational research underpinning the design

The materials and exercises in Speakout with MEL align with various principles established by research on learning and cognition, including research specifically investigating adult learning of foreign languages. This section provides an overview of a number of learning principles to which Speakout with MEL aligns. Note that this section includes consideration of materials and exercises in MEL.

Vocabulary: repetition, context, and imagery

Vocabulary acquisition is a major part of learning a foreign language. Research has demonstrated numerous ways to support foreign language vocabulary learning, including repetition, the use of meaningful context, and visual imagery.

Repeatedly retrieving information from memory is an effective way to strengthen memory for that information (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006). This general principle of memory applies to foreign vocabulary learning, with repeated retrieval of foreign vocabulary, improving the ability to recall that vocabulary later (Karpicke & Roediger, 2008). More generally, research shows that frequently encountering vocabulary in reading, writing, speaking, and listening is central to foreign vocabulary acquisition (Hulstijn, 2001). Speakout with MEL repeatedly presents key vocabulary in a variety of vocabulary exercises, as well as in numerous reading and listening comprehension activities. The Students' Book, for example, includes 10 or 12 Units with 90 to 120 hours of learning material. This is available in both print and digital form.

While repeated exposure to vocabulary in "de-contextualized" formats (e.g., dictionary format) supports learning, vocabulary acquisition is enhanced by encountering vocabulary in the context of meaningful sentences and passages (Nagy, 1995). This helps students understand how word meanings vary in subtle ways according to the context of use, resulting in a deeper representation of meaning. Speakout with MEL presents key vocabulary in meaningful contexts through various reading and listening comprehension activities. Vocabulary exercises also present key words in sentence or passage contexts, or require students to fill in missing words in those contexts.

Finally, research suggests that vocabulary learning is enhanced through visual imagery, in which students imagine or are presented with pictorial representations of word meanings (Chun, 2011; Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). In alignment with this principle, some Speakout with MEL exercises require students to associate key words or phrases with pictures. Speakout with MEL also comes with a vocabulary photo bank that further supports vocabulary acquisition.

Implicit and explicit grammar instruction

Much of language learning happens implicitly (i.e., without explicit instruction) as students read text or listen to speech. Some researchers suggest that foreign grammar can be acquired entirely implicitly through reading and listening (e.g., Krashen, 1993). Still, there is reason to believe that explicit grammar instruction is helpful, particularly for adult language students. Adults can comprehend abstract grammatical rules that young children cannot, allowing adults to ease initial acquisition of foreign grammar through explicit instruction, while still relying on implicit learning to reach higher levels of grammatical proficiency (Birdsong, 2005). Ultimately, ideal grammar instruction for adult students combines a mix of implicit and explicit instructional practices (Ur, 2011). Speakout with MEL includes explicit grammar instruction through both direct explanations of grammatical rules and associated grammar exercises, and it includes opportunities for implicit grammar learning through reading and listening comprehension activities that present a range of grammatical constructions. MyEnglishLab is a student learning management system holding an array of such exercises. Similarly, Speakout with MEL Extra is an online resource that allows students to download grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and skills practice worksheets.

Speech perception and multiple speakers

Speech perception abilities may be improved when students are exposed to speech that varies in acoustic properties, such as the same speech produced by several different speakers (Bradlow et al., 1999; Hardison, 2003). There is some evidence suggesting these benefits might extend to pronunciation ability, as well (Bradlow et al., 1999). Speakout with MEL's spoken materials are recorded with a variety of different speakers, thereby providing students with acoustic variability that may enhance speech perception abilities.

Conversation

Engaging in conversation is an important component of foreign language learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills. Conversation between two students can be particularly effective for learning when it requires students to discuss topics beyond their current comfort levels (Nation, 2011). Speakout with MEL provides materials to support such conversations in the form of numerous speaking exercises that require students to engage in conversation around pre-selected topics. The topics are relevant to the content of the current unit, often with encouragement to utilize new vocabulary or grammatical constructions they have just learned. Other speaking exercises require students to produce a brief monologue on a specified topic.

Feedback

Learning is enhanced when students are provided with regular feedback on their performance. Research has shown that feedback that explains or otherwise elaborates on the correctness of a response is more effective than feedback that indicates only whether the response was correct or incorrect (Van der Kleij et al., 2015). In MEL, many exercises provide students with meaningful feedback on their mistakes; for example, a learner who makes an error in a reading comprehension exercise might be told which part of the passage to pay attention to in order to determine the answer. Some feedback on MyEnglishLab grammar exercises constitutes *corrective feedback*, which targets the correction of grammatical errors. While the efficacy of corrective feedback has been debated in foreign language learning research, there is evidence that it can enhance grammatical skills under certain circumstances (e.g., Bitchener, 2008). Note that while MyEnglishLab provides corrective feedback in some grammar exercises (e.g., a verb conjugation exercise), it does not do so in writing exercises in which students freely write one or more sentences in response to a prompt.

Authenticity

There is often a gap between *authentic* language — that is, language produced in the context of real-world communication — and the examples used in traditional foreign language teaching materials, with those examples often failing to accurately represent the language that students are likely to encounter in naturalistic communication (Gilmore, 2007). In the context of learning English as a foreign language, there is evidence that the use of authentic materials can increase learner motivation and time-on-task (Peacock, 1997) as well as enhance development of communicative competencies (Gilmore, 2011). Speakout with MEL includes authentic text and video materials from the BBC archives, as well as videos of interviews conducted with everyday people on the streets of the UK.

History and reach of Speakout with MEL

Speakout with MEL is currently in its 2nd edition (2014), and exists alongside the 1st edition (2010), which is still in use in some countries. Both editions are available at Starter, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, and Advanced Levels.

Speakout with MEL serves:

- Teachers looking for a general adult/young adult English course with interesting, motivating and varied materials
- Students in private language schools (PLS), universities and other tertiary institutions
- Students who want to focus on English as it is really spoken

The age of students and reasons for study also vary. Students include:

- 16–45 year olds in private language schools, who are hoping to enhance job prospects by improving English language skills
- 18–25 year old students in private language schools
- 18–25 year old students in tertiary learning institutions, where students are learning English alongside or in preparation for other studies
- 25+ year olds in work, who are looking to improve English and careers without doing a specific business English course

Market sectors include private language schools, university and other tertiary institutions. Speakout with MEL is used by approximately 2 million students in over 77 countries (Europe, Latin America, Asia, Middle East). It is primarily used in private language schools and the tertiary education sector. We can therefore assume that users are supporting their own ongoing education, or are receiving support from their families.

Intended product implementation

We aim to keep Speakout with MEL flexible enough to allow our customers to make their own choices on how they want to implement it, and to allow them to tweak their practice over time to improve the experience and outcomes.

Currently, most teachers focus on the Speakout with MEL Students' Book (or the Student Book on ActiveTeach), which they present face-to-face in the classroom. Teachers don't generally engage fully with home or self-study work completed by their students out of the class. Teachers who do assign homework, usually refer to the print workbook. Teachers also often leave the students to self-correct, instead of grading assignments. Some teachers, who have adopted MyEnglishLab (not the printed Work Book), do assign home study tasks via the platform, but this is not standard practice. While we are aware of teachers' preferred methods of implementation, studies are needed to identify whether particular implementation models are associated with achieving greater learner outcomes.

We conducted two such studies between 2016 and 2017. The research we conducted in Turkey focused on the deployment of Speakout with MEL to teach English using a Flipped Classroom¹. In order to better understand how Speakout with MEL is implemented in a blended learning² setting, we also conducted research with three institutions in Poland. You can find more details of both our research studies in the **Product research** section, below.

¹ A Flipped Classroom is a type of blended learning that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional content, often online, outside of the classroom. It moves activities, including those that may have traditionally been considered homework, into the classroom.

² Blended learning is an education program that combines online digital media with traditional classroom methods. It requires the physical presence of both teacher and student, with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace.

Product research

The purpose of the research was to explore implementation of Speakout with MEL, understand student and teacher experiences using the product and the perceived impact of Speakout with MEL on access and experience, achievement and progression outcomes. Speakout with MEL incorporates the learning science principles detailed in **Product design and development** in order to promote intended outcomes related to student achievement and, in the case of authentic materials, student engagement. We hypothesized that, if Speakout with MEL supports student achievement in learning English, then students should report feeling that Speakout with MEL has helped them improve their English language skills (though see comment on the limitations of self-report measures in **Limitations and generalizability** below). If students perceive Speakout with MEL as supporting their learning of English skills, they may also report increased confidence in those skills. In addition, Speakout with MEL's use of authentic materials leads to the hypothesis that students will report increased motivation from learning with Speakout with MEL. Finally, Speakout with MEL is designed to be accessible, leading to the hypothesis that students will report finding Speakout with MEL easy to access.

For this first step of our efficacy journey, we conducted research that aims to understand the implementation of Speakout with MEL. Pearson aims to keep Speakout with MEL flexible so that teachers are able to make their own choices on how to implement it. The flexibility in implementation, coupled with the use of Speakout with MEL being less widespread across countries and institutions, made it imperative, as a first step, to explore institutions' approach to implementing Speakout with MEL, and teachers' and students' experiences and perceived impact when using the materials.

Findings presented in this report

These findings are only a sample of the overall findings included in the research studies. The studies collected and analysed a broad range of evidence types, including teacher surveys and interviews, student surveys, MEL performance data — and in Poland, student focus groups and classroom observations. The full results from analysing and triangulating findings across discrete evidence sources are summarized in the Technical Reports. However, the efficacy statements generated from these studies are based exclusively on student survey data. This is because our current Reporting Framework for auditing efficacy statements favors data sources that can be easily quantified to formulate statements. It does not easily accommodate qualitative results or insights generated by triangulating findings across mixed data sources that encompass both qualitative and quantitative evidence. In the next version of our Reporting Framework for auditing efficacy statements, we will expand the definition of descriptive statements to encompass statements based on both qualitative and quantitative evidence sources.

Existing research

In 2018, Pearson researchers completed a systematic search and review of research articles published since 2012 that assessed the impact of Speakout with MEL on learner outcomes. Our criteria for the review and inclusion of existing published research on our products were designed based on US Department for Education What Works Clearinghouse guidance.

Based on these guidelines, in order for research to be included in this Efficacy Report on Speakout with MEL it needed to meet a number of criteria, including that the study was published in the past five years, examined at least one intended learner outcome category, and reported results in enough detail that the research could be properly evaluated. For more information on this see the [Pearson Efficacy Reporting Framework dated April 3 2018](#).

In our initial screening, we discovered no studies that were completed in the last five years that explored the impact of Speakout with MEL on learner outcomes. For the initial screening list see the [Pearson Efficacy Reporting Framework dated April 3 2018](#).

Research studies

There are two new studies, conducted by Pearson, that form the basis of the Efficacy Report for Speakout with MEL. The research questions and findings are set out in detail below, including the efficacy statements generated by those studies.

Study 1

Study citation	Ahtaridou, E., (2018) Implementation of Speakout with MyEnglishLab (MEL) and perceptions of impact: The case of MEF University in Turkey, Pearson Education, Efficacy & Research, English
Research study contributors	Elpida Ahtaridou with the support of Bahar Varicioglu, Professor Iasonas Lamprianou, Katya Saville and Anne Pier Salverda.
Research questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How are the Speakout content and the MEL features embedded into the curriculum and teaching of Elementary, Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate Levels of Module 2?2. How is the course design (course objectives, learning outcomes, lessons) informed or supported by the features of MEL?3. How do students and teachers use Speakout with MEL?4. What are teachers' and students' experiences when using Speakout with MEL?5. What are teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the impact of MEL on students, teachers and the institution?
Related intended outcomes categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Learner access and experience (access)— Timeliness and completion (engagement)— Standard of achievement or level of competence (achievement)— Learner Progression (progression)
Study design	<p>Implementation study</p> <p>This study aimed to support our understanding of how Flipped Learning is implemented when using Speakout with MEL. The study took place at MEF university in Turkey, where Speakout with MEL was employed as part of MEF's English Language Preparatory Programme (ELPP)</p>
Evidence sources	<p>A mixed-method approach was employed, focusing on ELPP Module 2's Elementary, Pre-Intermediate and Intermediate levels. The methods used included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">— <i>A pre-questionnaire and collection of relevant course documents and other evidence collected by ELPP</i> — to gather information on the structure of Module 2 and its assessment model. Part of the evidence was results from ELPP's own satisfaction survey and questions related to MEL— <i>Staff interviews</i> — to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation practices used, discuss teacher usage and experiences with MEL and its perceived impact. Interviews were semi-structured in nature and lasted 45 minutes to one hour— <i>A student online survey</i> — to explore student usage of MEL, student experiences of using it, and their perceptions of impact. The survey was administered in Turkish and was then translated into English. All close-ended survey questions used a four-point Likert scale that included a number of sub-questions— <i>Student MyEnglishLab data analysis</i> — to gauge student usage, their performance on assignments and the validity of MyEnglishLab data for formative purposes— <i>Students' end of course test scores and final course scores</i> — to understand the overall performance of learners within a particular implementation model. Data used for these analyses was at a class level. Due to time constraints in obtaining permissions, individual student level data was not available.

Description of sample

MEF is a private foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey. It has been in operation since 2014. MEF has 43 years' experience in educating primary, secondary and high school students. Students at MEF have the opportunity to study education, law, economics, administrative and social sciences, engineering, art, design and architecture.

MEF's English Language Preparatory Programme (ELPP) runs a series of English courses. These courses are designed to support students to gain the appropriate level of competency in English, in order to complete their studies. The ELPP employs Speakout during Module 2. This study examined teaching and learning practices for Module 2.

The university was purposefully selected due to its, arguably, unique deployment of Speakout with MEL; it uses Speakout with MEL components and associated materials to teach English using Flipped Learning.

The efficacy statements (below) derive from the student online survey data only. The survey was administered to 457 students, 164 of which completed it (a response rate of 36%).

Sample size

- Student questionnaire: 164 student responses
 - Teacher interviews: 12 teachers
 - Student MyEnglishLab data: data from 452 students was analyzed
-

Analysis

Survey questions were analyzed by computing frequencies for various response categories. For open-ended data sources (interviews), all responses were audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Analysis of this open-ended data relied on coding discrete responses into themes by collaborative construction and refinement both of deductively and inductively-derived sets of categories. MEL data used statistical means and correlations. Analysis triangulated all the evidence collected from the different research instruments used.

Results

See **Efficacy statements** section below.

Efficacy statements

In the context of this study conducted at MEF university in Turkey, where Speakout with MEL was employed as part of MEF's English Language Preparatory Programme (ELPP), Pearson is able to make the following descriptive statements about the efficacy of Speakout with MEL:

Access — Student survey data suggests that MEL is accessible and easy to use.

- Between 92% (143/156) to 95% (147/155) of students in the survey agree that they were able to access their account, course and assignments easily, as well as access MEL easily through their smartphone/tablet.

Engagement — The majority of students report that MEL is engaging and that completing assignments is enjoyable.

- 68% (104/152) of students agree that MEL is engaging.
- 72% (111/154) of students enjoy completing their assignments in MEL.

Achievement — The majority of students believe that MEL is useful and helps their learning.

- 84% (130/154) of students report that MEL helps them review materials used in class.
 - 66% (100/151) of students report that MEL feedback on assignments helps them improve their English.
-

Read about this research in more detail in our [Technical Report](#)

Study 2

Study citation	Ahtaridou, E., Lamprianou, J. and Saville, K. (2018) <i>Implementation of Speakout with MyEnglishLab and perceptions of impact: Examining three Universities in Poland</i> , Pearson Education, Efficacy & Research, English
Research study contributors	Elpida Ahtaridou, Professor Iasonas Lamprianou and Katya Saville
Research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— What are students' attitudes towards Speakout with MEL when compared to other instructional experiences?— What are teachers' attitudes towards Speakout with MEL and of its use?— How are courses implemented when using Speakout 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 Speakout with MEL on students, teachers and institutions?
Related intended outcomes categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">— Learner access and experience (access)— Timeliness and completion (engagement)— Standard of achievement or level of competence (achievement)— Learner progression (progression)
Study design	Implementation study A case study design was used.
Evidence sources	Data collection instruments included: <ul style="list-style-type: none">— <i>A pre-questionnaire</i> — the pre-questionnaire was filled in by the language departments' coordinators and was used to gather information on the structure of the courses and the related assessment models.— <i>Staff interviews</i> — to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation practices used, discuss teacher usage and experiences with Speakout with MEL and its perceived impact. Interviews were semi-structured in nature and lasted 45 minutes to one hour.— <i>A student online survey</i> — to explore student usage of Speakout with MEL and student experiences of using it, as well as their perceptions of impact. All close-ended survey questions used a four-point Likert scale that included a number of sub-questions. The survey was administered in Polish and was then translated into English.— <i>Student focus groups</i> — to gain a deeper understanding of student usage and experiences with Speakout with MEL and its perceived impact. Interviews were semi-structured and lasted 30 minutes. A translator supported the focus groups where appropriate.— <i>Classroom observations</i> — a structured classroom observation schedule was used to understand how Speakout with MEL materials were implemented in practice.— <i>Student MyEnglishLab data analysis</i> — to gauge student usage, their performance on assignments and the validity of MyEnglishLab data for formative purposes.

Description of sample

The study examined three institutions³:

- Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego, JÓZEFA PIŁSUDSKIEGO W WARSZAWIE FILIA W BIAŁEJ PODLASKIEJ (AWF) — a state university specialising in physical education, as well as tourism and leisure. It offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. The majority of students are young adults. About 180 of its students who undertake English classes were taking Speakout with MEL courses in the academic year 2016–2017. A total of four teachers teach at the university's English language department, two of which use Speakout with MEL.
- Wyższa Szkoła in Warsaw (WS) — WS's teachers are supplied by Lingua Nova. Both institutions are located in Warsaw. Lingua Nova is a school of foreign languages with clients all over Poland, who teach as Lingua Nova in many Polish institutions. Lingua Nova does not supply teachers; rather, teachers work on their contracts using the Lingua Nova curriculum and materials. About 700 of WS's students are taught using Speakout with MEL, mainly at Pre-intermediate level and sometimes at Intermediate level. Most of the students are in their 20s or 30s, attend extramural classes, and study towards a bachelor's or master's degree in their chosen discipline.
- Wyższa Szkoła Logistyki — a private university in Poznan, offering both bachelor's and master's degrees. Bachelor's degree students who undertake English classes are a mixture of daytime students (of around 20 years of age) and extramural students (normally in their 20s to 40s), who work full-time during the week and study during weekends. Approximately a total of 60 students used Speakout with MEL at the time of the research. There was a total of six teachers, two of whom teach with Speakout with MEL. All teachers in the department, however, use MEL alongside other Pearson products.

Purposeful sampling was used to select a maximum of three institutions to include in the study. Sampling was at an institutional level, using a number of criteria for selection. The three priorities were that:

- Institutions would be using the latest Speakout with MEL edition (2nd Edition)
- Institutions used the 'full Speakout package, i.e., the Students' book, the Teacher's Book, MEL and ActiveTeach
- At least two institutions would be using the full package for more than one year

Information collected was recorded in an Excel spreadsheet for each institution and for each of the criteria. Approximately 20 institutions were using the latest version of Speakout with MEL. Of these 20, the majority were using only the print components and not MEL, or had been using MEL for less than a year. No institution was found to use ActiveTeach.

The findings below derive from the student survey only and a total of 201 students from AWF and Wyższa Szkoła Logistyki.

Sample size

- Coordinators' pre-questionnaire: 3
 - Student questionnaire: 201 student responses
 - Students in focus groups: 29 students
 - Teacher interviews: 11 teachers
 - Classroom observations: 4
 - Student MyEnglishLab data: data for 750 students was collected. Between 112 and 733 students' data was included in the different types of analysis conducted
-

³ Please note that a pseudonym is used to present one of the universities (WS) as per its request.

Analysis Survey questions were analysed by computing frequencies for various response categories. For open-ended data sources (staff interviews and student focus groups), all responses were audio-recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Analysis of this open-ended data relied on coding discrete responses into themes by collaborative construction and refinement, both of deductively and inductively-derived sets of categories. MyEnglishLab data used statistical means and correlations. Analysis triangulated all the evidence collected from the different research instruments used.

Results See **Efficacy statements** section below.

Efficacy statements

In the context of this study conducted at three institutions in Poland, Pearson is able to make the following descriptive statements about the efficacy of Speakout with MEL:

Access — Students report that Speakout is accessible.

— Between 82% (163/199) and 99% (198/199) of students report that the student book is up to date, interesting, relevant to real life, culturally appropriate and at the appropriate level.

— 95% (190/199) and 81% (157/193) of students report that they can access MEL easily from their computer and smartphone, respectively.

Positive learning behaviours — Students report that Speakout with MEL helps them to increase their confidence, motivation and enjoyment of learning English.

— 74% (142/192) of students report that Speakout with MEL significantly helps them increase their confidence in learning English. Between 75% (143/191) and 76% (145/192) of students find that Speakout with MEL helps their confidence in reading and listening significantly increase, respectively.

— 70% (135/193) of students report that Speakout with MEL significantly helps them improve their motivation to learn English.

— 66% (128/194) of students report that Speakout with MEL significantly helps them enjoy learning English.

Engagement — Overall, students find Speakout with MEL engaging.

— 77% (149/194) of students report that Speakout with MEL significantly helps them engage with learning English.

Achievement and progression — The majority of students report that Speakout with MEL supports their achievement and progression.

— 61% (115/189) of students report that Speakout with MEL significantly helps them improve their English.

— Between 65% (126/194) and 87% (169/194) of students report that Speakout with MEL significantly helps them improve their English in speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar and writing.

— 84% (161/192) of students report that Speakout with MEL helps them prepare for their next level of learning.

— 79% (152/192) of students report that Speakout with MEL helps them to achieve the goal they set for themselves when they chose to take the course.

Read about this research in more detail in our [Technical Report](#).

Study 1 and 2

Limitations and generalizability

- Both studies have the same key limitations (outlined below). More specific limitations are discussed in the corresponding country technical report.
- Findings are based on a specific sample of students in specific cultural contexts and settings.
 - The efficacy statements made are based on the student survey. Not all students completed the survey. In Turkey, the study participants came from a single institution. In Poland, the student survey was completed by approximately 85% of the student population at AWF (153/180) and 65% (153/180) of students studying at WYŻSZA SZKOŁA LOGISTYKI. WS did not provide permission to survey their students. Thus, the survey results represent the views of students in two of the three institutions that took part in the research.
 - Findings are based on the triangulation of different evidence sources. The aim is to use the data to find major occurrences and trends across institutions. The findings are used to develop an understanding of the different implementation models, and to support decision making (Ewell, 2009; McCormick & McClenney, 2012; Pike, 2013), not provide precise answers.
 - 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 learner achievement and progression than for learner access and experience, where self-reported perceptions are extremely valuable.
-

Further considerations

- The research studies point to a number of further considerations for Speakout with MEL. Here are a few of those that have been noted across both Poland and Turkey:
- Overall, although Speakout with MEL caters well for all ages, adding topics that further serve the interests of young adults would be beneficial.
 - In Poland, 65% (126/194) of students reported that Speakout with MEL had helped them significantly improve their speaking and 59% (113/191), that it helped them increase their confidence in writing. Further guidance could be provided through the Teacher's Book to support institutions with the teaching and assessment of speaking and writing using Speakout with MEL.
 - Some students drew conclusions on the usefulness of MEL based on the exercises they were assigned. For those who were not assigned exercises across all the English language skills, MEL was not seen as useful.
 - 64% (124/195) of Polish students and 68% (104/152) of Turkish students agreed that MEL is engaging. 57% (113/198) of Polish students also said that they enjoyed learning by completing MEL assignments. Although the majority of students found MEL engaging, some students reported, for example, that MEL could become more interactive and that further elaboration of the purpose of MEL for their learning, as well as how different components complement each other, would be helpful.
-

Future research

Future research could repeat the study with different samples of learners in a diverse range of cultural contexts and settings to discover if these findings can be generalised to all learners using Speakout with MEL.

Although the majority of students reported that Speakout with MEL supports student achievement and progression, future research could also seek to incorporate objective external measures of achievement and progression to compare outcomes for users and non-users, and to control for potentially confounding factors like prior achievement.

References

- Birdsong, D. (2005). Interpreting age effects in second language acquisition. In J. Kroll & A. M. B. de Groot (Eds.), *The Handbook of Bilingualism* (pp. 109–127). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Bitchener, J. (2008). Evidence in support of written corrective feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 17*, 102–118.
- Bradlow, A. R., Akahane-Yamada, R., Pisoni, D. B., & Tohkura, Y. (1999). Training Japanese listeners to identify English /r/ and /l/: Long-term retention of learning in perception and production. *Perception and Psychophysics, 61*(5), 977–985.
- Chun, D. M. (2011). Computer-assisted language learning. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (Vol. 2) (pp. 663–680). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ewell, P.T. (2009). Assessment, Accountability, and Improvement: Revisiting the Tension. National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, Occasional Paper #1. http://www.learningoutcomeassessment.org/documents/PeterEwell_005.pdf
- Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching, 40*, 97–118.
- Gilmore, A. (2011). “I prefer not text”: Developing Japanese learners’ communicative competence with authentic materials. *Language Learning 61*(3), 786–819.
- Hardison, D. M. (2003). Acquisition of second-language speech: Effects of visual cues, context, and talker variability. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 24*, 495–522.
- Hulstijn, J. H. (2001). Intentional and incidental second-language vocabulary learning: A reappraisal of elaboration, rehearsal and automaticity. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and Second Language Instruction* (pp. 258–286). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Karpicke, J. D., & Roediger, H. L. (2008). The critical importance of retrieval for learning. *Science, 319*(5865), 966–968.
- Krashen, S. D. (1993). The effect of formal grammar teaching: Still peripheral. *Tesol Quarterly, 27*(4), 722–725.
- McCormick, A.C. and McClenney, K. (2012) Will These Trees Ever Bear Fruit?: A Response to the Special Issue on Student Engagement. *The Review of Higher Education*. Volume 35, Number 2, Winter 2012: 307–333.
- Nagy, W. E. (1995). *On the role of context in first- and second-language vocabulary learning* (Report No. 627). Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Center for the Study of Reading.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2011). Second language speaking. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (Vol. 2) (pp. 444–454). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Oxford, R. L., & Scarcella, R. C. (1994). *Second language vocabulary learning among adults: State of the art in vocabulary instruction*. *System, 22*(2), 231–243.
- Peacock, M. (1997). The effect of authentic materials on the motivation of EFL learners. *ELT Journal, 51*(2), 144–156.

Pike, G.R. (2013). NSSE benchmarks and institutional outcomes: A note on the importance of considering the intended uses of a measure in validity studies. *Research in Higher Education*. March 2013, Volume 54, Issue 2, pp 149–17.

Roediger III, H. L., & Karpicke, J. D. (2006). The power of testing memory: Basic research and implications for educational practice. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1(3), 181–210.

Ur, P. (2011). Grammar teaching: Research, theory, and practice. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (Vol. 2) (pp. 507–522). New York, NY: Routledge.

Van der Kleij, F. M., Feskens, R. C. W., & Eggen, T. J. H. (2015). Effects of feedback in a computer-based learning environment on students' learning outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 85(4), 475–511.

Appendix 1: full list of intended outcomes

Outcomes related to learner access and experience

We have evidence related to this category of intended outcomes for Speakout with MEL.
Find it under **Product research**.

Intended outcome 1

Learners have access to learning as intended in product strategy (e.g. based on gender, ethnicity, disability or financing).

Speakout with MEL functions with standard operating systems and hardware, so that students are able to access from their home or lab computer successfully.

Intended outcome 2

Learners have access to learning at appropriate level.

Speakout with MEL provides teachers with multiple resources so that they can support students at their individual level of learning.

Intended outcome 3

Learners have a positive learning experience.

Speakout with MEL helps students achieve their personal goals by encouraging collaborative skills. Students are able to work at their own pace and level, which allows them to have a more positive learning experience

Intended outcome 4

Learners can access learning anytime, anywhere (digital).

Speakout with MEL is designed to be used online. The Students' Book can be accessed remotely on a smartphone or tablet. MyEnglishLab and the ebook are available online 24/7, allowing students to access learning materials at any time.

Intended outcome 5

Teacher experience and access.

Speakout with MEL is designed to be easy for teachers to use. The clear and consistent structure of Speakout with MEL's components makes it easy to teach off the page, minimising the time needed for preparation time.

Outcomes related to timeliness and completion

We have evidence related to this category of intended outcomes for Speakout with MEL.
Find it under **Product research**.

Intended outcome 6

Learners complete course / retained to end of course.

All of the resources in Speakout with MEL are intended to support students to persist to completion. The Students' Book and ActiveTeach content is designed to help teachers engage learners with relevant and up-to-date topics focusing on students and the world around them, which motivates them to complete the course.

Intended outcome 7

Learners complete tasks / activities / course on time when MEL used.

Speakout with MEL students benefit from The MyEnglishLab Gradebook, which automatically provides feedback with the aim of making them more likely to complete assignments on time.

Intended outcome 8

Learners exhibit positive behaviours for learning English.

Speakout with MEL is designed to fully engage students with the authentic material, motivating them to practise the language and have confidence in their skills.

Intended outcome 9

Learner engagement with product.

Speakout with MEL is designed to keep students motivated and excited about coming to class. Authentic BBC content, games and creative tasks make classes fun and enjoyable.

Intended outcome 10

Teacher engagement with product.

Speakout with MEL is designed to be easy to access and use. Detailed teacher's notes and additional photocopiable materials are included to help teachers get the most out of the course and keep classes lively, fresh and interesting.

Outcomes related to standard of achievement or level of competence

We have evidence related to this category of intended outcomes for Speakout with MEL. Find it under **Product research**.

Intended outcome 11

Learners make expected progress (on GSE).

The instructional content, practice materials, and assessments in Speakout with MEL cover all of the objectives for students to pass assignments.

Intended outcome 12

Learners achieve qualification / certification where appropriate.

The library of multimedia lessons and assessments in Speakout with MEL cover all of the objectives to assist students to go on to achieve a qualification / certification, where appropriate.

Intended outcome 13

Increased confidence in productive skills in English: speaking and writing.

Speakout with MEL is intended to instill in students the core principles of the English language. Features, such as BBC video content, give exposure to authentic language in the classroom. This engaging, relevant content encourages students to retain the fundamentals of speaking and writing, which gives students the confidence to use these skills in everyday life.

Intended outcome 14

Increased confidence in receptive skills in English.

Speakout with MEL gives learners plenty of opportunities to practise in class and at home. Speakout with MEL is designed to give students confidence in their listening and reading abilities outside of the classroom, as well as in lessons.

Intended outcome 15

Increased ability of teachers to teach speaking.

Speakout with MEL is designed to assist both students and teachers. Automatic grading provides feedback to the teachers, helping to analyse mistakes and identify areas for improvement.

Outcomes related to learner progression

We have evidence related to this category of intended outcomes for Speakout with MEL. Find it under **Product research**.

Intended outcome 16

Learners achieve their personal goal (e.g. new/ better job, ability to use functional English better, getting on to university course).

In addition to completing their chosen course, Speakout with MEL aims to help students apply what they have learned to other areas of their life to achieve their personal goals.



Pearson