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# AI-enhanced foundation skills training: A case study of MyAMES Chat

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## Abstract

Adult migrant and refugee learners often need improvement in spoken English, confidence and workplace communication while balancing settlement pressures, irregular attendance and highly varied skill profiles. This article presents a practice-based case study of MyAMES Chat, an AI-powered, mobile-friendly learning tool developed by AMES Australia in partnership with Getmee to extend pronunciation practice, vocabulary building and employability-focused speaking tasks beyond the classroom. The tool was not designed to replace teachers. Instead, it shifted routine feedback and rehearsal tasks to the app, allowing teachers to focus on differentiated instruction and link out-of-class practice more closely with curriculum goals. Drawing on multiple data sources including a student survey, teacher reflection notes and one teacher interview, findings showed that learners used the app for short, private speaking practice outside class; immediate audio feedback helped improve intelligibility, and teacher-mediated routines connected this practice with interactive classroom activities. The article outlines the co-design process between AMES Australia and Getmee, the curriculum alignment, and the implementation practices that supported equitable access for diverse learners. The case suggests that AI can make

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adult foundation skills training more inclusive and higher-quality when it matches the curriculum, and is guided by teachers, and learners are supported in its initial use.

Keywords: *Adult migrant English; foundation skills; MyAMES Chat; AMES Australia; AI coaching; pronunciation; employability; mobile learning.*

## Introduction

Across Australian adult education, development of foundation skills is closely tied to participation in work, further study, and community life. The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) are key national programs which provide free English tuition to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants (Department of Home Affairs, 2025). Within SEE/AMEP and related provision, learners' progress is typically described using the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF), which benchmarks core skills including oral communication, reading, writing, numeracy and learning across levels of performance. In parallel, employability-oriented frameworks such as the Core Skills for Work (CSfW) highlight the non-technical capabilities that underpin workforce participation, including communication, self-management, and working in a digital world.

These national frameworks align with what teachers observe daily: many adult EAL learners need to develop spoken English for immediate workplace interactions, yet opportunities for spoken practice can be constrained by class time, class composition, and learners' complex lives. In community and settlement education, it is common for educators to teach learners who vary widely in their prior schooling, first-language literacy, trauma histories, confidence, and access to stable routines. In classrooms, these differences often result in "spiky learner profiles": some students may show emerging pronunciation and fluency but stronger receptive listening skills, while others demonstrate solid grammatical knowledge yet display limited confidence in spoken production. Effective development in language acquisition including language components and language skills relies on regular practice and feedback through planning, rehearsal, production, and reflection.

Additionally, classroom contact hours are limited, and many adult learners juggle shift work, caring responsibilities, and settlement demands that reduce the time and energy available for homework or extra conversation practice. As a result, teachers often depend on in-class role-plays, pronunciation drills, and interview simulations to build oral communication skills. However, in mixed-ability classes these activities do not always provide sufficient practice for learners who need more support, while others spend time waiting for their turn. Even in well-designed interactive lessons, it is difficult for teachers to deliver individualised speaking feedback to every learner.

Speaking development is also shaped by opportunities outside the classroom. Many adult migrants have little sustained English interaction in daily life, especially if they work with same language peers or spend most time in first language community networks. These contexts are normal features of settlement but can limit exposure to interactional routines, workplace small talk, and interview discourse. A tool that creates additional speaking turns, especially for high-stakes genres can therefore be pedagogically valuable if it is used to complement, not replace, real interaction.

Digital tools have long extended language practice beyond class, from early computer-assisted language learning to contemporary mobile and online environments (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Mobile learning is particularly promising for migrants, as it travels with the learner and connects study to real contexts (Kukulska-Hulme, 2019). The pedagogical impact of technology depends on integration: tools may simply substitute existing tasks (e.g., digitised worksheets) or transform learning by enabling distributed practice, such as repeated low-stakes rehearsal with timely feedback (Hamilton et al., 2016). Recent advances in AI and speech technologies make on-demand spoken practice with automated feedback increasingly feasible. Studies in EFL contexts suggest benefits for pronunciation and speaking confidence when feedback is immediate and iterative (Dennis, 2024), yet evidence for adult migrant TESOL learners is limited. Practice-based research is needed to explore how AI tools are adopted, what learning opportunities they create, and how constraints can be addressed for equitable implementation.

This article contributes to the gap by reporting a practice-based case study of an AI-powered mobile coaching application, the MyAMES Chat app, which was used in adult EAL programs in Australia to extend pronunciation and job-interview communication practice beyond the classroom. The study addresses three questions:

1) How do adult EAL learners use the MyAMES Chat app outside class?
2) What benefits and limitations do learners and teachers report for pronunciation and interview communication?
3) What design and implementation considerations support responsible, scalable integration of this app in foundation skills programs?

## Conceptual framework

Our analysis draws on sociocultural theory, which views learning as mediated action (Vygotsky, 1978). Within this perspective, mediating tools from symbolic systems, such as language to contemporary digital applications, shape how learners participate in activity and expand the range of actions they can undertake with appropriate support. An AI coaching application like MyAMES Chat app can; therefore, be understood as a mediational artefact that can provide learners with opportunities for rehearsal, feedback and reflection when used as part of purposeful learning tasks. Importantly, MyAMES Chat does not operate as a standalone “teacher”. Instead, it helps shape the

conditions in which learners practise and receive feedback, and its outputs can be re-contextualised in classroom interaction through further mediation by teachers and peers.

We also draw on adult learning principles that emphasise self-direction, relevance, and agency (Knowles et al., 2015). While adult migrants often bring strong motivations linked to immediate needs including obtaining, securing employment, communicating at work, they may also bring prior schooling experiences that make them hesitant to speak or to risk making mistakes. Agency and autonomy in language learning extend beyond independent study; it includes learners' capacity to set goals, monitor progress, and choose strategies that align with personal objectives (Benson, 2011). Thus, a mobile tool that offers flexible, repeatable practice can support learner autonomy by allowing them to control their pace, select tasks aligned to goals, and practise privately in low-stakes conditions.

Pedagogical integration is understood through the Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition (SAMR) model developed by Puentedura (2006). This model is a four-level taxonomy which helps examine whether technology use simply substitutes existing tasks or leads to meaningful changes in learning activities (Hamilton et al., 2016). In this study, the central question is not simply whether AI is present, but whether its use genuinely expands learners' access to speaking practice and intelligibility feedback while preserving the teacher's pedagogical judgement and the inherently social nature of language learning. Speaking is inherently interactive, so we position AI coaching as a complement to classroom interaction rather than a replacement for human conversation.

## Literature review

### *AI-supported pronunciation practice and automated feedback*

Research on computer-assisted pronunciation teaching (CAPT) and automatic speech recognition (ASR) suggests that automated feedback can support pronunciation development, particularly when it enables repeated production and provides actionable prompts (McCrocklin, 2016). A consistent finding across the literature is that learners benefit from opportunities to practise autonomously and receive immediate feedback, which is difficult to sustain within typical classroom interaction. At the same time, CAPT research has repeatedly cautioned that automated systems remain imperfect. Commonly documented challenges include recognition errors, opaque feedback, and reduced accuracy for diverse accents and lower-proficiency users (McCrocklin, 2019). These limitations have led researchers to stress the importance of teacher mediation when automated pronunciation tools are introduced into language programs.

### *Intelligibility-based pronunciation pedagogy in TESOL*

Within Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), pronunciation pedagogy has emphasised intelligibility and comprehensibility rather than native-like accent targets (Derwing & Munro; 2015 Levis, 2005). This shift reflects evidence that adult learners can achieve meaningful improvements in clarity and listener effort without pursuing unrealistic accent goals, and that intelligibility is influenced by both segmental and suprasegmental features such as stress, rhythm and intonation (Derwing & Munro, 2015). In this study, the app's design and accompanying teacher guidance reflected this stance by framing pronunciation practice around intelligibility in workplace contexts.

### *Generative AI, conversational practise and pedagogical alignment*

The emergence of Generative AI has renewed interest in conversational practice tools that stimulate dialogue and provide speaking prompts. Studies of chatbots and virtual assistants suggest potential benefits for fluency development and opportunities for rehearsal, but they also highlight that pedagogical value depends heavily on alignment with curriculum goals and transparent communication of system limitations. Evidence on such alignment remains uneven. Research on tools such as ChatGPT often reports surface-level learner benefits while offering limited insight into how generative AI reshapes teaching strategy, classroom interaction, or curriculum sequencing (Al-khresheh, 2024). Alongside claimed benefits, the literature has consistently warned about risks associated with bias, hallucinations, opacity, and data privacy (Bender et al., 2021). These risks are particularly salient in adult migrant education, where learners may be more vulnerable to misinformation and less able to interrogate automated outputs.

Taken together, the literature highlights three intersecting themes: the value of repeated, autonomous speaking practice beyond the classroom; the pedagogical importance of intelligibility-focused pronunciation rather than accent imitation; and the need for clear boundaries and teacher mediation when AI tools are introduced. However, while there is growing discussion of AI affordances and risks in ELT, there remains limited practice-based research examining how these tools are integrated within adult migrant TESOL contexts and how teachers actively shape their use in everyday programs. This study responds to that gap by examining AI-supported coaching as a mediated practice space embedded within curriculum, teacher routines, and workplace-oriented learning goals.

## MyAMES Chat app in practice

### *Purpose and design of the app*

The intervention was an AI-powered mobile application, MyAMES Chat app, designed to provide individualised coaching for spoken English out of classroom, in workplace and job-seeking contexts. The app was implemented at AMES Australia, a major adult EAL provider which delivers migrant-settlement English programs as well as vocational education pathways. Unlike CAPT/ASR tools that emphasise segmental scoring or accent comparison, the app combines intelligibility-focused feedback with interview-genre rehearsal and teacher-mediated use in class. The app includes two core learning pathways:

- Pronunciation and intelligibility: supporting learners to practise words, short utterances, sentences, and workplace-relevant phrases. Learners recorded their speech and received automated feedback through a combination of speech recognition, modelled audio, and prompts for repetition. Feedback focused on intelligibility features commonly linked to comprehensibility such as word stress, syllable clarity, and selected segmental contrasts rather than accent reduction or nativelikeness.
- Interview communication: through scenario-based prompts aligned to common entry-level job roles. Learners practised structured responses (e.g., introducing themselves, giving examples of teamwork, explaining availability) and received feedback on clarity, fluency, and pragmatic appropriateness (e.g., polite tone, use of complete answers). The design goal was to support rehearsal of common interview genres (e.g. behavioral questions), with repeated practice cycles and opportunities to refine responses.

### *MyAMES Chat functions*

The app provides short, repeatable speaking activities designed for mobile use, typically in five-to-ten-minute sessions. Learners work through a range of tasks including job-interview role-plays, vocabulary-building prompts, pronunciation practice, and short reflection activities - where they respond to a prompt, receive immediate feedback, revise, and record response again. The pedagogical aim is to expand opportunities for intelligibility-focused, and confident speaking practice that supports everyday and workplace communication, rather than to native accent features or emulate native norms. Importantly, the app does not assign grades or influence any high-stakes decisions; teachers remain responsible for assessment and for interpreting learners' progress.

***Partnership with Getmee: roles, co-design and decision rights***

MyAMES Chat was developed through a structured partnership between AMES Australia (as the pedagogical lead and institutional implementation partner) and Getmee (as the AI and product engineering lead) who is Australian technology company focused on AI-powered learning development. The partnership was designed to avoid the common failure mode of "generic app adoption" in which tools are bolted onto programs with minimal curriculum fit. Instead, design decisions were jointly owned, with AMES leading curriculum mapping, learning outcome selection, task design and teacher workflow requirements; Getmee led product engineering, interface design, model integration and analytics reporting. A cross-functional steering group of leaders, coordinators, and developers from AMES and Getmee met monthly to prioritise feature development, resolve pedagogical questions, and review feedback collected from teachers and students. These discussions informed ongoing refinements and continuous improvements to the app's functionality.

In addition, regular on-campus visits by the app developer provided teachers with hands-on demonstrations of the app in practice, illustrating how its digital and AI features could be embedded into course delivery. These visits also played an important troubleshooting role, addressing technical challenges from the diverse levels of student digital access and literacy. This site-based support model strengthened teacher confidence and capability, supporting the meaningful and sustainable adoption of digital tools in teaching practice. Overall, this governance arrangements involved explicit trade-offs between pedagogical priorities, technical feasibility and implementation constraints. Importantly, this structure supported faster iteration while preserving teacher agency by positioning teachers as co-designers, not end-users.

***Data governance, privacy and responsible use***

The partnership gave early attention to privacy, consent and transparency. In alignment with AMES's strategic goals, learner-centred intentions, and organisational policies governing the use of digital applications in service delivery including strict requirements that personal information was not used for any other purpose as the application was not authorised for widespread adoption in classroom settings for use by both teachers and students.

Learners were introduced to the purpose of the tool, the type of data captured such as interaction records and de-identified usage metric, and to the boundaries of use. Data collection followed proportionality: only what was needed for feedback and teaching decisions was retained. Teachers explained to learners in plain English language that automated feedback was imperfect and meant for practice, not a judgement of ability. This human-in-the-loop framing helped mitigate over-trust

and supported ethical engagement, particularly for learners from contexts where surveillance concerns or mistrust of institutions might be heightened.

## *Design principles and implementation framework*

### *Curriculum mapping and content authoring.*

Translating broad program outcomes into concrete, repeatable speaking tasks was a central design challenge in developing the AI driven application. Teachers and curriculum team at AMES identified high-frequency communication demands across English as an Additional Language (EAL) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) aligned pathways: greeting and small talk, requesting clarification, describing skills and experience, responding to common interview questions, and using pronunciation features that materially affect intelligibility like word stress, key vowel contrasts and rhythm. These demands were mapped to existing course sequences so that the app tasks could be introduced when learners had acquired the language resources to succeed and when practice would directly reinforce in class learning.

The content authoring process places a strong emphasis on personalised feedback and adaptive learning pacing, supported by scaffolded instructional feedback across key skill areas. In particular, the design targets the development of pronunciation accuracy, essential soft skills, and interview readiness. Feedback was structured progressively to respond to individual learner performance, allowing learners to advance at their own pace while receiving targeted guidance that supports gradual skill acquisition and confidence building. This scaffolded approach aims to enhance learner engagement, promote self-regulated learning, and improve communicative competence in employment-related contexts.

### *Designing feedback for adult migrant learners.*

During co-design discussions, teachers consistently prioritised feedback that was actionable and emotionally safe. Accordingly, feedback was framed as suggestions for improvement and opportunities for repetition rather than pass/fail judgments. For pronunciation, feedback cues emphasised intelligibility and key features like stress on a target word with encouragement to re-record. For interview communication, feedback cues focused on clarity, completeness and pragmatic appropriateness like answering the question directly, giving an example, or using polite forms.

*Mobile-first user experience and access considerations.*

The mobile-first design was a deliberate equity strategy: many adult learners have limited access to laptops but do have smartphones. Design choices; therefore, prioritised low friction entry like simple navigation, short tasks, and minimal typing, and prioritised compatibility with intermittent study time. Implementation support included in-class onboarding, peer support routines and, where available, access to shared devices and Wi-Fi. Importantly, these supports were treated as part of pedagogy in addition to technical troubleshooting. Learners were taught how to use the mobile tool as a learning resource, including how to interpret feedback and how to set small, achievable practice goals.

*Classroom integration patterns and practices.*

Effective implementation relied less on the novelty of AI and more on predictable routines that linked app practice with classroom interaction. Teachers described several high-leverage patterns. One common routine involved brief (1) 'warm-up rehearsals', where learners completed a short speaking task at the start of class (or while settling in), then used their responses as a springboard for pair or group discussion. Another routine integrated the app into a (2) 'prepare-practise-perform' cycle; learners practiced interview answers in class with teacher guidance, rehearsed multiple times in the app between classes, and then performed a live role-play for peer and teacher feedback. Teachers also used the tool for (3) 'targeted catch-up', directing learners with fragmented attendance to specific tasks aligned to missed lessons, allowing them to re-enter the class sequence with greater confidence. These routines showed learners that the tool was a different way to practise towards the same goals. The dashboard serves as an instructional monitoring system that supports teachers in overseeing class progress and in creating, managing, and distributing learning tasks to students.

## ***Professional learning and sustaining partnership***

Teachers' uptake was strengthened through short, practical professional learning that modelled “how to teach with the tool” rather than “how the tool work”". This approach aligns with AMES structured professional development framework, which provides multiple, ongoing opportunities for teachers to build their digital capabilities and AI competence. Within this framework, four curriculum meetings and eight network meetings over the year offered dedicated spaces for teachers to explore the pedagogical integration of digital tools such as the MyAMES Chat app into their teaching and learning practices. In addition, a series of AI-focused workshops and hands-on training sessions were delivered throughout the year, with a strong emphasis on lesson integration strategies, troubleshooting common learner barriers, and sharing exemplars of prompts and class

routines. A small group of early adopters acted as peer champions, supporting colleagues and feeding classroom insights back to the product team. This feedback loop was an important partnership mechanism: it translated pedagogical needs like more sector-specific interview prompts, into product refinements, and it ensured that iteration remained anchored to learner outcomes and teacher workload realities. In this sense, the partnership between AMES and Getmee functioned as a socio-technical system in which curriculum design, classroom practice and product development co-evolved.

## Study design and data sources

We used a qualitative-dominant case study design to understand how an AI coaching tool was taken up in context and what pedagogical and ethical issues emerged. A case study approach is appropriate where the aim is to generate practice-relevant insight into an intervention within a bounded setting rather than to make generalisable causal claims (Yin, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The intervention occurred within AMES Australia, a major adult education provider in Victoria, Australia, delivering EAL and VET-aligned foundation skills programs for migrant and refugee learners. Participants included learners who elected to use the MyAMES Chat app as part of their course and teachers who integrated the tool into routine classroom practice. Data sources comprised three complementary strands:

- De-identified analytics were collected over two years. This in-app data was used to uncover patterns of use, not as direct indicators of language gain.
- An end-of-course learner survey was completed by 146 learners who actively used the app. The survey included 4 Likert-scale items on perceived usefulness of the app, confidence, and relevance, as well as open-ended questions inviting learners to describe when and why they used the tool and what they found helpful or challenging. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.
- Teacher insights were gathered through reflective notes (as part of routine teaching reflection) and two group interviews with 21 teachers who had integrated the app into their classes. Teacher data focused on pedagogical integration (how teachers designed learning around the tool), observed learner engagement, and constraints encountered during implementation.

Qualitative data- open-ended survey comments and teacher data- were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initial coding focused on purposes of use, perceived learning benefits, points of friction, and contextual factors shaping uptake. Codes were iteratively refined and grouped into themes, with attention to tensions between affordances (e.g., on-demand rehearsal) and constraints (e.g., access, trust, and recognition errors). Usage analytics informed

interpretation by providing descriptive evidence of which features were most used and when use increased.

This study also drew on the app evaluation data collected with informed consent. All survey responses were anonymous, quotations were de-identified, and the app was positioned as a formative learning support rather than an assessment instrument. Details that could identify individual learners, specific sites, or the vendor were removed for blind peer review.

## Findings

The analysis examines how the MyAMES Chat app shaped learning opportunities and teaching practice, moving from survey evidence and implementation insights into four interconnected themes: private and repeatable rehearsal beyond class, immediate audio feedback that supported noticing and intelligibility work, interview practice that built pragmatic readiness and confidence, and teacher enabled redesign of classroom teaching and learning activity through explicit integration. Quotations are attributed to "learner" or "teacher" only, with identifying details removed.

### *Descriptive learner survey results*

The learner survey (n = 146) indicated strong perceived value of the tool as a learning support. Most respondents reported that the app was easy to use and relevant to their learning goals, with overall satisfaction at 96%. Many learners (69%) were frequently engaged with pronunciation and vocabulary practice pathway with many integrating practice into short, regular routines.

Confidence-related responses were notably positive: 98% respondents reported increased confidence when speaking independently, and 60% reported increased confidence in interview situations. This pattern is consistent with teacher observations that interview readiness depends not only on language proficiency, but also on genre knowledge, use of examples, and pragmatic choices that require explicit teacher mediation.

The pronunciation pathway was also strongly valued in survey data, with learners' self-reporting a 20–30% improvement in vocabulary and pronunciation. In the survey, over 70% of respondents nominated vocabulary and pronunciation tasks as the most frequently used and valuable features. These findings suggest that learners perceived the app's pronunciation as both highly engaging and effective in supporting spoken language development.

Survey items also suggested perceived confidence gains. In the survey, 60% of respondents agreed that the app helped them feel more confident in job interviews drills, and 98% reported increased confidence in oral communication including job interview response, pronunciation, and free speaking. While these are self-reported perceptions rather than validated outcome measures, the data indicate that learners experienced the tool as supportive for high-stakes communication tasks.

### *Key themes from qualitative data*

Across sites including Dandenong, Noble Park, Springvale, Lonsdale and Werribee, teachers' insights from reflective notes showed that successful uptake was associated with a deliberate implementation sequence rather than ad hoc encouragement to use the app. Teachers reported that learners were more likely to persist when early success was engineered through short, scaffolded tasks and visible teacher endorsement.

Teachers also highlighted the importance of brief, practical professional learning that was easy to access and directly relevant to classroom use. Effective strategies included: short demonstrations of classroom routines, shared prompt banks aligned to common units, and troubleshooting guides for typical barriers includingmicrophone permissions, login issues, and how to improve audio quality in noisy environments. Teachers also integrated digital skills development into language teaching, helping learners set practice targets, monitor progress, and revise responses. Several teachers noted that this approach supported broader foundation skills outcomes, including digital literacy and self-management, because learners practised navigating an app, managing their learning time and persisting through iterative improvement.

The following themes emerge from qualitative analysis of learner and teacher feedback, supported by survey responses and platform analytics.

#### *Theme 1: Private, repeatable rehearsal extended speaking practice beyond class.*

A major finding was the value of practice that was both private and repeatable. Learners described using the app in short bursts across the week—while commuting, during lunch breaks, or in quiet moments at home. For many, the ability to rehearse without an audience reduced anxiety and made it easier to attempt unfamiliar sounds or longer answers. One learner commented that practising privately meant they could "try again until I feel OK". Teachers described the app as providing a "low-pressure setting" that encouraged experimentation with speaking.

Survey and analytics data supported these accounts of distributed use. In the learner survey, 70% of respondents reported using the app at least once per week. Learners explicitly linked this pattern

to their time constraints: short rehearsal cycles fit better than extended homework tasks. These findings reflect how mobile learning can enable opportunistic study moments for adult learners whose time is fragmented (Kukulska-Hulme, 2019). This is evidence in a student's feedback "This app helps us a lot. We learn a lot from what we study in school and when we work on this app at home." Teachers observed that private rehearsal increased willingness to speak in class. A teacher noted that learners who were typically quiet became more prepared to participate in role-plays after rehearsing key phrases in the app. Another teacher noted that learners arrived with "something prepared", enabling the class to focus on interactional practice rather than first attempts.

*Theme 2: Immediate audio feedback supported noticing and intelligibility work.*

Learners frequently described a feedback loop of recording, listening back, comparing and repeating. Modelled audio and prompts helped learners notice differences between their own production and target forms. One learner wrote that hearing themselves made them realise their stress patterns were different, while another reported focusing on "difficult words" until the app recognised the utterance more consistently. Taken alongside these observations, generative AI is often positioned as enabling adaptive, immediate feedback loops that promote noticing and rapid cycles of adjustment (Creely, 2024). A student stated that:

> This app is very useful for vocab and pronunciation, and also, good for correcting pronunciation and sentences. I don't need to go to google to search for vocab. I think it's good for my family and all things in here and it's important for me.

From a sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), the app functioned as a mediational tool that made features of speech more salient and supported cycles of self-monitoring and adjustment. Teachers reported that the most productive use of automated feedback occurred when it fed into classroom interaction. One teacher shared their experience that they asked learners to bring one "hard word" or one short recording to class; teachers then used peer drilling, minimal-pair activities, or rhythm-and-stress practice to work on intelligibility in a socially supported way.

*Theme 3: Interview practice supported pragmatic readiness and confidence.*

Interview practice was consistently described as highly motivating because it aligned with learners' employment goals. Learners rehearsed self-introduction, common interview questions, and examples demonstrating teamwork or reliability. Rehearsal was framed as both linguistic preparation and anxiety management. One learner explained: "I practiced so much with the app

that when I finally went for an interview, I didn't feel as nervous because I had already rehearsed a lot."

Teachers reported that interview rehearsal became more powerful when integrated into genre-based teaching. Teachers used learners' app practice to discuss local workplace norms like answering in complete sentences, or giving specific examples, and to build awareness of pragmatic choices such as tone and politeness. In this sense, the app served as a rehearsal platform that enabled richer classroom discussions about local workplace etiquettes, identity, context and audience.

*Theme 4: Teacher-enabled redesign of classroom teaching and learning activities-when implementation was explicit.*

Teachers consistently reported that the app was most impactful when it was deliberately embedded into weekly learning routines. In these classes, teachers set an achievable app task; for example; practise an interview response three times; and then link it to an in-class activity such as pair interviews, feedback rounds, and reflection on approaches to integrating the app into in-class activities. This enabled a shift from the first attempts in class to higher-value interaction and coaching. A teacher explained: "The app does the repetitive work for me. I no longer have to spend so much time modelling basic phrases, which frees me up to focus on personalised support and facilitating group discussions." Teachers also described the app as supporting differentiation in mixed-ability classes. Because learners could practise at different speeds, teachers could set extension tasks for learners who progressed quickly while supporting learners who needed more repetition. One teacher described the experience as "like having a personal tutor for every student".

### *Constraints and tensions*

Despite positive perceptions, several constraints were prominent. First, access was uneven, with some learners limited by data caps, older devices, or shared phones, which reduced consistent uptake. Second, digital literacy confidence varied across the cohort, with many learners who had lower digital literacy needing explicit orientation and troubleshooting support. One learner noted that they had never used a smartphone for learning before and required help from teachers and classmates to get started. Third, trust and transparency mattered. Teachers reported learner concerns about how voice data were stored and used, and whether the system recognised a range of accents with comparable accuracy. Teachers found that transparent explanations and ongoing reassurance were essential for building trust.

Beyond access and confidence, participants raised concerns about accuracy and fairness. Teachers noted that automated speech recognition can be less forgiving of non-standard prosody patterns or background noise, which might lead learners to believe their speech is "wrong" even when it was intelligible. Teachers mitigated this by reinforcing that feedback was formative and encouraging learners to check ambiguous cases with a human listener. This approach helped preserve learner confidence while still leveraging the tool for rehearsal.

Another tension was emerging: some learners became focused on "being recognised by the app" rather than on communicating naturally. These learners focused on getting a "pass" from the system rather than on natural-sounding, communicative speech. Teachers addressed this by pairing app practice with authentic communicative tasks and reinforcing that intelligibility is contextual. The goal was to be understood by real listeners, not to satisfy an algorithm.

Finally, privacy and safety assurances played a vital role in uptake. Teachers reported recurring learner questions about whether voice data were stored securely and used solely for learning purposes. As one teacher put it, "the most important thing is safety. They need to trust that their information is protected and that it's safe to use." Accordingly, transparent governance, explicit consent processes, and ongoing teacher oversight were essential not only for immediate use but also for long term fairness and epistemic trust as generative AI evolves (Mishra et al., 2024).

## Discussion

The findings address the three research questions by showing how learners took up the app in everyday contexts (RQ1), the benefits and tensions they experienced (RQ2), and the design and implementation choices that shaped responsible integration (RQ3).

Addressing the research question of how adult EAL learners use the MyAMES Chat app outside class (RQ1), learners reported using the app to learn new words, prepare for upcoming classes, consolidate classroom learning through after-class practice, reinforce knowledge and content, and engage in self-study at their own pace and in their own time, helping them become more confident and independent learners.

Addressing the research question of what benefits and limitations learners and teachers report for pronunciation and interview communication (RQ2), reported benefits included enriched vocabulary, improved pronunciation, stronger communication skills, increased confidence, and greater independence in learning. Learners and teachers also valued the app's immediate and personalised audio feedback, opportunities for extra practice outside class, and culturally safe mock interview activities that helped build readiness for real interview situations. Learners' accounts of listening back, noticing stress, and repeating until the output was clearer suggest that

the app supported cycles of self-monitoring and adjustment. Such cycles are hard to sustain in class, where turn-taking limits individual rehearsal and feedback is shared across many learners. From a teaching perspective, the app was seen to reduce some teacher support time, strengthen teaching and learning strategies, and enhance teacher creativity in redesigning classroom activities through purposeful app integration. Reported limitations included barriers to access caused by device availability, data usage, and varying digital skills, as well as concerns about the app's own limitations, particularly the accuracy and fairness of feedback, which could reduce learner motivation to continue using it.

Addressing the research question of what design and implementation considerations support responsible, scalable integration of this app in foundation skills programs, participants highlighted the importance of formally embedding the app within the curriculum rather than positioning it as an optional add-on. This included establishing clear organisational expectations and policies for regular use, such as daily practice routines, homework, or supplementary learning tasks. The app was also seen as valuable for differentiated teaching approaches, providing additional support and flexible practice opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) learners. Such integration would help ensure consistent uptake, purposeful use, and scalable implementation across programs. Learners' accounts of listening back, noticing stress, and repeating until the output was clearer suggest that the app supported cycles of self-monitoring and adjustment. Such cycles are hard to sustain in class, where turn-taking limits individual rehearsal and feedback is shared across many learners.

A central insight concerns how practice was redistributed across time and settings. Learners used the app in short, opportunistic intervals, aligning with evidence that mobile learning can leverage "in-between" moments for adult learners with fragmented study time (Kukulska-Hulme, 2019). In this case, convenience and privacy reduced affective barriers to speaking. For learners who are anxious about speaking publicly, private rehearsal can function as a bridge into classroom participation, preparing greater readiness for students to take risks.

Another key insight relates to the mediating role of teachers, which was the hinge that connected out-of-class rehearsal to classroom learning. When teachers built explicit routines such as a weekly app goal, a clear link to in-class tasks, and a habit of bringing questions back to class, learners' app practice became a resource for collaborative work. This dynamic was significant for two reasons. First, it supported the social dimension of language learning: automated feedback was followed by human interaction and teacher mediation. Second, it mitigated the limitations of automated feedback by creating opportunities to check, reinterpret, or override feedback considering communicative outcomes. This is consistent with concerns in CAPT research that recognition errors and feedback opacity can frustrate learners or misdirect attention (McCrocklin, 2019).

The findings also highlight the pedagogical and ethical importance of intelligibility-focused pronunciation practice rather than accent elimination. Teachers' emphasis on clarity in workplace contexts aligns with evidence-based pronunciation perspectives that prioritise being understood and reducing listener effort (Derwing & Munro, 2015). This framing is pedagogically and ethically important because it directs attention to features with communicative payoff. It is also ethically important because it avoids positioning adult migrants as needing to erase identity-marked accents to be employable. In this case study, learners valued feedback that increased clarity and confidence, not feedback that implied "native-like" targets.

Beyond generic mobile/CAPT tools, the value-added contribution of the MyAMES Chat app lies in its combination of immediate, repeatable spoken rehearsal, actionable feedback cues, curriculum-mapped prompts including interview pragmatics, and teacher-mediated routines that bring app outputs back into social learning. Teachers described a shift from spending in-class time on first attempts and repetitive modelling toward conducting more interactive, feedback-rich activities. This aligns with critiques of the Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition (SAMR) model, which emphasize that technology benefits depend on pedagogical redesign rather than tool adoption alone (Hamilton et al., 2016). The app's repetitive modelling function did not replace teaching; instead, it freed teachers to focus on complex instructional work that technology cannot do: diagnosis, relationship-building, responsive scaffolding, and the negotiation of meaning in interaction.

## Implications for practice

This case study suggests that AI coaching adds value in English foundation skills education when it is used as a practice space and an extension of teaching rather than a replacement for teacher. Programs should build shared AI literacy, so the tool is not treated as a black box and so its role in learning is explicit. Plain language explanations of what the system can and cannot do, such as practice prompts and approximate speech recognition rather than understanding meaning or judging employability, help learners interpret feedback and avoid over trust.

Based on the findings, we would propose five practical recommendations for teachers and program leaders.

1. Class teachers should use short, frequent practice cycles. Learners reported the greatest benefit when practice was brief but regular, paired with clear goals; for example, practise work introduction three times per week. This approach mitigates the challenge of allocating extended time blocks and promotes sustained progress.
2. Teachers should link the app to classroom learning: learners should bring one recording, one question, or one "hard word" back to class, so that automated feedback is complemented by

human feedback and interaction. This also allows teachers to address mismatches between app results and real-world intelligibility.

3. Teachers should teach digital routines explicitly. Orientation should show learners how to use the app and why key features, like listening for stress and rhythm, matter. Learners should be taught how to interpret feedback, how to select tasks, and what to do if the app mis-recognises speech. This would support learner autonomy and reduce frustration.
4. Teachers also should treat interview communication as genre learning. Interview practice is most effective when linked to workplace language ssuch as answering in full sentences, giving examples, and presenting strengths. Teachers can use app prompts as a starting point for analysing job advertisements, workplace scenarios, or work placement preparation.
5. Leaders should ensure transparent governance. Program managers/leaders should clarify data handling, consent, privacy, and limits of automated feedback. Transparent communication helps build trust and supports equitable participation, especially for learners with limited digital confidence or access.

The partnership between AMES Australia and Getmee offers a practical model for how education providers can work with edtech vendors without giving up pedagogical control. In many institutional adoptions, vendor timelines and pre-built feature dictate classroom use, leading to shallow integration and limited impact. In this case, the partnership design put curriculum fit and teacher workflow first. Decision rights were made explicit, with AMES determining learning outcomes, task types and implementation constraints, and Getmee translating these requirements into product features and iterating in response to classroom feedback. This arrangement reduced the risk of technical solutionism by keeping the problem definition in the hands of educators, while still enabling rapid technical development. It also has implications for sustainability. AI-enabled tools require ongoing maintenance like prompt updates, scenario expansion, feedback refinement and support for new device ecosystems. Maintaining a standing partnership with clear governance and feedback loops may; therefore, be more realistic than one-off procurement if the goal is enduring pedagogical value rather than short-term novelty. For English language program leaders, this highlights the importance of resourcing not only licenses but also time for teacher co-design, professional learning and iterative evaluation.

Equity considerations cut across these findings, as uneven access, varied digital confidence, and unequal opportunities for practice can lead to uneven learner progress two-speed development unless addressed through targeted support and structured routines. Differential access to devices and data can produce participation gaps, particularly in adult migrant programs where learners may have precarious financial circumstances. Variation in digital confidence can amplify inequality unless digital routines are explicitly taught and normalised. Concerns about bias, opacity, and data handling are central to trust echoing broader critiques of large-scale language and generative AI systems, including the risks of bias, lack of transparency, and the tendency for systems to be perceived as authoritative even when they are unreliable (Bender et al., 2021).

UNESCO (2023) similarly emphasises the need for transparency, data protection, and human oversight when generative AI is used in education. In this study, questions about how feedback was generated and how recordings were stored directly influenced learner willingness to engage. Clear consent processes, plain-language explanations, and assurances that automated feedback is fallible and support-oriented all contributed to learner trust. Taken together, the case supports a balanced proposition for TESOL practice: AI coaching tools can productively extend speaking rehearsal and support learner confidence, but their impact depends on human-led integration, explicit routines, and ethical governance. In adult foundation skills contexts, effective use involves positioning the tool as one element in a broader learning ecology alongside classroom interaction, peer support, and teacher judgement.

Finally, program leaders should also avoid positioning AI as an authoritative evaluator. Large language and speech systems can produce plausible but unreliable outputs, and they may encode bias (Bender et al., 2021). The tool should therefore be framed as offering practice opportunities and prompts, not as providing definitive judgements about ability. A simple pedagogical stance "the app helps you practise; your teacher helps you learn" keeps authority with the human pedagogue while still leveraging the tool's affordances.

## Limitations

This study has limitations typical of program evaluation and practice-based research. Because app use was voluntary, findings reflect the experiences of learners who engaged with the tool, and insights should be interpreted in this context. Survey respondents were active users, which may over-represent positive experiences and under-represent learners who disengaged early. Reported benefits, including confidence gains and employment-related outcomes, were self-reported and not independently verified. Usage analytics were descriptive and did not directly measure language development, and the study did not include a comparison group. Finally, the intervention occurred within one provider context and one app design. Different tools, learner cohorts, and teaching conditions may produce different results.

A further limitation relates to the co-designed partnership between AMES Australia and Getmee and the iterative nature of the app during the evaluation period. Teachers' classroom observations prompted changes to feedback wording, prompt clarity and scenario coverage; while this improved contextual fit, it reduces comparability across cohorts because learners did not all experience the same version of MyAMES Chat. For instance, feedback cues were revised to distinguish pronunciation/intelligibility guidance from content/completeness guidance after teachers observed that learners sometimes interpreted all feedback as negative judgement. Scenario banks were also expanded to better reflect diverse employment pathways, although coverage remained uneven

during data collection. This highlights an evaluation challenge: in adult migrant English contexts, AI tools may operate as evolving services rather than stable, replicable interventions.

## Conclusion

This practice-based study shows how AI-powered MyAMES chat can support adult EAL adult learners' pronunciation and interview communication in foundation skills programs. The app's main contribution was not automation itself, but the creation of additional, low-stakes opportunities for rehearsal and mediated noticing outside class, paired with teacher-led integration that redesigned classroom time towards interaction and targeted feedback.

This research contributes to emerging debates on AI in TESOL by offering a practice-based account of how AI coaching tools can be positioned as part of a broader learning ecology, one in which classroom interaction, peer exchange, and teacher judgement remain central. While the findings are context-specific, they provide transferable insights for educators and leaders seeking to integrate AI in ways that extend practice opportunities without eroding professional expertise or learner agency.

As AI tools become increasingly available in adult education, the challenge is not whether they can be used, but how they are framed, governed, and pedagogically situated. This study suggested that AI is treated as a support for practice rather than an authoritative evaluator, and when teachers are positioned as designers of learning rather than implementer of technology, AI-enabled tools can play a constructive role in supporting equitable, confidence-building language learning.

Future research should examine language development longitudinally, investigate which kinds of automated feedback are most useful for adult migrant learners, and explore designs that support learners with limited digital access while preserving the relational and social dimensions of TESOL.

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