EVOLVE

DIGITAL

IMPACT STUDY

Find out more about improving English with digital learning: an impact evaluation study of the Evolve Digital course

CAMBRIDGE

IMPACT STUDY OVERVIEW

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has been working with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan since 2019, delivering training programs to teachers of English at junior and senior high schools.

The program delivered in 2022/23 included not just training in communicative language teaching, but also a focus on improving English language proficiency levels. All teachers involved in the training took the Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT) as a screening tool before the start of the program, to establish their English language proficiency level. Those who scored a B1 or lower Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level on the placement test were given the opportunity to improve their English with Evolve Digital, a flexible online course for adult learners. The course was delivered in collaboration with Global Bridge, a Tokyo-based training organization.

FLEXIBLE STUDY OPTIONS

Evolve Digital is an online course that combines asynchronous, independent learning content with synchronous, teacher-led lessons to meet the changing and varying needs of its users.

The flexible design of the course means it can be used in three modalities and participants in the program could choose the course option which suited them:

▶ Cohort A: on its own as an asynchronous self-study option, administered without any teacher input

▶ Cohort B: an asynchronous course combined with teacher feedback on Speaking and Writing components

▶ Cohort C: an asynchronous course combined with synchronous, teacher-led online classes.

IMPACT EVALUATION STUDY

A study was conducted to evaluate the impact of Evolve Digital on participants' motivation, engagement, attitudes toward digital learning, perceptions of the course and learning gains.

The data for the evaluation study comprised pre- and post-course surveys, pre- and post-course CEPT scores, online classroom observations, teacher interviews and learner analytics data extracted from the course delivery platform, Cambridge One.

> " We could offer only the online program for those students that could not commit to a fixed lesson each week, or we could offer the online program plus the lesson for those students that could. So I think the way that we could tailor it to each student was really one of the most positive aspects.
>
> **Garry Pearson**
> Founder and President, Global Bridge

The content of the Evolve Digital course was useful

This graph shows the average from all three cohorts, with 85% who either agree or strongly agree:
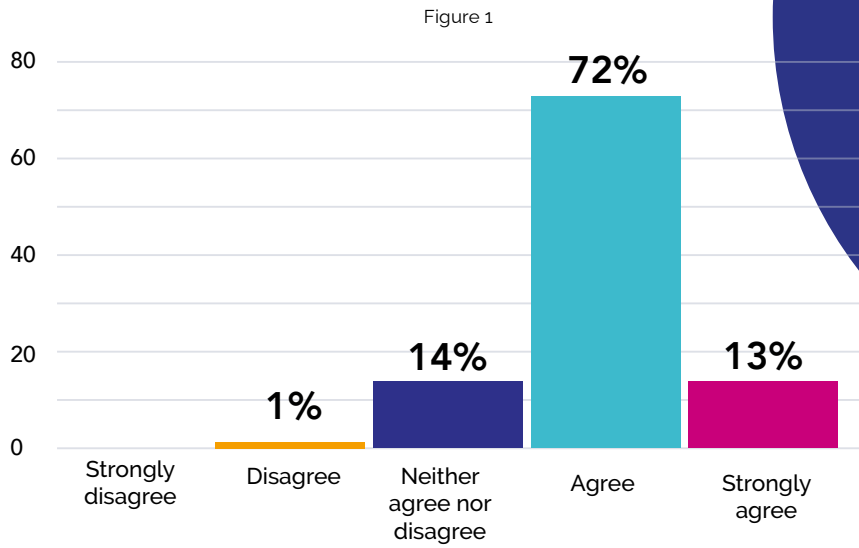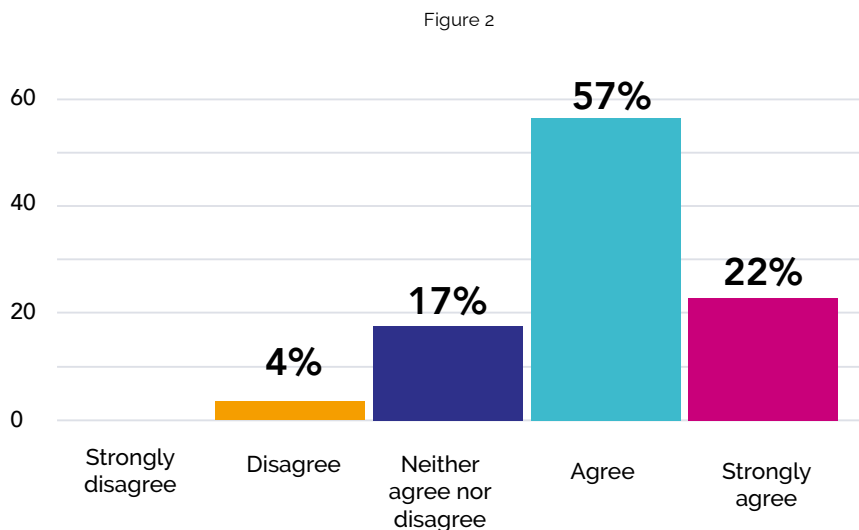
Figure 1

|	
Strongly disagree	
Disagree	1%
Neither agree nor disagree	14%
Agree	72%
Strongly agree	13%

I felt motivated when I was studying English with Evolve Digital

This chart shows the responses from cohort C = 79% either agreed or strongly agreed:

Figure 2

Strongly disagree	
Disagree	4%
Neither agree nor disagree	17%
Agree	57%
Strongly agree	22%

I will be able to implement what I learned in the Evolve Digital course in the future

91% either agreed or strongly agreed they would be able to use what they had learned:

Figure 3

Strongly disagree	
Disagree	4%
Neither agree nor disagree	5%
Agree	61%
Strongly agree	30%
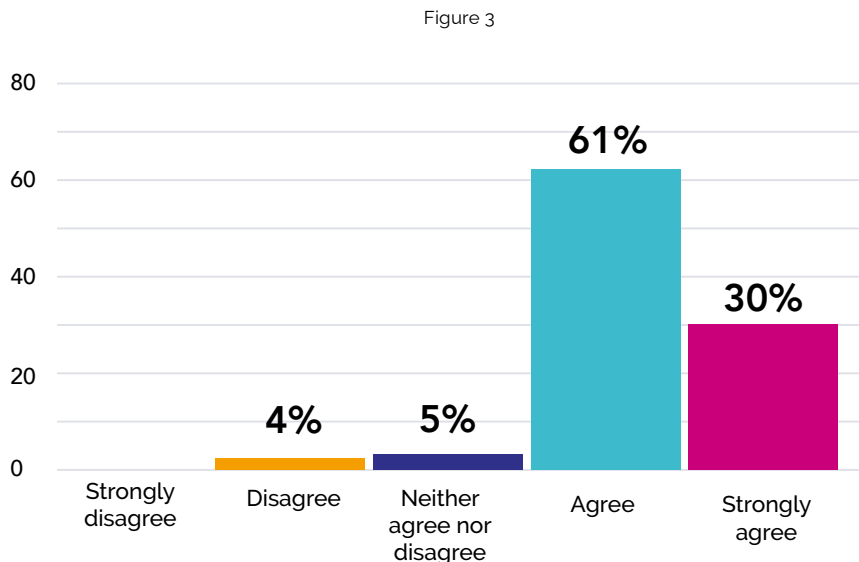
OVERALL IMPROVEMENT

The overall findings suggest that whichever way Evolve Digital was taken there was an improvement in English level.
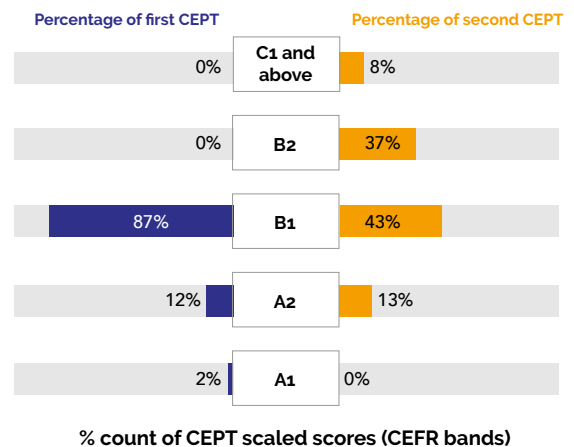
Looking at the combined score data across cohorts, there was a statistically significant improvement in post-course CEPT scores, with an average improvement of four raw scale points (33.9 vs 37.9).

Score analysis further revealed that **51% of all participants improved by at least one CEFR level. This is a significant improvement given that participants took the course part time over a period of seven months while working full time and also taking part in a teacher professional development program.**

51% of participants improved by at least one CEFR level in seven months of part time study

Figure 4 shows a change in the distribution of scaled scores based on the candidates' CEFR level pre- and post-course, with a lower proportion of B1 scores (87% vs 43%), and a higher proportion of B2 (0% vs 37%) and C1 scores (0% vs 8%). This means there was an upward shift in numbers of participants at each level. The majority of candidates who were at A1 and A2 levels improved their scores post-course, usually by one CEFR band.
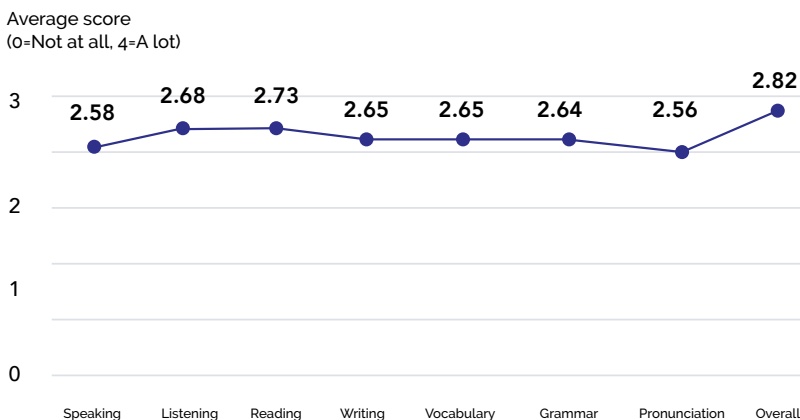
Figure 4. Distribution of CEPT scaled scores post-course

Percentage of first CEPT		Percentage of second CEPT
0%	C1 and above	8%
0%	B2	37%
87%	B1	43%
12%	A2	13%
2%	A1	0%

% count of CEPT scaled scores (CEFR bands)

In addition to the actual placement test score improvement, **perceived improvement** by skill area on average across all three cohorts also increased. Participants were asked to rate their perceived improvement on a scales from 0-4. Zero being 'not at all', to four being 'a lot':

Figure 5. Perceived improvement

Thinking back to your level of English before using the Evolve Digital course, how much do you think your English has improved in the following areas?

Average score
(0=Not at all, 4=A lot)

Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	Vocabulary	Grammar	Pronunciation	Overall
2.58	2.68	2.73	2.65	2.65	2.64	2.56	2.82

> **It is quite convenient for me to study anywhere because I could study at home or at my school.**
>
> **Chieko Hamamura**
> Participant
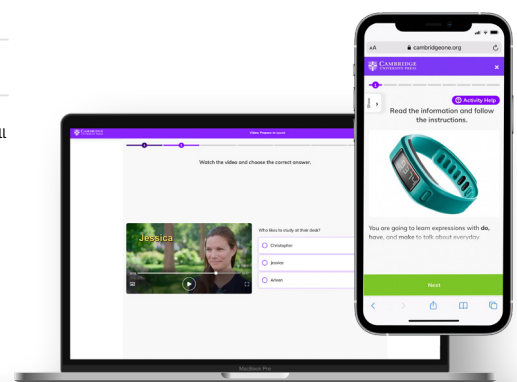
SUMMARY

The study shows that there was something positive to report from each cohort about their experience of using Evolve Digital.

Overall, Cohort C expressed the highest levels of satisfaction with the course. It was delivered with teachers at the center, replicating some of the aspects of the face-to-face learning environment, which helped motivation, perceived improvement and speaking confidence.

Digital learning can be implemented in a variety of ways and deliver good results. This is particularly evident in data from Cohort A, who were doing the course asynchronously without any teacher input. While their motivation and overall satisfaction ratings were lower compared to Cohort C, Cohort A participants successfully engaged with the course and completed a similar number of activities as Cohort C (59% for Cohort C vs 54% for Cohort A).

Cohorts A and B achieved the highest scores in their post-course placement test, with an average increase of 5.3 and 5 points respectively.

Finally, Cohort B emphasized that the motivating factors of teacher feedback on their Writing and Speaking tasks really helped them progress with the course and improve their English.

Attitudes to digital learning and digital readiness

One of the factors that can influence participants' engagement with a digital course is their attitudes and beliefs about digital learning. Pre-course survey results suggest that respondents believe that using technology, such as language learning apps and online learning materials, can help them learn better (**89% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement**).

> " I had a chance to actually use what I learned online. I had my speaking and writing corrected.
>
> **Participant**
> Cohort C

> " It was good to receive feedback on my writing and speaking from my tutor.
>
> **Participant**
> Cohort B

TEACHER FEEDBACK

The Evolve Digital course for all cohorts was delivered by teachers at Global Bridge, a Tokyo-based training organization. Global Bridge equip people with the communication skills, mindset and flexibility required to succeed in global business.

Teachers who taught the synchronous classes described the course as "easy to navigate", with a "clear and very functional" layout and design. They also believed that the course provides students with examples of natural, functional language that they can practice in class. The more open-ended speaking tasks were praised by the teachers for allowing students to implement what they had learned in practice.

Our insights-led approach ensures that Evolve Digital delivers an engaging course underpinned by digital pedagogy you can trust. With Evolve Digital, you can deliver the right blend of learning for your own context.

> **One of the great things about Evolve Digital is it comes with ready-made teaching materials.**
>
> **Graham Skerritt**
> Teacher, Global Bridge

Get in touch with us to find out how we
can help improve your student's English.
cambridge.org/evolvedigital

**Find out more at
cambridge.org/english**

We believe that English can unlock a
lifetime of experiences and, together
with teachers and our partners, we
help people to learn and confidently
prove their skills to the world.

Where your world grows

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