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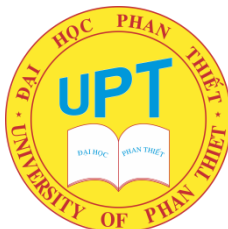
NGUYỄN ANH THƯỜNG

**A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE ELSA
ENGLISH-SPEAKING LEARNING APP ON HOTEL
STAFF'S COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY AT PHAM
GIA HOTEL**

**MASTER'S GRADUATION PROJECT
MAJORED IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

Lam Dong Province - 2026

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MAJOR IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

CODE: 8220201

MASTER'S GRADUATION PROJECT

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Last but not least, I will be always thankful to my family and friends, for always staying beside, listening to my anxious thoughts and providing me with the most needed emotional support and the boundless love.

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I confirm that the work presented in this research entitled “A CASE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE ELSA ENGLISH-SPEAKING LEARNING APP ON HOTEL STAFF’S COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY AT PHAM GIA HOTEL” has been performed and interpreted solely by myself.

I confirm that this work is submitted in partial fulfillment for the MA course of English language at University of Phan Thiet and has not been submitted elsewhere in other form for the fulfillment of any other article or paper.

Lam Dong, April 20th, 2026

Nguyen Anh Thuong

ABSTRACT

The hospitality industry demands strong English communicative proficiency from frontline staff, yet hotel workers frequently face compounding barriers including rotating shifts, language anxiety, and the absence of accessible training pathways. This study investigates the impact of the ELSA Speak application — an AI-powered Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tool — on the English communicative proficiency of hotel staff at Pham Gia Hotel in Phan Thiet, Vietnam, and identifies which specific app activities most effectively support speaking skill development. The study is theoretically grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and Canale and Swain's (1980) model of Communicative Competence.

A mixed-methods case study design was employed, incorporating a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group structure within the quantitative strand. Fifteen hotel staff members were purposively assigned to an Experimental Group (EG, n=8) and a Control Group (CG, n=7). The EG underwent a structured five-week ELSA Speak intervention of 15 minutes daily self-directed practice, while the CG continued normal work routines without supplementary training. Data were collected through three instruments: a hospitality-specific speaking test assessed against a four-component rubric; a structured Likert-scale questionnaire comprising two reliability-verified constructs; and semi-structured interviews with all EG participants.

Quantitative data were analyzed through Pearson correlation analysis to establish inter-rater reliability, Normal Q-Q plots and Levene's Test to verify parametric assumptions, and Independent Samples T-tests to evaluate between-group differences at both pre-test and post-test stages. Internal consistency of questionnaire constructs was confirmed via Cronbach's Alpha. Qualitative interview data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings revealed statistically significant improvement in the EG's post-test speaking performance relative to the CG ($p < 0.05$), while pre-test equivalence confirmed a valid

experimental baseline. Questionnaire results identified AI-powered pronunciation feedback, hospitality-specific interactive dialogues, and gamified self-assessment as the three most effective ELSA features. Thematic analysis produced five recurring themes, most notably reduced language anxiety, enhanced communicative confidence, and increased intrinsic motivation for self-directed study. These findings suggest that structured, short-duration MALL interventions represent a viable, psychologically supportive, and cost-effective supplementary training model for rotating-shift workers in Vietnam's hospitality sector.

Keywords: *Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), English Language Speech Assistant, communicative competence, hotel staff, hospitality industry, Self-Determination Theory.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACTFL: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

AI: Artificial Intelligence

ASR: Automatic Speech Recognition

CALL: Computer-Assisted Language Learning

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference

CG: Control Group

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EG: Experimental Group

ELSA: English Language Speech Assistant

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

F&B: Food and Beverage

M: Mean

MALL: Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

SD: Standard Deviation

SDT: Self-Determination Theory

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Science

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The hospitality industry is one of the fastest growing industries globally today. Hotels and other service enterprises have guests from many countries, cultures and language backgrounds. As such, English is the most common language used to communicate in tourism and hospitality. To serve international tourists effectively, hotel staff must possess excellent English communication skills. In the hospitality industry, speaking English is not just an academic subject, it is a vital survival skill. Staff members not only need to use English for basic greetings, but they also need to use English to solve problems, provide information, and offer a pleasant experience to international guests, and protect the professional image of the hotel. According to Shaheen (2025), “The hospitality industry is inherently global, and effective English communication by hotel staff is critical to guest satisfaction and operational success” (p. 125). This shows that strong English communication skills are directly linked to guest happiness and the success of hotel operations.

Training hotel staff in English presents a massive practical challenge. Most hospitality employees, such as receptionists and food and beverage staff, work rotating eight-hour shifts. After a long day of serving customers, they suffer from severe physical and mental fatigue. Therefore, they simply do not have the fixed schedules, time, or energy to attend traditional English classes at language centers. This reality creates a serious problem for hotel managers: How can we train our busy staff effectively without disrupting hotel operations?

In many hotels, particularly in non-English speaking nations, staff have limited chances to utilize English in a genuine professional setting. Conventional language courses are beneficial; nonetheless, they possess certain shortcomings. Supplementary training programs can be prohibitively expensive, challenging to integrate into the

schedules of shift workers, and may not consistently cater to the particular requirements of hotel personnel. Furthermore, numerous employees rapidly experience a decline in motivation as acquiring proficiency in English may seem arduous or protracted. This scenario necessitates affordable, engaging, and adaptable choices for improving English communication skills in the workplace.

These practical challenges raise the curiosity of this study. Recently, MALL and AI have emerged as potential solutions. Applications like ELSA Speak allow users to practice speaking anytime and anywhere. But can a mobile app truly keep exhausted adults motivated to learn? Can a machine help a tired receptionist practice English at 10 PM after a night shift? Will the AI's feedback reduce their fear of losing face when talking to real foreign guests? To satisfy these questions, it is highly necessary to conduct a case study to explore how AI learning tools actually impact the communication proficiency of staff in a real-world, high-pressure environment like Pham Gia Hotel.

The swift advancement of digital technology has rendered mobile learning a potent instrument for language education. MALL enables learners to study at any location and at any time, utilizing solely a smartphone. Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) contended that "Mobile devices offered the potential for new ways of language learning, allowing learners to engage with language resources and activities in diverse contexts" (as stated in Haliza & Lolita, 2024, p. 227). This concept illustrates that mobile devices can facilitate learning in various contexts, including not only schools but also during work breaks or at home.

An illustration of a MALL application employing AI to assist users in enhancing their English speaking proficiency is the ELSA Speak application. The application provides customized courses, instantaneous pronunciation feedback, and practice exercises linked to real-world scenarios. This enables hotel staff to focus on honing the English necessary for communicating with visitors. The application promotes learner

autonomy, enabling workers to assume control over their learning speed, perhaps enhancing motivation and confidence.

Consequently, it is essential and opportune to investigate the application of ELSA Speak inside a genuine hospitality setting. This research focuses on Pham Gia Hotel, where the staff frequently interacts with international clientele. It is intended to enable them to leverage ELSA and improve their general communicative skills to provide superior services.

To contextualize the research problem concretely, it is necessary to describe the specific setting in which this study is conducted. Pham Gia Hotel is a boutique coastal hotel located in Phan Thiet City, Lam Dong Province, Vietnam - one of the country's most rapidly expanding beach tourism destinations. The hotel operates 25 rooms and employs approximately 15 full-time staff across seven functional departments: front desk reception, food and beverage service, housekeeping, security, maintenance, accounting, and administration. The property regularly receives international guests from diverse linguistic backgrounds, including visitors from China, South Korea, Russia, Europe, and English-speaking countries, with international bookings accounting for approximately 35% of total occupancy.

Given this guest profile, frontline staff are expected to communicate in English on a daily basis for tasks ranging from check-in procedures and room service requests to complaint resolution and local area guidance. However, prior to this study, no formal English language training programme had been implemented at the hotel. Staff relied primarily on self-taught vocabulary, previous schooling, and informal on-the-job exposure - resources that proved insufficient for consistent, confident communication with foreign guests. This gap between the communicative demands of the hospitality environment and the actual English proficiency of staff constitutes the central problem that motivated this research.

1.2. Problem Statement

The research problem emerged from a combination of direct observation and preliminary discussion with hotel management and staff at Pham Gia Hotel. Before the study commenced, the researcher conducted informal needs analysis conversations with the hotel manager and department supervisors, who consistently identified English communication as the most pressing training need. Specifically, management reported that staff frequently experienced communication breakdowns during guest interactions - including difficulty explaining hotel facilities, responding to complaints, and understanding guest requests when spoken at natural speed. Several staff members acknowledged feeling anxious when approached by international guests, often deferring to colleagues or resorting to translation applications rather than attempting direct communication.

These observed patterns indicate that the problem is not simply a lack of vocabulary or grammar knowledge, but a compound issue involving pronunciation accuracy, listening comprehension, interactive confidence, and the absence of a structured, accessible training pathway. The standard corrective measure - enrolling staff in formal English courses - is largely impractical in this context due to rotating shift schedules, time constraints, and the financial limitations of small-to-medium hospitality properties. This specific, empirically grounded communication deficit, within a hotel that lacks viable conventional training solutions, forms the core justification for investigating ELSA Speak as an alternative, mobile-based intervention.

Specifically, the context of this study is situated in Phan Thiet, a rapidly growing coastal tourism city, focusing on Pham Gia Hotel. The core research problem arises from the critical gap between the high demand for English communication in daily hotel operations and the limited language proficiency of the local staff. These working adults face significant language anxiety, unclear pronunciation, and slow reflexes during real-

time interactions with foreign guests. Because their exhausting, rotating shifts make traditional English classes impossible, there is an urgent need for a flexible, autonomous training solution. Therefore, the problem this study addresses is how to effectively integrate the ELSA Speak app into this high-pressure, real-world hospitality environment to solve these specific communication challenges, rather than just using it as a general academic tool.

1.3. Research Objectives

This study intends to evaluate the efficacy of ELSA Speak in improving English communication skills among the workers of Pham Gia Hotel, based on the research questions. The major purpose is to assess the overall influence of MALL on employees' communicative proficiency in a genuine workplace situation, specifically within the hotel industry, where efficient communication is crucial for service quality and customer pleasure.

The study aims to quantify the degree to which the ELSA application enhances staff speaking performance, encompassing pronunciation correctness, fluency, and interactional competence. The research utilizes a pre-test and post-test approach to furnish empirical proof of alterations in learners' communication skills following a period of controlled application usage.

The study seeks to identify and assess the primary learning activities inside the ELSA app that most significantly enhance speaking skill development. These may encompass pronunciation exercises, AI-driven feedback, dialogue simulations, and tailored learning paths. This analysis aims to emphasize practical elements that might be incorporated into professional training programs.

The project aims to provide pedagogical and practical insights for incorporating AI-powered mobile applications into workplace language instruction within Vietnam's hospitality industry.

1.4. Research Questions

The research questions are formulated to guide the investigation into how MALL, specifically through the use of the ELSA English Speaking Learning App, can enhance communication skills among hotel staff. This study aims to assess the overall effect on communicative proficiency as well as improvement of specific language skills which are crucial in hospitality service. In doing so, it aims to provide evidence of the effectiveness of ELSA in a real workplace setting as well as underscore its potential contribution to professional training.

1. What is the effect of the ELSA English Speaking Learning App on the overall English communication proficiency of hotel staff at Pham Gia Hotel?
2. What are the activities on Elsa App that can help learner to improve their speaking skills?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study theoretically contributes to the understanding of SLA in the workplace, particularly within the hospitality sector. By highlighting communicative competence (speaking, listening, and pronunciation), it demonstrates how MALL can improve several sub-skills intricately associated with real-life communication. Moreover, the model integrates SDT and Communicative Competence into the research, offering novel insights into the interplay of motivation, autonomy, and competence within technology-enhanced learning. This study addresses a vacuum in the literature, as most research on ELSA Speak has concentrated on students in academic settings rather than on employees in Vietnam's service industries.

The results are directly applicable to hotel personnel and management. The study provides evidence regarding the efficacy of the ELSA app in enhancing staff confidence and communication with international guests, ultimately leading to improved performance in customer service activities. It offers managers pragmatic guidance on

implementing cost-efficient, adaptable, and AI-driven language training solutions that may supplement or supplant traditional training methods, which tend to be costly and time-intensive.

This study pedagogically broadens the domain of ESP by demonstrating the efficacy of digital resources in enhancing vocational English education. The incorporation of ELSA Speak into professional practice exemplifies the utilization of mobile learning applications in service-oriented sectors. It illustrates that language acquisition may be individualized and integrated into daily work practices, rendering professional development more sustainable.

Furthermore, the study provides insights for the hotel sector at large. Hotels aiming to enhance client happiness may consider incorporating mobile language learning into their service quality strategy. Enhancing the communication skills of their personnel enables hotels to bolster their reputation, augment client loyalty, and enhance competitiveness in a worldwide market.

1.6. Scope of the Study

This research is confined to the professional training context within the hospitality sector, specifically focusing on the hotel personnel of Pham Gia Hotel in Vietnam. The course concentrates on English communication skills, specifically speaking, listening, and pronunciation, which are essential for effective engagement with guests.

Hotel personnel are required to attain the requisite communication proficiency for routine operations: welcoming guests, addressing inquiries, resolving issues, and providing services in English. The predominant and essential forms of communication in guest service are verbal expression and active listening, rendering these abilities important. This research exclusively considers personnel that have direct and regular interaction with international visitors, specifically those in front office, food and beverage service, and housekeeping roles.

The study comprises a modest sample size, featuring 15 people engaged in the quantitative component via pre-tests, post-tests, and questionnaires, alongside 8 participants participating in qualitative semi-structured interviews. The sample is chosen to guarantee departmental diversity and facilitate practical sample collecting within the framework of a case study. Other linguistic competencies, like as reading and writing, are not emphasized in study, as the emphasis is on verbal engagement and proper pronunciation.

Data for the study are obtained via structured evaluations and participant comments. The pre-test and post-test assess competency improvements, the survey gauges staff perceptions and attitudes about ELSA, and the interviews offer in-depth insights into user experiences. The ELSA solution typically comprises brief daily practice sessions lasting 10 to 15 minutes, designed to align with staff schedules without disrupting their professional responsibilities. This adaptable and concentrated methodology addresses the practical challenges of training within the hospitality sector and fosters active engagement by participants throughout the study process.

Within the scope defined above, this study addresses a major **research gap** in the current literature. Although previous studies have consistently reported the effectiveness of ELSA Speak in improving pronunciation, speaking performance, and learner autonomy, the existing literature remains heavily concentrated on students in schools and universities. Little is known about whether these benefits can be transferred to professional hospitality settings, where communication is task-oriented, time-sensitive, and directly linked to service quality and guest satisfaction. Furthermore, few studies have examined how mobile AI-assisted learning influences working adults who must balance language learning with workplace demands, rotating shifts, and physical fatigue.

Therefore, this study addresses an important research gap by investigating the impact of ELSA Speak on the English communication skills of employees at Pham Gia

Hotel. The study contributes to the literature by extending previous ELSA research from academic contexts to a real-world hospitality environment and by providing empirical evidence on the roles of learner autonomy and motivation among working adults. In addition, it offers a practical and cost-effective model of English training for hotels and similar service-oriented organizations, demonstrating how mobile learning technologies can support employees who have limited time to participate in traditional classroom-based training.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

2.1.1. Definition and Evolution of MALL

Technology plays a crucial part in language instruction. Historically, computers were employed to enhance language acquisition, a practice known as CALL. Nonetheless, with time and with technological progress, electronics have become more compact and portable. This consequently resulted in a novel approach to language acquisition, referred to as MALL, which can be considered an evolution of CALL. To explain this concept clearly, Stockwell (2022) states that:

MALL refers to learning a second or foreign language through the use of one or more of various mobile devices including, but not restricted to, mobile phones (including smartphones), tablets, personal digital assistants (PDAs), MP3/MP4 players, electronic dictionaries, and gaming consoles. (p. 8)

Consequently, MALL represents an evolution and expansion of CALL, in which computer-assisted learning has been integrated and assimilated into ubiquitous mobile devices.

The shift from computers to mobile devices has a narrative to convey. Initially, they featured smaller displays and inferior processing capabilities relative to computers. This implies that developers were unable to create new and inventive programs, resulting in the replication of existing computer software. As Stockwell (2022) points out:

Early MALL research that appeared in the mid-2000s was, in essence, a replication of the resources available for computers adapted to mobile devices, often in a way that was simplified to work with lower processing power and smaller screens, resulting in ‘stripped down versions of their more complex desktop predecessors. (p. 35)

However, over time and with technology advancements, they evolved to become significantly more intelligent and powerful, resulting in MALL emerging as a formidable and autonomous entity.

2.1.2 Features and Affordances of MALL

Mobile devices are recognized for offering learners distinctive attributes, namely portability, ubiquity, and customisation. The lightweight and compact nature of cellphones enables learners to carry them everywhere. This indicates that learners can acquire knowledge at any location and at any time. Moreover, mobile learning is recognized for assisting learners in connecting with real-world scenarios. Highlighting this advantage, Stockwell (2022) points out that "The portability of mobile devices makes possible another potential benefit helping to contextualise learning - that is, to make learning relevant to the specific situations that learners find themselves on a day-to-day basis" (p. 7). In other words, MALL enables learners to organize their study time in accordance with their everyday schedules, so enhancing the practicality of language acquisition.

In addition to portability, the current advancements in mobile technology facilitate the creation of intelligent applications with numerous essential features to engage learners. A primary instrument is the utilization of voice recognition technologies. Previously, learners received audio recordings; but, currently, they have access to AI technology that analyzes their voices and provides instantaneous feedback on pronunciation. This procedure establishes a robust feedback system. This resembles possessing a personal tutor within the phone. Moreover, some applications employ gamification techniques, such as point accumulation or reward acquisition, to render studying an enjoyable experience. Pointing out the power of these tools, Haliza & Lolita (2024) assert that "By using advanced speech recognition, ELSA Speak provided real-time, personalized feedback essential for improving speaking skills" (p. 226).

Consequently, these interactive features not only motivate consumers but also enable them to swiftly rectify their errors.

Ultimately, these contemporary aspects render mobile applications highly effective instruments for self-directed learning and professional advancement in the workplace. Instead of remaining in a conventional classroom, learners can readily regulate their own pace of learning. Highlighting this particular advantage, according to Haliza & Lolita (2024):

Scholars like Hoi (2020), Ezra and Cohen (2018), Shi, Luo, and He (2017), and Sun et al. (2017) further defined it as a self-paced learning environment facilitated by various mobile devices such as tablets, phones, or pads, which were used for teaching and learning languages. (p. 227)

Therefore, mobile learning serves as an exceptionally adaptable resource that seamlessly integrates into the everyday schedules of busy professionals, including hotel personnel.

2.1.3 Background on MALL in Pedagogical Practice

Mobile learning beyond the mere utilization of smartphones; it fundamentally transforms the methodologies of teaching and learning. MALL will seamlessly align with constructivist and task-based learning methodologies. In these approaches, learning occurs actively. It is, instead, an active and dynamic process. Even when learners utilize an app autonomously, they do not engage in complete isolation; rather, they partake in an ongoing engagement with the learning tasks and the external environment. Explaining this connection, Stockwell (2022) point out that "This social dimension may be nested in a dynamic social constructivist model, where 'the learner(s), the teacher, the task and the context interact with and affect each other'" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 46, as cited in Stockwell, 2022, p. 137). For hotel personnel, this signifies that the English

acquired through the mobile application is immediately applicable to their daily responsibilities at the reception desk.

ESP is a pedagogical approach employed by educators in instructing ESL for particular professions. ESP has proven advantageous in the hospitality sector by equipping hotel staff with the requisite language skills essential for their everyday operations. This type of training previously took place mostly in physical classrooms. Discussing these conventional methods, Shaheen (2025) notes that "Training hotel staff in English has traditionally relied on classroom instruction, role-plays, and immersion programs tailored to hospitality contexts (often called English for Specific Purposes or ESP)" (p. 126). Nonetheless, traditional classes often face challenges in assembling all employees due to variations in their work schedules. With the enhancement of MALL into ESP, managers may now provide specific, job-related language instruction directly to all employees via their cellphones. This novel training method enhances accessibility and convenience for the entire hotel personnel.

Lastly, numerous research affirm that mobile tools can substantially improve speaking and listening skills. Pronunciation can be exceedingly challenging for language learners to practice without an instructor. Contemporary MALL programs, however, address this issue by functioning as virtual tutors. These clever software listen to users and promptly assist them in rectifying their errors. Demonstrating this positive impact, Shaheen (2025) states that "For instance, AI-powered pronunciation apps (such as ELSA Speak) analyze learners' speech and offer corrective feedback, significantly improving accuracy and confidence" (p. 126). This will enable hotel personnel to converse in English daily, enhance their confidence, and facilitate more efficient communication with international guests.

2.1.4 Challenges and Limitations of MALL

Despite the numerous benefits of mobile learning, it is also accompanied by some problems. The predominant issues include gadget dependence, screen weariness, and a lack of student autonomy. For instance, hotel staff already endure arduous and extended working hours. Excessive time spent gazing at phone screens might lead to fatigue. Moreover, certain learners may become overly dependent on the software, hindering their capacity for independent thought. Pointing out this specific concern, Shaheen (2025) states that "Language learners, in particular, may worry about over-dependence: hospitality students in one study feared they might 'trust the [AI] application more than the lecturer' and lose critical thinking opportunities" (p. 133). Consequently, hotel management must reconcile mobile practices with genuine human engagement to mitigate these adverse consequences.

In addition to physical and cognitive exhaustion, students in developing countries often have economical and technological constraints. For instance, not all hotel employees in Vietnam can afford the expensive app subscription. The majority of free versions of language programs lack access to useful courses. Highlighting this economic limitation, Haliza & Lolita (2024) explain that "Challenges with ELSA Speak included the limited features for free users, which affected practice depth and frequency. Reinders and Pegrum (2016) noted that additional features required payment, leading to less frequent use and varied learning outcomes" (p. 236). Consequently, these budgetary limitations may prevent all staff members from practicing regularly and achieving their full potential.

2.2. Theoretical Framework:

2.2.1 *Self-Determination Theory (SDT)*

In the context of utilizing mobile applications for workplace training, technology serves merely as a tool. The genuine success of any educational program hinges on the learners' perceptions and their sources of motivation. In the hospitality

industry, employees are required to adhere to stringent regulations and endure demanding, fluctuating shifts. Consequently, conventional classroom instruction frequently proves ineffective. The employees are either excessively occupied or fatigued to engage in learning. Consequently, SDT developed by Deci and Ryan is selected as the primary framework for this research. It elucidates how working adults reconcile the demands imposed by their employers with their intrinsic desires.

Traditional pedagogical approaches attempt to regulate students through incentives or sanctions. Nonetheless, SDT is distinct. It emphasizes the intrinsic human aspiration to develop, acquire knowledge autonomously, and improve (Ryan & Deci, 2020). For hotel personnel, acquiring proficiency in English is typically not an enjoyable pastime. Initially, they acquire knowledge out of necessity. They are compelled by external factors, such as the necessity to provide excellent service or the apprehension of dissatisfied guests. However, if kids learn solely due to this pressure, they will quickly experience fatigue and stress during communication. They are unable to study for extended periods. This underscores the significance of SDT for this investigation. It elucidates how a mobile learning application can transform a demanding job need into a daily, autonomous learning practice. The software demonstrates how it encourages personnel to pursue self-directed learning rather than being compelled to do so.

SDT is chosen due to its three fundamental psychological requirements, which correspond precisely with the design elements of the ELSA app: the app's flexible self-paced timetable fulfills autonomy, its real-time grading system addresses competence, and its interactive conversations foster social relatedness.

Technology facilitates learning, although the effectiveness of any training program depends on the participants' motivation. The researchers often depend on the Self-Determination Theory, initially developed by Deci and Ryan, to understand

intrinsic motivation. This notion has emerged as a crucial foundation for contemporary education. Highlighting its growth, Ryan & Deci (2020) state that “In the two decades since, the field has rapidly matured and much has been learned about these two major types of motivation, especially within the framework of self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2017), a broad theory of human development and wellness, with strong implications for education” (p. 1).

Moreover, SDT presents a markedly distinct perspective in contrast to traditional approaches that sought to externally regulate students. It pertains to the innate drive of individuals to acquire knowledge and improve themselves. Explaining this significant change, Ryan & Deci (2020) point out that:

SDT has been part of a "Copernican turn" in the field, as unlike behavioristic approaches, which attempt to shape and control motivation from the outside, SDT places its emphasis on people's inherent motivational propensities for learning and growing, and how they can be supported. (p. 1)

Hotel staff benefit more from internal assistance and encouragement in learning English than from pressure exerted by hotel management.

SDT categorizes several types of motivation to enhance the understanding of the learning process. The primary distinction lies in acting for personal gratification versus acting to obtain an external reward. Highlighting this difference, Ryan & Deci (2020) explain that:

Often contrasted with intrinsic motivation is the heterogeneous category of extrinsic motivation, which concerns behaviors done for reasons other than their inherent satisfactions. From an SDT view the contrast is not a simple one, because instrumental motivations can vary widely in content and character. (p. 2)

For all hotel personnel, intrinsic motivation may derive from the pleasure of proficiently speaking a new language. Conversely, extrinsic motivation may stem from

the desire for a promotion or a wage increase. By understanding these two types, hotel management can create optimal settings that will encourage personnel to maintain interest in long-term English language education.

The primary significant aspect of SDT is autonomy. Autonomy in learning denotes the capacity of pupils to independently make decisions regarding their educational pursuits. This is advantageous for hotel personnel, as it allows them to determine when and where to practice English. They have the autonomy to govern their own educational journey instead of adhering to a rigid classroom timetable. Highlighting this concept, Ryan & Deci (2020) state that “Autonomy concerns a sense of initiative and ownership in one's actions. It is supported by experiences of interest and value and undermined by experiences of being externally controlled, whether by rewards or punishments” (p. 1). Consequently, hotel personnel will exhibit greater engagement and assume responsibility for their growth when they perceive ownership of the learning process.

The second fundamental component of SDT is competence. Competence is fundamentally the conviction of being effective and capable of performing a specific task. All hotel personnel find a sense of fulfillment when they can communicate proficiently and fluently in English with overseas customers. To cultivate this sentiment, learners must engage in a nurturing environment. Defining this concept, Ryan & Deci (2020) state that “Competence concerns the feeling of mastery, a sense that one can succeed and grow. The need for competence is best satisfied within well-structured environments that afford optimal challenges, positive feedback, and opportunities for growth” (p. 1). Thus, when hotel staff obtain explicit and affirmative feedback from their language apps or supervisors, they will experience an enhanced sense of proficiency in their communication abilities.

2.2.2. Theory of Motivation

Building upon the foundational psychological needs outlined in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), it is crucial to further analyze the specific trajectory of motivational energy that drives learners to engage or disengage with a learning tool over time. For this reason, the theory of motivation, specifically the intrinsic-extrinsic motivation framework developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), is selected as a complementary theoretical pillar for this study.

This theoretical framework is specifically chosen because it provides the evaluative lens to assess whether ELSA Speak functions as a motivational instrument—not merely a pronunciation tool. By examining how the app's gamified scoring system, flexible scheduling, and interactive dialogues engage intrinsic motivational processes, this study can explain not only whether the app improves communication proficiency, but why sustained self-study behavior emerges, and under what psychological conditions its effectiveness is maximized.

Motivation is recognized as the fundamental impetus behind human behavior and learning, affecting effort, persistence, and performance levels. In psychology and education, comprehending the essence of motivation is essential for both theoretical and practical applications.

According to Ryan & Deci (2000), “To be motivated means to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated” (p. 54). This definition emphasizes motivation as a dynamic condition that influences a learner's decision to participate in or disengage from a task. The level of motivation in language acquisition can profoundly influence students' readiness to engage in communication, their learning tactics, and their overall success in the long term.

Intrinsic motivation denotes the innate drive to participate in an activity due to its intrinsic satisfaction or enjoyment, rather than for external incentives. According to Ryan & Deci (2000), “Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence” (p. 56).

This form of motivation is defined by curiosity, enjoyment, and the quest for personal development. Individuals with intrinsic motivation typically employ profound learning techniques, exhibit enhanced creativity, and demonstrate resilience in challenging situations due to the inherent satisfaction derived from the activity. A student who derives pleasure from reading English novels or watching English films has intrinsic motivation, as the activity is inherently satisfying, irrespective of grades or external rewards.

Extrinsic motivation, as contrast to intrinsic motivation that stems from internal enjoyment, pertains to participation in an activity to achieve results that are distinct from the activity itself. According to Ryan & Deci (2000), “Extrinsic motivation is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome” (p. 60).

In SDT, extrinsic motivation is elucidated through a continuum of regulation, extending from external regulation, characterized by behavior motivated by rewards and punishments, to more autonomous forms such as identified and integrated regulation, where individuals acknowledge and internalize the intrinsic value of the activity. While extrinsic motivation is frequently deemed inferior to intrinsic drive, it remains significantly pertinent in formal educational contexts, where assessments, grades, and prospective career possibilities are crucial in maintaining students' engagement.

A student studying English to pass the IELTS exam for university admission is evidently extrinsically driven, as the learning facilitates a practical consequence beyond the activity itself.

2.3. Learner Autonomy

2.3.1 Definitions and Core Concepts of Autonomy

Understanding how individuals learn autonomously is essential prior to discussing specific language instruction techniques. Autonomy is the fundamental principle of this notion. The term "autonomy" originates from Greek, signifying "self-rule" or "self-governance". It can be succinctly defined as an individual's capacity to make autonomous decisions. Elucidating the historical origins of this phrase, Benson (2011) notes that “The English word autonomy is etymologically derived from Ancient Greek, where it referred to the political status of conquered cities that were governed according to their own laws rather than those of the conquering power.” (p. 50). For a typical learner, such as a university student, autonomy signifies that they do not only await a teacher's directives; they proactively assume responsibility for their own education. Similarly, hotel staff must cultivate independence in a fast-paced work atmosphere to attain success. Consequently, the act of cultivating autonomy is a crucial step that enables both ordinary students and hospitality professionals to become lifelong learners.

To achieve true autonomy, two essential conditions must be met: liberty and agency. Liberty is the capacity to learn autonomously, free from the constraints of stringent external influences. This refers to a typical student's capacity to study independently without a teacher's guidance at every stage. Highlighting this necessary freedom, Benson (2011) points out that “Researchers on autonomy were aware that in order to develop a capacity to take control of their learning, learners needed to be freed from the direction and control of others” (p. 14). For hotel staff, freedom signifies the ability to learn English at their convenience, rather than adhering to a rigid work schedule, allowing them to choose the time and location that suit them best.

The second is agency, denoting a human intention to act in order to attain a specific objective. While learners may have the liberty to study, they will accomplish little without a defined aim. Explaining this psychological concept, Virenque & Mossio (2024) state that “In the mainstream conception, the notion of agency is related to intentionality. Action is intentional behavior, which means behavior performed for a reason, oriented toward a goal” (p. 2). For an average student, this may signify the successful completion of a university final exams. Meanwhile, hospitality staff are driven by the necessity to communicate effectively and fluently with foreign tourists to provide exemplary service. Consequently, a synthesis of liberty and agency empowers both everyday students and working professionals to attain complete independence and success in their language pursuits.

2.3.2 Learner Autonomy in Adult Education

General learner autonomy is the capacity of any student-including young children and school teenagers-to take responsibility for their own learning, such as choosing study topics or evaluating their own progress (Benson, 2011). However, autonomy in adult education is fundamentally different because adult learners possess unique life experiences and psychological needs.

According to Malcolm Knowles’ theory of andragogy (adult learning), adults are already independent individuals in real life. They manage jobs, families, and financial responsibilities every day. Therefore, while school children need to be taught how to become autonomous, adults already have life autonomy and strongly expect to be treated as self-directed people in their training. Furthermore, adult autonomy is highly practical and problem-centered. Regular students often study a language for future grades or general knowledge. In contrast, adults only use their autonomy to learn things that solve immediate real-world problems in their current career.

The transition from philosophical theories to practical education fundamentally alters our perception of the classroom regarding autonomy. In traditional language instruction, the teacher exerts complete control over all aspects. This is referred to as a "teacher-centered" approach. For adult learners, education must transition to a "learner-centered" approach, wherein students assume complete management over their own studies. This transition entails providing adults with new competencies that will direct them. Explaining this necessary shift, Benson (2011) notes that:

At CRAPEL, it was argued that in order to carry out effective self-directed learning, adult learners would need to develop skills related to self-management, self-monitoring and self-assessment. Learners who were accustomed to teacher-centred education would also need to be psychologically prepared for more learner-centred modes of learning, (pp. 11-12)

Similar to any adult reentering academia who must acquire time management skills, hotel personnel encounter the same difficulty. Due to their demanding shifts without a conventional instructor, these hospitality professionals must mentally equip themselves to oversee their own English practice and evaluate their daily advancement.

Many individuals believe that autonomy equates to solitary study. Nonetheless, this constitutes a misconception; our social contexts and interpersonal relationships significantly impact autonomy. Explaining this shift in perspective, Benson (2011) points out that "In recent years, however, researchers on autonomy have emphasised that the development of autonomy necessarily implies collaboration and interdependence" (p. 14). For an average language learner, this implies that the student must continue practicing with peers or seek advice from friends to improve effectively. Likewise, hotel personnel cannot attain proficiency in English independently. They must engage with their coworkers and guests to cultivate their linguistic autonomy.

Another important aspect of autonomy is self-maintenance. Biological systems in nature has the autonomy to sustain and preserve themselves. Adult learners exhibit remarkably analogous behavior. They ought to cultivate a self-sustaining practice to preserve their language proficiency over the long run. Explaining this concept from a scientific viewpoint, Virenque & Mossio (2024) state that:

In a nutshell, the theory of biological autonomy holds that a system is an agent if it is capable of interacting with its environment in such a way that its behavior is, first, enabled by its own constitutive organization and, second, contributing to maintain that very organization. (p. 2)

Applying this biological principle to education elucidates its significance. For any typical adult learner, learning is not a singular occurrence. They must engage in regular practice to retain their information. Consequently, genuine autonomy entails establishing a perpetual practice of self-enhancement.

2.4. Motivation and SDT in Practice

2.4.1 Relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

While intrinsic and extrinsic drive are frequently juxtaposed, modern viewpoints indicate that they are not to be seen as wholly distinct or antagonistic factors. According to Ryan & Deci (2000):

Although intrinsic motivation is clearly an important type of motivation, most of the activities people do are not, strictly speaking, intrinsically motivated. Extrinsic motivation is therefore an important type of motivation, and the Self-Determination Theory proposes that extrinsic motivation can vary greatly in the degree to which it is autonomous. (p. 60)

This argument emphasizes that extrinsic motivation is not inherently negative or inferior; instead, it can be absorbed and converted into more self-determined forms of regulation.

This indicates that intrinsic motivation fosters learning for pleasure and curiosity, although extrinsic incentive can also facilitate significant and enduring engagement when learners recognize the worth of their endeavors.

2.4.2 Application of SDT in Language Learning

Motivation is crucial for individuals in the endeavor of acquiring a new language. In both traditional classrooms and for adult learners studying at home, fulfilling general psychological requirements is essential for long-term success. Pointing out this universal principle, Ryan (2023) asserts that “To the extent that learners’ needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied, they are likely to sustain any intrinsic motivation they might have and/or adopt a more internalized orientation toward learning and using the new language” (p. 623). This fundamental norm is equally applicable to working professionals. Like other learners in their daily experiences, hotel employees will be more motivated to study when they feel autonomous, competent, and engaged throughout their English training sessions. To effectively convert external job requirements into internal drive, a successful training program should aim to satisfy these three key goals.

Recent years have seen several researchers examine the SDT in mobile learning contexts. These empirical studies indicate that general learners experience heightened motivation and engagement while utilizing smart applications. The beneficial impact is evident in the workplace, where applications can be customized for particular roles. Highlighting this practical application, Shaheen (2025) notes that “AI tools support targeted practice on hospitality-specific language (hospitality vocabulary, typical guest queries, etc.), promote learner autonomy, and can make training more engaging through gamification and multimedia” (p. 126). Consequently, these new technologies may satisfy not only the fundamental vocabulary but also address the psychological needs of all hotel staff, rendering their training experience exceptionally beneficial.

2.4.3 Relevance of SDT to ELSA Use

The SDT substantiates the efficacy of certain mobile applications for language learners. Specifically, programs like ELSA Speak are designed to enhance both autonomy and competence. Users can exercise autonomy by choosing when and where to practice without awaiting a teacher's arrival. To assure proficiency, the program promptly rectifies their errors while assessing their pronunciation. Highlighting how these smart features empower learners, Shaheen (2025) notes that “AI tools support targeted practice on hospitality-specific language (hospitality vocabulary, typical guest queries, etc.), promote learner autonomy, and can make training more engaging through gamification and multimedia” (p. 126). Consequently, when hotel personnel utilize ELSA, they not only assume responsibility for their own training but also cultivate a robust sense of proficiency in their English abilities.

The primary objective of mobile applications is to facilitate learners in continuing their education beyond standard working hours. Intrinsic motivation is the paramount factor for sustaining everyday involvement in the absence of a conventional classroom. When an application effectively satisfies the fundamental psychological demands of users, they will be inclined to engage more frequently. Explaining this long-term effect, Ryan (2023) asserts that “To the extent that learners’ needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied, they are likely to sustain any intrinsic motivation they might have and/or adopt a more internalized orientation toward learning and using the new language” (p. 623). This indicates that when ELSA instills a sense of competence and independence in the hotel employees, they will persist in learning English with passion, even in their personal environments.

2.5. Language Acquisition in Context

2.5.1 Action-Based Language in the Hospitality Context

When an individual studies a language, they do not merely commit abstract symbols from a textbook to memory. In reality, language is intricately connected to corporeal experiences and physical actions. For a typical learner, comprehending a new word entails envisioning the specific action denoted by the term. Explaining this cognitive process, Glenberg & Gallese (2012) note that “The Indexical Hypothesis (Glenberg & Robertson, 1999) asserts that sentences are understood by creating a simulation of the actions that underlie them” (p. 4). It suggests that to achieve proficiency in any language, an individual must connect their vocabulary to tangible experiences in life.

This action-based theory perfectly matches the hospitality environment. In a bustling hotel, communication is predominantly action-driven. For example, receptionists frequently engage in physical activities while interacting with guests, such as distributing room keys, indicating locations on a map, or processing transactions. Consequently, hotel personnel should prioritize swift reactions in situations over proficiency in classical grammar. Highlighting how English training must reflect these physical tasks, Shaheen (2025) points out that:

Effective courses focus on the real-world functions needed by staff - for example, greeting guests, making reservations, or handling complaints. As Husin et al. note, training content should align with the ‘sequence of services’ in hotel operations, incorporating common expressions for reception, dining, and housekeeping. (p. 126)

Thus, effective language acquisition for hospitality personnel necessitates the rehearsal of the specific vocabulary and behaviors they deploy daily during their shifts.

2.5.2 Technology-Enhanced Language Acquisition

Digital tools provide novel chances for language learners in contemporary society. These tools fundamentally alter the manner in which individuals engage with a

new language outside of a conventional classroom setting. Mobile applications provide students with a readily accessible personal tutor. Highlighting the power of these digital tools, Shaheen (2025) notes that “AI-driven tutors and apps can provide personalized, adaptive practice, giving learners individualized feedback on pronunciation and grammar” (p. 126). Similar to university students utilizing applications for home study, hotel personnel can employ similar technologies to manage their own educational development. This renders English practice highly adaptable and individualized, accommodating their demanding professional schedules.

Furthermore, to acquire a language effectively, a learner necessitates three essential resources: comprehensible input (listening), possibilities for output (speaking), and immediate corrective feedback. For a typical student, reiterating this approach will rectify errors and enhance natural speech. The ELSA application can function as an optimal technical aid for this process in the workplace. It employs artificial intelligence to establish an ongoing loop of listening, speaking, and correcting. Emphasizing this specific advantage, Shaheen (2025) explains that “By identifying specific phonetic errors (e.g. vowel sounds, consonant clusters), the AI points learners to exactly what to improve a level of personalized guidance that traditional classroom training finds hard to match” (p. 127).

This ongoing and accurate input is immensely beneficial for the hotel staff. It aids them in surmounting the interference of their native language and markedly enhances their conversational proficiency with overseas visitors.

2.6. Measuring Communicative Proficiency

Educators necessitate a standardized approach to assess the proficiency of an individual in a language. The two most prevalent systems are the CEFR levels A1-C2 and the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Guidelines. These frameworks provide explicit objectives for each level of learning to the average student. Highlighting the purpose of

this system, Whyte (2019) notes that “A cross-linguistic competency framework based on fine-grained 'can do' statements, the CEFR shares with interlanguage research a concern to identify stages of approximation of native-speaker competence” (p. 7). Similar to a university student utilizing these levels to monitor academic advancement, the hotel personnel can employ these pragmatic "can do" statements to assess their actual capacity to service international customers.

In assessing spoken language, evaluators consider more than merely grammar. They focus significantly on essential indications such as pronunciation, fluency, and intonation. For any typical language learner, succeeding in a speaking examination necessitates the acquisition of certain particular competencies. Explaining the standard testing criteria, According to Whyte (2019) “Candidates are scored on five linguistic criteria (vocabulary, grammar, coherence, pronunciation, and fluency) by two raters using A2, B1, B2, and C1 band descriptors” (Deygers et al., 2018, as cited in Whyte, 2019, p. 8).

Nonetheless, in practical scenarios, ordinary individuals also assess these identical competencies. Noting this real-world judgment , according to Whyte (2019), “The lay judges mentioned *demeanour, non-verbal behaviour, pronunciation, linguistic resources (vocabulary, grammar), fluency, content, interaction, and overall impression (ability, performance, message, proficiency)* in justifying their assessments” (pp. 12-13). Thus, for hospitality employees, fluent pronunciation and fluency are not merely academic prerequisites. They are crucial instruments that directly influence the overall impression they convey to their customers.

Building on these general frameworks, the present study operationalizes communicative proficiency through four measurable components that are directly derived from Canale and Swain's (1980) theoretical model and adapted to the hospitality workplace context. These four components - pronunciation accuracy, speaking fluency,

vocabulary range, and interactional competence - collectively constitute the dependent variable of this study and form the basis of the speaking test rubric used in both the pre-test and post-test assessments. Pronunciation accuracy corresponds to the phonological dimension of grammatical competence; speaking fluency reflects discourse competence in terms of smooth, coherent delivery; vocabulary range captures the lexical dimension of grammatical competence; and interactional competence - the ability to respond appropriately, maintain dialogue, and apply communication strategies - reflects strategic and sociolinguistic competence as defined by Canale and Swain. This operationalization ensures a direct and transparent connection between the theoretical framework established in the literature review and the empirical measurement procedures employed in Chapter 3.

2.7. Introduction to the ELSA App

2.7.1 Overview of *ELSA Speak*

Enhancing pronunciation without the guidance of a native instructor poses a significant challenge for many English learners globally. A customized mobile application was developed to address this issue. Describing its origin and main purpose, Gusrianto & Iswahyuni (2025) state that “ELSA Speak, an app developed by ELSA Corporation, addresses this issue by using artificial intelligence and speech recognition technology to provide personalized pronunciation feedback” (p. 220). Since its early development, the application has grown into a massive educational tool. Providing more details on its scale, Nushi & Sadeghi (2021) note that “ELSA is an EFL/ESL pronunciation development app designed based on United States English, with over 1200 exercises to help learners sound like native speakers. The software is used by millions of language learners worldwide” (p. 289). This extensive repository of exercises provides individuals, regardless of being a high school student or a working professional, the opportunity to enhance their speaking skills at any time.

The primary benefit of this application is its technological sophistication. For an average student, engaging a private pronunciation instructor is frequently costly and time-intensive. Nevertheless, this tool functions as a virtual instructor that immediately detects and rectifies faults. Highlighting this powerful capability, Nushi & Sadeghi (2021) explain that:

The flagship feature of this app is its built-in automatic speech recognition technology (ASR) and the way it provides learners with instant feedback on their pronunciation accuracy at both segmental and suprasegmental levels. Perhaps this is the reason the app website names it ‘the world's smartest Artificial Intelligence pronunciation coach’. (pp. 288-289)

With this "smart coach" integrated into mobile phones, independent learners can receive accurate and immediate corrections on their English regardless of their location.

2.7.2 Key Features of ELSA

Real-time feedback on pronunciation

The application's paramount feature is its capacity to rectify spoken errors instantaneously. For an average student, awaiting a teacher's evaluation of their pronunciation can be time-consuming. This application employs contemporary technologies to address this problem. Explaining this core function, Gusrianto & Iswahyuni (2025) note that “ELSA Speak is a pronunciation app using AI and speech recognition to provide learners with real-time feedback” (Becker & Edalatishams, 2019, as cited in Gusrianto & Iswahyuni, 2025, p. 221). Detailing how fast this process happens, Karim et al. (2023) state that “Right after students record their voices, ELSA Speaks will immediately show the score result and the level of achievement” (p. 659). This implies that any autonomous learner can immediately identify and rectify their mistakes without delay.

Personalized lesson plans

Moreover, the application generates a personalized learning trajectory for each user. It does not offer the same textbook to all users; instead, it administers an initial assessment. Describing this process, Nushi & Sadeghi (2021) mention that “ELSA recommends learners take a five-minute quiz to find out what they need to learn and will provide them with a custom lesson plan” (p. 290). It also takes into consideration the origins of the learner in order to provide improved guidance. Highlighting this smart feature, Nushi & Sadeghi (2021) further explain that:

The reason for this initial language selection is that the app is capable of adapting to the learners' mother tongue and will be able to provide them with more accurate feedback and identify their top pronunciation challenges if it knows their native language. (p. 289)

In addition to personalizing the lessons, it also measures progress clearly. Noting this structured approach, Karim et al. (2023) point out that “Moreover, ELSA speak provides some learning levels, ranging from beginner to advanced level, and determines whether or not the user's speech is accurate” (p. 656).

Gamification and self-paced modules.

Ultimately, it must sustain student motivation by including gamified interactions and adaptable timetables. Studying might become tedious or stressful for a busy adult. The application enables users to enhance their practice by gamifying lectures. Noting this benefit, Gusrianto & Iswahyuni (2025) state that “The app’s interactive and gamified features support independent learning and have been shown to improve users’ pronunciation skills significantly” (Osadcha et al., 2021, as cited in Gusrianto & Iswahyuni, 2025, p. 220).

This flexibility also enables users to manage their time. Highlighting this advantage, according to Gusrianto & Iswahyuni (2025) “Language learners can access

interactive and engaging activities through mobile apps and online platforms, allowing for flexible, self-paced learning” (p. 221).

Finally, these elements provide the language acquisition process both pleasurable and highly manageable for independent learners.

2.7.3 Pedagogical Role of ELSA

Besides its technological functionality, the program also has a significant pedagogical purpose. Firstly, it significantly promotes autonomous learning. Students in a conventional classroom typically remain seated and await guidance from the teacher. However, by developing a mobile application, they can assert control over their own education. Highlighting this benefit, Nushi & Sadeghi (2021) state that “Furthermore, it can provide language learners with opportunity to enhance their pronunciation on their own and become more autonomous in learning the skill” (p. 287).

In addition to fostering student independence, the software also alleviates anxiety among users. Many individuals experience anxiety when required to articulate their thoughts in front of a complete classroom. The app's provision of a private environment enables users to repeatedly engage in the experience without feeling embarrassed. Emphasizing this psychological advantage, Karim et al. (2023) note that “Indeed, ELSA Speak provides students with more opportunities to practice speaking confidently without fear of their own mistakes” (p. 666).

This digital tool is particularly relevant for general workplace training. Most busy professionals rarely have the opportunity to attend regular classes. The application does not fully supplant traditional schooling but rather functions as an adjunct to formal education. Explaining how it fits into the professional world, Shaheen (2025) points out that “Importantly, these tools augment but do not replace human trainers; they serve as scalable supplements that can be used any time, fitting around busy schedules” (p. 128).

Consequently, the application offers a pragmatic, confidential, and effortless method for enhancing communication skills, suitable for both students and working adults.

2.7.4 Content Scope of ELSA Speak and Its Relevance to This Study

Understanding what the ELSA Speak application actually teaches - not merely how it teaches - is essential for evaluating its suitability as a training tool for hotel staff. The app's content library is organized across three primary dimensions: phonological content, topic-based communicative content, and self-assessment content.

Phonological Content

The core of ELSA's learning content focuses on pronunciation at both segmental and suprasegmental levels. At the segmental level, the app provides structured drills targeting individual English phonemes - including vowel sounds, consonant clusters, and minimal pairs - that learners commonly mispronounce based on their native language background. For Vietnamese learners specifically, common error patterns addressed by the app include the deletion of final consonants (e.g., /t/, /d/, /k/, /s/), confusion between long and short vowel pairs (e.g., /i:/ vs /ɪ/ as in *seat* and *sit*), and difficulty with fricatives such as /θ/ and /ð/ that do not exist in Vietnamese phonology.

At the suprasegmental level, ELSA provides practice in word stress, sentence stress, intonation patterns, and connected speech features including linking and reduction. These elements are particularly critical for hospitality communication, as incorrect stress and intonation - even when individual phonemes are accurate - frequently impede intelligibility in real guest interactions.

Topic-Based Communicative Content

Beyond pronunciation drills, ELSA Speak provides over 60 topic-based dialogue modules organized around real-life communicative contexts. These modules require learners to produce full utterances - not just isolated sounds - within a communicative scenario, and receive AI feedback on their overall delivery. The topic categories most

directly relevant to hotel staff in this study include: *Travel and Transportation, Hotel and Accommodation, Food and Beverage Service, Directions and Location, Customer Service and Complaints, and Business Communication*. Within each topic, learners progress through vocabulary introduction, phrase-level practice, and extended dialogue simulation, building from word recognition to conversational fluency within the same content domain.

For the purposes of this study, the five-week intervention was specifically structured around the ELSA content categories most closely aligned with the daily communicative demands of Pham Gia Hotel staff, as described in Section 3.5. This alignment between app content and occupational language needs - grounded in ESP principles - was a deliberate design decision to maximize the practical transferability of learning gains to real workplace interactions.

Self-Assessment Content

ELSA also provides a structured self-assessment layer that forms an integral part of its content delivery. Upon initial registration, users complete a five-minute diagnostic quiz that assesses their current pronunciation profile and generates a customised learning plan. Throughout the learning process, the app maintains a personal progress dashboard that tracks phoneme-level accuracy scores, identifies recurring error patterns, and generates recommendations for targeted remediation. This data layer served a dual function in the present study: it provided participants with visible evidence of their own improvement - and it supplied the researcher with objective adherence and progress indicators during the intervention period.

Table 2.1 below summarizes the content categories of ELSA Speak addressed in this study and their correspondence to the communicative demands of hotel operations at Pham Gia Hotel.

Table 2.1 content categories of ELSA Speak

ELSA Content Category	Specific Content Addressed	Relevance to Hotel Staff
Segmental phonology	Final consonants, vowel pairs, fricatives	Clearer pronunciation in guest interactions
Suprasegmental phonology	Word stress, intonation, connected speech	Natural-sounding speech; comprehension by guests
Hotel & Accommodation dialogues	Check-in/out, room service, facility descriptions	Direct daily job task
Customer Service dialogues	Handling complaints, offering alternatives	Managing difficult guest situations
Food & Beverage dialogues	Menu explanation, taking orders, dietary queries	F&B staff communication
Directions & Location	Describing routes, landmarks, hotel areas	Assisting guests with navigation
Self-assessment dashboard	Error tracking, progress scoring, remediation	Monitoring improvement & sustaining motivation

2.8. Previous Studies

2.8.1. Related studies

The examination of AI mobile applications and English language proficiency has advanced significantly in recent years, underscoring the relevance of digital platforms like ELSA. Articulate with progressively enhanced pronunciation, fluency, and communication proficiency. However, to understand how these studies inform the

current research problem, they must be critically evaluated across two main dimensions: empirical linguistic improvements and psychological impacts on autonomous learning.

A substantial body of recent research has focused on quantifying the exact linguistic benefits of AI-based pronunciation tools using rigorous experimental designs. For instance, Permatasari and Lubis (2024) utilized a quasi-experimental design to compare ELSA Speak with other digital dictionaries among EFL university students, finding that the AI app significantly enhanced phonological accuracy due to its precise real-time feedback. Similarly, Wipen Asteriana (2025) conducted a pre-experimental study on high school students, revealing a statistically significant increase in overall speaking scores (from a mean of 12.11 to 18.07), with notable improvements in fluency, grammar, and vocabulary comprehension. Expanding on this, Arifah and Islam (2025) tested the application at the junior high school level (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) and confirmed its positive impact on intonation and phonetic accuracy. Furthermore, a comprehensive mixed-methods study by Almutairi and Alghammas (2025) on Saudi university students demonstrated that continuous interaction with the app's speech recognition technology dramatically improved not only pronunciation but also grammatical range, cohesion, and lexical resources.

These four studies contribute immensely to the current research by establishing the technical validity of the ELSA Speak app. They provide empirical evidence that the app's ASR system is a scientifically proven tool for correcting fossilized pronunciation errors and improving fluency. However, a critical gap exists: all of these studies were conducted strictly within formal academic environments (junior high schools, high schools, and universities). The participants were full-time students operating under structured academic curricula, with dedicated study hours, and the direct supervision of academic teachers. Consequently, these studies fail to evaluate whether the app's technical benefits can transfer to a high-pressure, vocational environment. The current

research problem at Pham Gia Hotel involves working adults whose communication needs are highly action-oriented (e.g., checking in guests, handling complaints) rather than academic. Therefore, while previous studies prove the tool works in a classroom, they leave a void regarding its practical efficacy in the fast-paced hospitality workplace.

Beyond technical proficiency, another cluster of recent studies has investigated the psychological dimensions of using MALL, particularly focusing on language anxiety, motivation, and learner autonomy. Karim et al. (2023) utilized a mixed-methods approach to explore EFL students' perceptions, concluding that ELSA Speak provided a "scaffolding" effect that lowered speaking anxiety. Because the AI does not judge, students felt more comfortable making mistakes and repeating tasks. In the same vein, Yuliawati and Suryadi (2023) highlighted that the app fostered highly positive perceptions and independent learning habits among students, though they noted challenges regarding limited access to premium features. To deeply understand this independence, Gusrianto and Iswahyuni (2025) conducted a qualitative case study exploring the independent learning experiences of high schoolers. Their findings were twofold: while the app successfully promoted vocabulary acquisition and autonomous practice, the learners also reported significant physical and systemic challenges, such as screen fatigue and difficulty with the app's strict phonetic recognition.

These three studies are highly valuable to the current research because they validate the psychological framework of SDT. They prove that private, gamified AI tools can lower the "affective filter" and foster intrinsic motivation. However, there is a critical limitation in their context. The "independent learning" described by Karim et al. (2023) and Gusrianto and Iswahyuni (2025) still occurred within the safety of a school environment, where students' primary life responsibility is studying. These prior works do not account for the severe cognitive and physical exhaustion experienced by adult professionals working rotating 8-hour shifts. Can a hotel receptionist, who is physically

exhausted after a night shift, still maintain the "autonomous motivation" observed in a high school student? The existing literature fails to critically evaluate this intersection of workplace fatigue and autonomous mobile learning.

By critically evaluating these literatures, a clear research gap emerges: the over-reliance on academic demographics and formal educational settings. The present case study at Pham Gia Hotel is specifically designed to bridge this gap and extends earlier research

This study shifts the research paradigm from academic students to working adult professionals. It extends the technical findings of Permatasari and Lubis (2024) and Almutairi and Alghammas (2025) by testing the ELSA app not as an academic grading tool, but as a vocational survival tool used by hotel staff (receptionists, bellboys, F&B staff) to manage real-time interactions with international guests.

While previous studies (Yuliawati & Suryadi, 2023; Karim et al., 2023) confirmed that ELSA reduces anxiety in a classroom, this study extends that psychological inquiry into the high-stakes hospitality environment. It investigates whether the app can mitigate the specific professional fear of "losing face" in front of colleagues and customers, and whether gamified learning can sustain intrinsic motivation despite rotating shifts and physical workplace fatigue (addressing the challenges noted by Gusrianto & Iswahyuni, 2025).

Taken together, previous studies have established the pedagogical value of ELSA Speak in educational settings and highlighted its potential to reduce speaking anxiety and promote autonomous learning. Nevertheless, the literature remains heavily concentrated on student populations and classroom-based contexts. Little is known about whether these benefits can be sustained among working adults whose learning opportunities are constrained by professional responsibilities, irregular schedules, and workplace stress. This limitation is particularly significant in the hospitality industry,

where effective spoken English is directly linked to service quality and customer satisfaction. Therefore, the present study extends existing research by examining the use of ELSA Speak among hotel employees at Pham Gia Hotel, thereby broadening the applicability of previous findings beyond formal educational environments.

2.8.2. Domestic Studies

Recent studies examining the impact of mobile applications on the development of English speaking skills have enhanced comprehension of the role of AI platforms in promoting language acquisition within the Vietnamese setting. Various research have examined distinct aspects of these digital activities, asserting that they contribute to the development of fluency, confidence, and articulation in students.

Recent experimental studies in Vietnam have rigorously tested the app's ability to correct specific mother-tongue interference. Nguyen and Tuyen (2024) demonstrated through a pre-test/post-test design that ELSA Speak effectively enhanced the speaking skills of college students in Ho Chi Minh City. Similarly, Phuong & Duy (2026) conducted an 8-week experiment with 60 non-English majors at Tra Vinh University, finding significant improvements in pronunciation accuracy and native-like intonation.

These studies contribute significantly to the current problem by anchoring the technological validity of ELSA Speak for Vietnamese learners. They prove that the ASR system successfully identifies and corrects typical Vietnamese phonetic errors. However, a critical limitation exists: both studies tested the application solely on university students whose primary motivation is passing academic exams within a structured curriculum. They do not critically evaluate whether this technological efficacy translates into practical, real-time communicative competence for adult professionals facing the immediate, high-stakes pressures of the hospitality industry. The current research at Pham Gia Hotel addresses this gap by testing the app's efficacy as a vocational survival tool rather than an academic grading mechanism.

Another cluster of local research explores the psychological impacts of using the app. Pham & Pham (2025) and Tran & Vu (2024) found that the application fostered high learner satisfaction and a strong sense of learner autonomy among students at Can Tho College and Sai Gon University, as it allowed for flexible, self-paced learning. Conversely, qualitative studies by Ngoc & Thanh (2023) and Pham & Pham (2024) highlighted the practical challenges of MALL. While recognizing the benefits, their participants (university students) reported frustrations with technical bugs, screen fatigue, and the psychological stress of trying to meet the AI's strict grading criteria.

These qualitative findings provide an essential theoretical anchor for this study, confirming that ELSA Speak can indeed trigger learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation in the Vietnamese context (SDT Theory). However, the "autonomy" described in these academic settings is heavily scaffolded by university curricula, and the challenges identified (such as AI grading stress) are viewed entirely through an academic lens. The existing literature fails to critically evaluate how these technological frustrations interact with severe workplace fatigue. For the front-line staff at Pham Gia Hotel, the cognitive load of practicing English after a rotating 8-hour shift is profoundly different from a student completing homework. It remains unknown whether the app's motivational gamification is strong enough to sustain autonomous practice among exhausted working adults.

By looking closely at these studies, we can see a clear gap because they only focus on university and college students. The present study at Pham Gia Hotel directly extends this earlier local research in several important ways. First, this study changes the focus from academic students to working adults. Instead of testing general English for school grades like the projects at Duy Tan or Tra Vinh University, it examines real workplace communication for hotel staff who need English to serve international guests. Second, this project extends the theory of independent learning. Previous research by Tran & Vu

(2024) shows that students can build good self-study habits with the mobile app. However, this study tests if working professionals can still maintain this autonomy when they suffer from physical exhaustion after working rotating 8-hour shifts. Finally, this research re-evaluates the practical challenges of using AI technology. While Ngoc & Thanh (2023) noted that students feel stressed by the app's strict grading system, the present study explores how hotel workers respond to this pressure. It examines whether the fear of losing face in front of real customers makes the AI feedback more useful as a vocational survival tool. Therefore, this project connects the technological and psychological findings of earlier local papers but moves them into a completely new corporate environment.

2.9. Research Gap

The efficacy of the ELSA Speak application is addressed in a substantial corpus of literature, as analyzed in the preceding sections. Global study (e.g., Nushi and Sadeghi, 2021; Karim et al., 2023) has effectively shown that AI-based solutions can improve students' pronunciation, fluency, and autonomous learning worldwide. In the context of Vietnam, domestic research (e.g., Pham and Pham, 2025; Nguyen and Pham, 2026) have corroborated these advantages, demonstrating that ELSA Speak mitigates speaking anxiety and enhances confidence among university students.

However, a critical examination of these international and local research reveals a notable shared limitation: they predominantly focus on formal academic environments. The topics mostly consist of students who learn under the supervision of conventional educators within a formal educational framework. Currently, there is a significant deficiency of empirical studies investigating the use of AI language applications in professional environments, particularly within the hotel industry in Vietnam. Hotel employees face distinct challenges compared to students, such as erratic rotating shifts,

the absence of a professional English instructor, and the necessity for everyday communication with international individuals.

Consequently, to address this particular gap, this study transitions the research context from a conventional classroom to a vibrant hospitality setting. The study establishes its research aims and questions by concentrating on the staff of Pham Gia Hotel to overcome this gap. The study is to assess the impact of ELSA Speak on the English communication ability of hotel employees (Research Question 1) and to determine which AI activities are most beneficial for these autonomous adult learners (Research Question 2).

2.10. Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework demonstrates the direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the context of Pham Gia Hotel.

The theoretical framework serves as the foundation for both the selection of variables and the interpretation of findings in this study. Specifically, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Motivation Theory provide the conceptual linkage between the educational model (ELSA Speak) and the empirical variables investigated.

Regarding variable selection, ELSA Speak functions as the independent variable because it represents the technological intervention introduced to improve employees' English communication. Based on SDT, two key psychological constructs were selected: Learner Autonomy and Motivation. These variables were chosen because SDT argues that individuals are more likely to engage in sustained learning when they experience autonomy and competence. The application's self-paced learning environment, instant feedback system, and flexible accessibility are expected to support these psychological needs. Communication Proficiency was selected as the dependent variable because it represents the ultimate learning outcome that the training intervention seeks to improve.

Regarding result interpretation, the theoretical framework explains the mechanism through which ELSA Speak may influence communication performance. Rather than assuming that technological features alone improve speaking ability, SDT suggests that the application first enhances learners' sense of autonomy and competence. These psychological experiences increase motivation and encourage more frequent and sustained practice. Consequently, improvements in communication proficiency can be interpreted as the combined outcome of technological support and psychological engagement. Therefore, the theoretical framework establishes a clear pathway linking the educational model (ELSA Speak), the psychological variables (Learner Autonomy and Motivation), and the final outcome variable (Communication Proficiency).

This framework directly responds to the two research inquiries of the study by correlating the distinct attributes of ELSA Speak with quantifiable enhancements in general communication proficiency and by pinpointing the most efficacious app actions for the advancement of speaking skills.

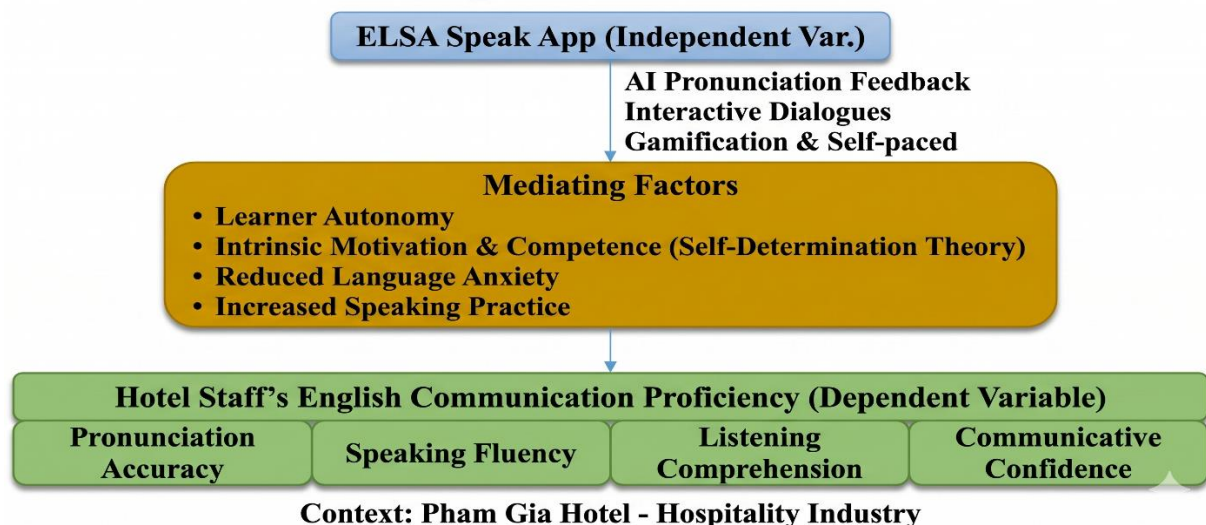


Figure 2.1. Conceptual framework

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Site

The study was place at Pham Gia Phan Thiet Hotel, a privately owned hospitality establishment operated by Pham Quang Than Co., Ltd. The hotel's location is E5-02 Tourism Urban Area, Phu Thuy Ward, Phan Thiet City, Lam Dong Province. Constructed in 2018, it began operations in January 2020.

The hotel is situated in a prominent metropolitan locale adjacent to green parks and the coastline. It is defined by a unique amalgamation of contemporary tropical and opulent French architecture. All guest rooms are externally designed with balconies and vibrant, nature-inspired hues to provide a comfortable accommodation. The hotel operates under the motto “Prestige - Quality - Reasonable Price” and consistently caters to a diverse clientele, including domestic visitors, business travelers, and international clients.

The hotel currently features a system of 25 rooms, each designed with distinct functional areas to meet the accommodation needs of various guests in the vicinity. The hotel's organizational structure consists of 15 personnel: 3 administrators (1 director and 2 deputy directors), 4 receptionists, 2 food and beverage workers, 2 accountants, 2 housekeepers, 1 security guard, and 1 maintenance worker. The entire workforce possesses an exemplary service-oriented mindset and consistently strives to improve customer service delivery. The success of the hotel and its pleasant atmosphere for guests are mostly attributed to the diligence and amiability of the staff.

This particular site was selected as the research location for several significant reasons. Initially, it offers an authentic and dynamic work atmosphere, markedly apart from a conventional academic classroom. Secondly, as Phan Thiet is an emerging seaside tourism city, the hotel personnel regularly engage with international guests. Currently,

individuals encounter practical challenges in English communication, particularly concerning pronunciation and situational responses. Consequently, Pham Gia Hotel serves as an exemplary and practical setting to investigate the integration of MALL applications, such as ELSA Speak, into the daily lives of the adult workforce to enhance their communicative ability.

3.2. Participants

It is essential to elucidate the necessity of English proficiency among these specific participants prior to detailing the sample size. Pham Gia Hotel is situated in Phan Thiet, a burgeoning coastal tourism destination that attracts a consistent influx of international tourists. Consequently, hotel staff, comprising front desk receptionists, frontline food and beverage waiters, security personnel, and housekeepers, interact with foreign visitors on a daily basis. Proficiency in English is required to perform essential everyday tasks such as greeting guests, addressing inquiries, taking orders, providing directions, and handling immediate complaints.

However, as working adults lacking regular formal language training, they frequently encounter communication breakdowns due to imprecise pronunciation, sluggish reflexes, or insufficient confidence. Consequently, acquiring proficiency in English is not merely an academic obligation for these staff; it is a vital professional necessity to ensure visitor contentment and maintain service quality at the hotel. The pressing necessity for enhanced communication skills throughout daily shifts underpins the rationale for this research and the implementation of the ELSA Speak application as a viable training solution.

The study sample comprises 15 employees from Pham Gia Hotel, including 7 in the control group and 8 in the experimental group. All participants are volunteers. The target population comprises hotel personnel possessing varying levels of English proficiency. This phase is crucial as their existing English proficiency will significantly

influence their everyday work performance and the quality of client service. In this research, the EG participants received the ELSA Speak application. They received guidance on integrating the app's lessons into their daily activities. Their perspectives are crucial in assessing the app's utility and efficacy for their tasks.

The researcher employed a purposive sampling strategy. This indicates that the participants have been meticulously chosen based on the research objectives. To guarantee that the sample accurately represents the entire hotel, the 15 participants were systematically categorized according to their respective departments. The EG comprises 8 members: 2 receptionists, 1 food and beverage crew, 1 accountant, 1 housekeeper, 1 security guard, 1 maintenance worker, and 1 administrator. The CG comprises seven members: two receptionists, one food and beverage service worker, one accountant, one housekeeping, and two administrators. This distribution ensures that the sample accurately reflects the actual hotel environment. Consequently, the research findings will unequivocally demonstrate the efficacy of the ELSA app in enhancing communication abilities.

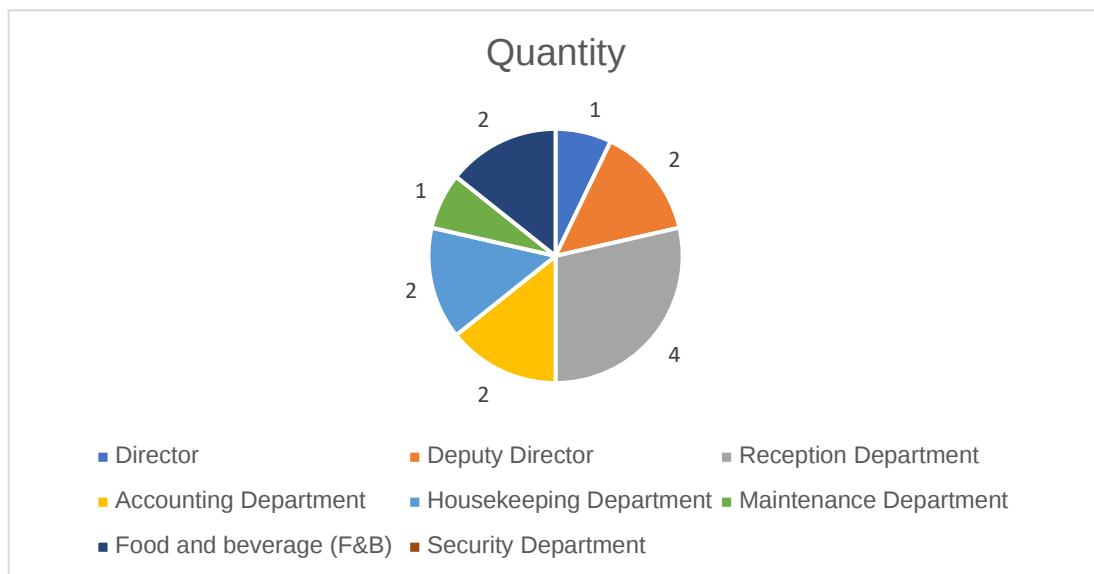


Figure 3.1: Distribution of Participants by Department.

Table 3.1: Communicative Roles of Participants by Department

	Department	Main Communicative Role with Foreign Guests
1	Director	Strategic management; high-level interaction.
2	Deputy Director	Operational management; resolving serious complaints.
3	Reception Department	Primary contact point; check-in/out; information.
4	Accounting Department	Primary contact point; check-in/out; information.
5	Security Department	Welcoming; directions; handling luggage.
6	Housekeeping Department	Room service; basic requests (towels, cleaning).
7	Maintenance Department	Repairing facilities in guest rooms.
8	Food and beverage (F&B)	Introducing menus and taking F&B orders.

Beyond departmental distribution, the demographic composition of the participants is presented to provide a fuller picture of the sample. The 15 participants ranged in age from 20 to 50 years, with a mean age of approximately 28 years, reflecting a predominantly young-adult working population. In terms of gender, the sample comprised 7 female and 8 male participants. Participants' length of employment at Pham

Gia Hotel ranged from 3 months to 5 years, indicating varying degrees of exposure to guest-facing English communication demands.

With regard to prior English proficiency, all participants completed a brief language background questionnaire at the outset of the study. None of the participants had received formal English language training within the preceding two years, and none had used AI-based language learning applications prior to this study. Based on their pre-test speaking scores (mean = 5,50 for the experimental group; mean = 5,85 for the control group on a 10-point rubric), consistent with basic communicative ability but insufficient for fluent, confident professional interaction with international guests.

The two groups - the experimental group (EG, n = 8) and the control group (CG, n = 7) - were formed through purposive assignment rather than random allocation, in order to ensure comparable departmental representation across both groups and to minimise disruption to hotel operations. Pre-test equivalence between the two groups was confirmed statistically prior to the intervention, as reported in Section 4.1.

The adequacy of this sample must be evaluated within the logic of case study research rather than against the standards of large-scale survey studies. In a case study, representativeness is defined by diversity within the bounded context - not by statistical generalizability to a wider population (Yin, 2018). The fifteen participants in this study cover seven distinct departmental roles: reception, food and beverage, accounting, housekeeping, security, maintenance, and administration. This distribution ensures that the findings reflect the communicative realities of all staff categories that engage directly with English at the hotel, rather than any single occupational group.

Furthermore, given that Pham Gia Hotel is a small coastal property, the fifteen participants closely approximate the total population of English-communicating frontline staff at the site. The sample is therefore less a subset drawn from a larger pool

and more a near-complete coverage of the relevant workforce within the case — which strengthens rather than undermines its internal representativeness.

For the qualitative strand, eight interview participants from diverse departments and proficiency levels produced consistent, recurring themes across all core areas: pronunciation improvement, anxiety reduction, motivation, and app usability. This pattern of convergence indicates that theoretical saturation was reached within the current sample (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the quantitative component achieved statistical significance ($p < .05$) despite the small group sizes, confirming that the effect was large enough to be reliably detected — providing post-hoc evidence that the sample was adequate for the study's research questions.

Additionally, to ensure the research findings are very dependable and precise, the speech assessments are evaluated by two raters. Rater 1 serves as the researcher. Rater 2 serves as the Deputy Director of Pham Gia Hotel and is the son of the Director. He possesses a college degree in English and communicates fluently in English with international guests. Both evaluators consented to assess the staff's performance and monitor their advancement. This was conducted to obtain objective and authentic instances of English communication within a genuine hotel setting.

The volunteers were selected from various hotel departments to gather data pertinent to Pham Gia Hotel. This methodology for employing mobile learning applications will enable the research to yield specific and profound outcomes. It will demonstrate the significant significance of AI voice recognition in enhancing the English speaking proficiency of working adults.

3.3. Research Design

This study used a mixed-methods research design to address the research questions and assess the efficacy of the ELSA Speak application in enhancing the

English communicative ability of the workers at Pham Gia Hotel. This design integrates quantitative and qualitative methodologies to gather and present data comprehensively.

The researcher utilized a quasi-experimental approach featuring pretest and posttest assessments in this investigation. The research was carried out during the internship at Pham Gia Hotel. The group comprised 15 staff members, with 8 individuals in EG and 7 individuals in CG.

The EG was directed to utilize the ELSA Speak application and engage in daily English practice. The objective was to improve their pronunciation, fluency, and confidence in efficient communication with international guests. The CG employed self-study techniques through conventional methods without the integration of AI. The two groups underwent a speaking pretest and posttest to assess their communicative and speaking abilities. The assessments were appraised by two evaluators: the researcher and the Deputy Director. The participants completed a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The study's findings were assessed by a post-treatment survey administered soon thereafter. Descriptive statistics and an independent-samples t-test were employed to evaluate the data, comparing the mean scores of the pretest and posttest between the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG).

In addition to the quantitative data, the study also collected qualitative information. The survey sought to gather information from hotel workers regarding their views, impressions, and the efficacy of the ELSA app. The integration of the mobile application into their everyday routines facilitated the documentation of their heightened interest and enhanced communication.

The researcher employed in-depth interviews and workplace observations for the qualitative method. The researcher conducted interviews with hotel staff and managers to acquire a comprehensive grasp of their experiences with the app. To facilitate the exchange of thoughts, emotions, and psychological impediments, such as the

apprehension of error, the researchers employed open-ended inquiries. Furthermore, the researcher monitored daily operational tasks, such as greeting guests at the reception and serving breakfast, to document the staff's authentic communication scenarios and responses.

Incorporating both ways would be really beneficial. The quantitative method provides specific numerical data, such as test scores and survey percentages, which facilitate objective comparison and generalization of results. The qualitative method, encompassing interviews and observations, will facilitate a deeper understanding of staff sentiments and the app's impact, exploring nuances that numerical data cannot capture.

3.4. Research Instruments

To collect reliable and comprehensive data for this study, three main instruments were employed: speaking tests (pre-test and post-test), a structured questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The selection of this specific combination was not arbitrary; rather, it reflects the data triangulation principle in mixed-methods research, which holds that convergent evidence gathered through multiple, methodologically independent instruments produces more trustworthy conclusions than any single instrument alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Each instrument was designed to address a distinct dimension of the research questions: the tests provide objective, measurable evidence of proficiency change; the questionnaire captures participants' perceptions and attitudes at scale; and the interviews generate explanatory depth that neither tests nor surveys can access.

3.4.1 Speaking Tests (Pre-test and Post-test)

Speaking tests were selected as the primary quantitative instrument because they provide the most direct and empirically defensible measure of communicative proficiency change - the central dependent variable of this study. Unlike self-reported proficiency measures, which are subject to social desirability bias and individual

variation in self-assessment accuracy, performance-based speaking tests generate observable, ratable data that can be compared objectively before and after an intervention. This instrument was therefore essential for answering Research Question 1, which concerns the measurable effect of ELSA Speak on overall communication proficiency.

The tests were designed as hospitality-specific role-play tasks rather than generic academic speaking assessments. This design decision was grounded in the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which holds that assessment validity is maximised when test tasks closely mirror the target language-use domain (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Concretely, each speaking test required participants to perform three communicative tasks drawn directly from their daily professional responsibilities: a self-introduction and hotel welcome greeting, a guest check-in simulation including room type explanation and facility description, and a handling-complaints scenario. These task types were selected through informal needs analysis discussions with hotel management prior to the study, ensuring content validity.

The standardized speaking rubric used in this study was designed around four assessment components, each reflecting a theoretically grounded dimension of communicative proficiency as established in Section 2.6. The rubric was adapted from established oral proficiency assessment frameworks, including the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Guidelines and CEFR band descriptors for speaking, and further contextualized to the hospitality setting by incorporating task-specific criteria relevant to hotel guest communication. Table 3.x below presents the four rubric components, their definitions, and the specific communicative behaviors assessed within each.

Table 3.2 Speaking Test Rubric

Component	Definition	Indicators Assessed
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Pronunciation Accuracy	Clarity and intelligibility of phoneme production, word stress, and intonation	Correct final consonants; appropriate word stress; natural intonation patterns; comprehensibility without repeated clarification
Speaking Fluency	Smoothness and pace of delivery; absence of unnatural pauses or excessive hesitation	Continuous delivery without long gaps; appropriate speaking rate; natural self-correction without breakdown
Vocabulary Range	Breadth and appropriateness of lexical choices in hospitality contexts	Use of context-appropriate hospitality vocabulary; avoidance of repetitive phrasing; ability to paraphrase when specific terms are unavailable
Interactional Competence	Ability to respond relevantly to guest prompts, maintain dialogue, and deploy communication strategies when meaning breaks down	Appropriate turn-taking; relevant and complete responses to guest requests; use of repair strategies (e.g., clarification requests, paraphrasing)

Each component was scored on a scale of 0 to 10, yielding a maximum total score of 10 per participant when the four component scores were averaged. Raters applied the rubric independently and scores were subsequently compared for inter-rater reliability, as reported in Section 3.7. This four-component structure enables the analysis to go beyond a single aggregate proficiency score and identify which specific dimensions of

communicative ability showed the greatest improvement following the five-week ELSA intervention - a level of analytical granularity that is particularly important for informing practical training decisions in the hospitality workplace.

Both the pre-test and post-test were structured identically in format and difficulty level to allow direct score comparison. Performances were audio-recorded and evaluated by two raters - the researcher and a qualified Deputy Director familiar with English communication standards - using a standardized 10-point rubric covering pronunciation accuracy, speaking fluency, vocabulary range, and interactional competence. The use of dual raters was specifically designed to control for evaluator subjectivity and establish inter-rater reliability, which was subsequently confirmed statistically (Pearson $r > 0,89$ for both groups; see Section 3.7).

3.4.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was selected as a complementary quantitative instrument for two reasons. First, it enables the systematic and time-efficient collection of perceptual data from all fifteen participants simultaneously, without disrupting hotel operations - a practical necessity given the rotating shift schedules of the sample. Second, it provides structured, scalable data on participants' subjective experiences with the ELSA app, which the speaking tests alone cannot capture.

The questionnaire was designed specifically to map onto the two research questions of this study, and was organized into two construct-based sections. Section 1, comprising items related to *Overall English Communication Proficiency*, addressed Research Question 1 by measuring participants' self-reported changes in pronunciation confidence, listening comprehension, speaking fluency, and communicative comfort with foreign guests following the intervention. Section 2, comprising items related to *ELSA App Activities*, addressed Research Question 2 by measuring the perceived effectiveness of three specific app features - AI pronunciation feedback, interactive

dialogue exercises, and the gamified scoring system. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), which was selected because ordinal Likert data captures degrees of agreement rather than binary yes/no responses, allowing for more nuanced statistical comparison of attitude intensity across participants and groups.

The questionnaire was written in deliberately straightforward English - avoiding technical linguistic terminology - to ensure comprehension across participants with varying proficiency levels. Internal consistency of the two constructs was verified through Cronbach's Alpha analysis, with both sections achieving coefficients above the accepted threshold of 0.70, as reported in Section 4.2.

3.4.3 *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the qualitative instrument because they are uniquely capable of capturing the psychological and experiential dimensions of language learning - including anxiety, motivation, and perceived barriers - that neither test scores nor Likert ratings can adequately represent. Specifically, they enable participants to describe the subjective process of how and why their communicative confidence changed, which is essential for explaining the mechanisms behind the quantitative results.

The decision to use a *semi-structured* format, rather than a fully structured interview protocol, was deliberate. A semi-structured design establishes consistent thematic areas across all interviews - ensuring comparability - while permitting the interviewer to probe emerging responses and follow participant-led directions where relevant. This flexibility is particularly appropriate for exploratory research on lived experience, where the most meaningful insights often arise from unexpected elaborations rather than predetermined questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Interviews were conducted only with the eight EG participants, since only those who had undergone the ELSA intervention possessed first-hand experiential knowledge relevant to the research questions. Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to ensure authentic and uninhibited self-expression, and subsequently transcribed and translated for thematic analysis. The interview guide covered five thematic domains: perceived pronunciation and fluency improvement, changes in communicative confidence and anxiety levels, motivational dynamics and self-study habits, challenges and limitations encountered during app use, and overall reflections on the app's practical relevance to the hospitality workplace. The full interview protocol is provided in Appendix C.

3.5. The Five-Week Intervention Protocol

The core intervention of this study consisted of a structured five-week programme during which the Experimental Group (EG, $n = 8$) used the ELSA Speak application as their sole supplementary English training tool, while the Control Group (CG, $n = 7$) continued their regular working routines without any additional language instruction. The five-week duration was selected on the basis of prior MALL research suggesting that short, intensive interventions of four to six weeks are sufficient to produce statistically detectable improvements in adult speaking proficiency, while remaining feasible within the operational constraints of a working hospitality environment.

To ensure consistency of practice and progressive skill development, the intervention was organized around a weekly thematic focus, as presented in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.3 The Five-Week Intervention

Week	Focus	ELSA Modules Used	Daily Target
1	Pronunciation fundamentals	Phoneme drills: final consonants, vowel sounds, word stress	15 min/day

2	Hospitality vocabulary & phrase fluency	Topic dialogues: check-in, room service, directions	15 min/day
3	Interactive dialogue & sentence fluency	Full dialogue simulations, intonation & connected speech	15 min/day
4	Self-monitoring & error correction	Personal progress dashboard, targeted error remediation	15 min/day
5	Consolidation & integrated practice	Mixed-mode exercises: pronunciation + dialogue + vocabulary	15 min/day

The minimum daily practice requirement was set at 15 minutes per session. This duration was deliberately kept brief to accommodate the physical fatigue and variable shift schedules characteristic of frontline hospitality work, while remaining consistent with research indicating that distributed, short-session MALL practice yields stronger retention than infrequent longer sessions. Participants were free to practice at any time of day - before shifts, during breaks, or after work - to maximise schedule compatibility.

Throughout the five-week period, participant adherence was monitored through weekly self-reported usage logs submitted via a group messaging channel. The researcher responded to technical queries and provided brief motivational reminders at the start of each new week to sustain engagement. No direct instruction or correction was provided by the researcher during the intervention period; all feedback received by participants was generated exclusively by the ELSA app's AI engine. The CG received no communication, instruction, or language-related support during this period.

3.6. Data Collection Procedures

The data gathering process was carefully executed over an 8-week period at Pham Gia Hotel to assure the research's reliability and validity. The procedure was meticulously segmented into four primary phases: preparation and pre-test, the intervention, post-test and survey administration, and ultimately, the comprehensive interviews.

3.7. Data Analysis Procedures

3.7.1. *Pre-tests and Post-tests*

This study administers speaking pre-tests and post-tests to the experimental group of 8 staff members and the control group of 7 staff members at Pham Gia Hotel. The pre-test, scheduled for the first week, will establish a baseline for the employees' communication ability, specifically assessing their pronunciation correctness, speaking fluency, and word usage within the hospitality context. The post-test, same in structure, is administered in week 7 following the five-week ELSA app intervention to assess progress.

Both assessments will be conducted in a regulated environment, featuring audio-recorded and evaluated performances by two assessors (the researcher and the Deputy Director) utilizing a defined criteria. The gathered scores will be examined with SPSS software. The analysis commences with descriptive statistics and assessments of normalcy. Subsequently, paired-samples t-tests will assess the enhancement within each group, whilst independent-samples t-tests will evaluate the post-test scores between the experimental group and the control group. Cohen's d will be employed to compute the impact size, whereas Cronbach's Alpha will be utilized to assess reliability. These statistical analysis will yield objective results regarding the efficacy of the AI application.

3.7.2. *Variable Coding*

For the quantitative analysis, the variables were coded systematically for processing in SPSS. Group assignment was coded as a binary categorical variable: the Experimental Group was coded as 1 and the Control Group was coded as 2. The survey responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale and coded numerically: 1 for Strongly Disagree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Neutral, 4 for Agree, and 5 for Strongly Agree. The

speaking test performance data (pre-test and post-test scores) were recorded as continuous numerical variables based on the evaluation rubric scores.

3.7.3. Qualitative Interview Process and Thematic Analysis

The qualitative strand followed a strict protocol to ensure data trustworthiness. With the explicit permission of the eight participants from the Experimental Group, all semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recorder. After data collection, these audio recordings were transcribed verbatim (word-for-word) from Vietnamese into text. The data was then analyzed using the six-step thematic analysis framework by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researcher read the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the data. Second, initial codes were generated by highlighting recurring phrases and ideas related to learning experiences. Third, these codes were sorted into broader potential themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed against the original transcripts to ensure accuracy. Fifth, the themes were defined and named based on the study's framework (such as pronunciation, anxiety, and motivation). Sixth, the final qualitative narrative was produced to complement the quantitative findings.

3.8. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the overall validity and reliability of the research, a rigorous evaluation approach will be applied across all data collection instruments. For the quantitative components, the validity and reliability of the speaking tests are guaranteed through careful structural design, inter-rater reliability checks between two independent raters, and a pilot study demonstrating a two-tailed correlation significance below the 0.05 level. Similarly, the questionnaire's internal consistency will be verified via pilot testing with a small sample of hotel staff, aiming for a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient greater than 0.7. Regarding the qualitative data, an interview guide will be systematically developed based on the core research objectives and subsequently reviewed by experts to establish

content validity. Finally, the final interview questions will be further refined through a pilot test with a small group of employees to ensure clarity and relevance before official administration.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

To protect the rights of the participants and ensure the integrity of the research, several ethical measures were strictly followed. First, informed consent was obtained from all fifteen participants before the study began. They were fully informed about the purpose of the research, the data collection methods, and their right to withdraw from the project at any time without any negative consequences.

Second, strict confidentiality measures were implemented to protect the participants' identities. All personal information, such as names and specific job positions, was completely anonymized using codes (e.g., Participant A, Participant B) in all datasets, transcripts, and final reports. All collected data, including pre-test and post-test scores, survey responses, and interview audio recordings, was stored in password-protected digital folders. Only the primary researcher has access to these files, and all data will be permanently deleted after the graduation project is officially completed and accepted by the university.

Third, specific steps were taken to mitigate researcher and response biases. To minimize response bias (where staff members might give overly positive answers to please the hotel management or the researcher), all participants were explicitly assured that their test scores, app usage statistics, and interview responses would remain confidential. They were guaranteed that their performance in this study would have absolutely no impact on their job security, salary, or official workplace performance evaluations. To control researcher bias, a standardized speaking rubric was used to score the pre-test and post-test objectively. Furthermore, data triangulation—combining quantitative tests, surveys, and qualitative interviews—was used to ensure that the final

interpretations reflect the true experiences of the staff rather than the personal expectations of the researcher.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Speaking Test Results

4.1.1 Pre-test

The speaking pre-tests of both the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG) were assessed by two evaluators (Rater 1 and Rater 2) to guarantee the reliability of the pre-test scores for comparative analysis, referred to as inter-rater reliability. Table 4.1 presents the correlation between the pre-test scores assigned by Rater 1 and Rater 2 in the CG, whereas Table 4.2 delineates the correlation of the pre-test scores from the two raters in the EG.

Table 4.1. Correlation of speaking pretests scores of the CG by two raters

<i>Correlations</i>		Pre-test speaking score for CG by Rater 1	Pre-test speaking score for CG by Rater 2
Pre-test speaking score for CG by Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	1	,946**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	7	7
Pre-test speaking score for CG by Rater 2	Pearson Correlation	,946**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	7	7

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.2 Correlation of speaking pretests scores of the EG by two raters

<i>Correlations</i>		Pre-test speaking score for EG by Rater 1	Pre-test speaking score for EG by Rater 2
Pre-test speaking score for EG by Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	1	,892**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,003
	N	8	8
Pre-test speaking score for EG by Rater 2	Pearson Correlation	,892**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,003	
	N	8	8

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on the data in Table 4.1, it can be inferred that Sig. (2-tailed) = ,001 < ,05, indicating a statistically significant correlation between the pre-test score of Rater 1 and Rater 2 in the CG. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the CG ($r = 0,946$)

demonstrated a very strong correlation between the two raters regarding the CG pre-test scores. Likewise, as shown in Table 4.2, a highly significant and strong correlation between the pre-test scores of Rater 1 and Rater 2 in the EG is also found ($r = 0,892$, Sig. = $,003 < ,05$). Therefore, with such a strong inter-rater correlation between the evaluations of the two raters, the inter-rater reliability of the pre-test is firmly confirmed.

In order to determine if the underlying population follows to a normal distribution, the pre-test scores of both the control group (CG) and experimental group (EG) were analyzed and visually represented through Normal Q-Q Plots. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 demonstrate that the score data points of the two groups are closely clustered along a nearly straight diagonal line, indicating a normal distribution of scores. Consequently, the Rater 1 values were utilized in all subsequent statistical analyses.

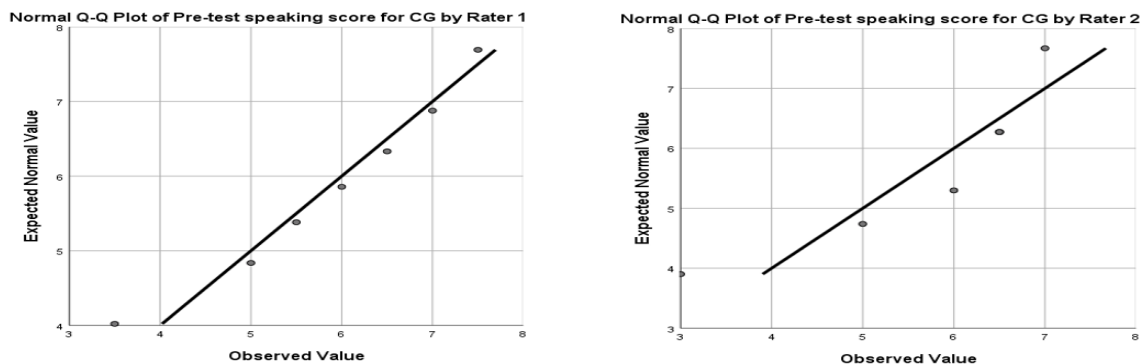


Figure 4.1. Normal Q-Q plots for speaking pretest results of CG

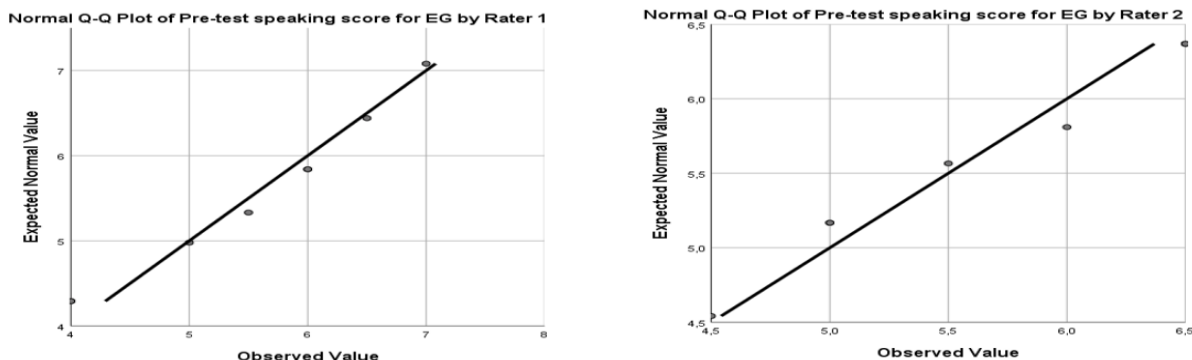


Figure 4.2. Normal Q-Q plots for speaking pretest results of EG

With the reliability of the speaking pre-test scores ensured between the two raters, the mean scores of the pre-tests for both the CG and the EG were calculated and analyzed. As shown in Table 4.3, the CG pre-test Mean score is 5,8571, while the EG pre-test Mean score is 5,5000. Clearly, there is a minimal difference between the two values. Specifically, the mean score of the EG (M = 5,5000, SD = 1,10195, N = 8) is slightly lower than the mean score of the CG (M = 5,8571, SD = 1,34519, N = 7).

Table 4.3. Pre-test scores of EG and CG

Group Statistics

	CLASS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre_test_results	Experimental class	8	5,5000	1,10195	,38960
	Control class	7	5,8571	1,34519	,50843

From Table 4.4, to check whether there was a statistically significant difference between the initial communicative proficiency of the two groups, an Independent Samples T-test was conducted. First, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances shows an F-value of 0,173 with a significance value (Sig.) of 0,685. Since the significance value is greater than 0,05, the assumption of equal variances is met. Therefore, the analysis continues with the row of “Equal variances assumed”.

Table 4.4. Pre-test results of Independent Sample T-Test

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Pre_test_results	Equal variances assumed	,173	,685	-,566	13	,581	-,35714	,63154	-1,72150 1,00722
	Equal variances not assumed			-,558	11,667	,588	-,35714	,64054	-1,75719 1,04290

The Independent Samples T-test results reveal that the difference between the means of the CG and EG is not statistically significant ($t = -0,566$, $df = 13$, $\text{Sig. } \backslash (2\text{-tailed}) = 0,581 > 0,05$). The mean difference is $-0,35714$, and the 95% confidence interval for the difference ranges from $-1,72150$ to $1,00722$, which includes zero, further confirming the lack of a significant difference. Therefore, it can be concluded that the speaking performance and initial proficiency levels of the CG and EG staff members were equal to each other before the ELSA app intervention.

4.1.2 Post-test

The inter-rater reliability of the post-test speaking scores was evaluated following the examination of the pre-test results. Table 4.5 illustrates the correlation between the scores assigned by Rater 1 and Rater 2 for the CG, while Table 4.6 presents the analogous correlation for the EG.

Table 4.5 Correlation of speaking posttests scores of the CG by two raters

<i>Correlations</i>		Post-test speaking score for CG by Rater 1	Post-test speaking score for CG by Rater 2
Post-test speaking score for CG by Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	1	,943**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	7	7
Post-test speaking score for CG by Rater 2	Pearson Correlation	,943**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	7	7

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.6 Correlation of speaking posttests scores of the EG by two raters

<i>Correlations</i>		Post-test speaking score for EG by Rater 1	Post-test speaking score for EG by Rater 2
Post-test speaking score for EG by Rater 1	Pearson Correlation	1	,856**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,007
	N	8	8
Post-test speaking score for EG by Rater 2	Pearson Correlation	,856**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,007	
	N	8	8

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As noted in the correlational analysis, Table 4.5 reveals that the correlation between the post-test scores administered by the two raters in the CG was significant (Sig. 2-tailed = 0,001 < 0,05). The Pearson Correlation Coefficient of the CG ($r = 0,943$) illustrates extremely strong and positive relationship between Rater 1 and Rater 2. In the same manner, Table 4.6 indicates a very significant correlation of the EG (Sig. 2-tailed = 0,007 < 0,05), with a Pearson Correlation Coefficient of $r = 0,856$, indicating a strong agreement between the two raters. As a result, the high inter-rater reliability of the post test is obtained with solid confirmation of both groups. Thus, the scores given by Rater 1 were chosen to be used in the further statistical measures.

A normality test was conducted on the post-test data of both the control group (CG) and experimental group (EG) to verify compliance with the assumptions of parametric testing. The data points of each group exhibited a strong correlation with a straight diagonal line, as demonstrated by the Normal Q-Q Plots (Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4). This verifies that the post-test scores for both groups had a normal distribution, therefore validating the application of the Independent Samples T-test for subsequent analysis.

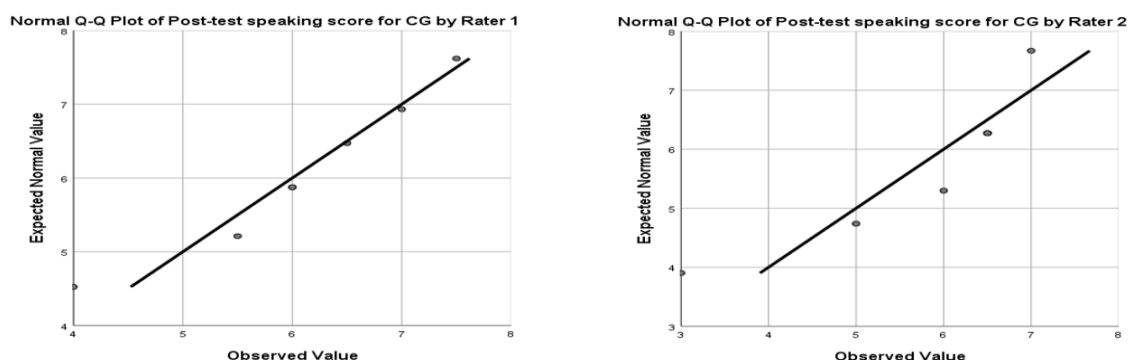


Figure 4.3. Normal Q-Q plots for speaking posttest results of CG

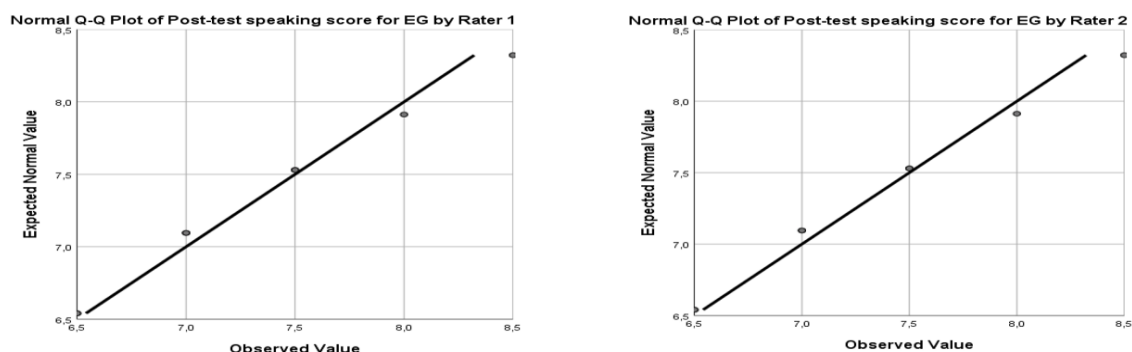


Figure 4.4. Normal Q-Q plots for speaking posttest results of EG

To evaluate the effectiveness of the ELSA app intervention, the post-test scores of both groups were calculated and compared. According to Table 4.7, the general descriptive statistics demonstrate that the post-test mean score in the CG ($M=6,0714$, $SD=1,13389$, $N=7$) is significantly lower, as compared to the EG ($M=7,3125$, $SD=0,70394$, $N=8$). This visible gap suggests that the EG staff members achieved better speaking performance after the training period.

Table 4.7. Post-test scores of EG and CG

<i>Group Statistics</i>					
	CLASS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post_test_results	Experimental class	8	7,3125	,70394	,24888
	Control class	7	6,0714	1,13389	,42857

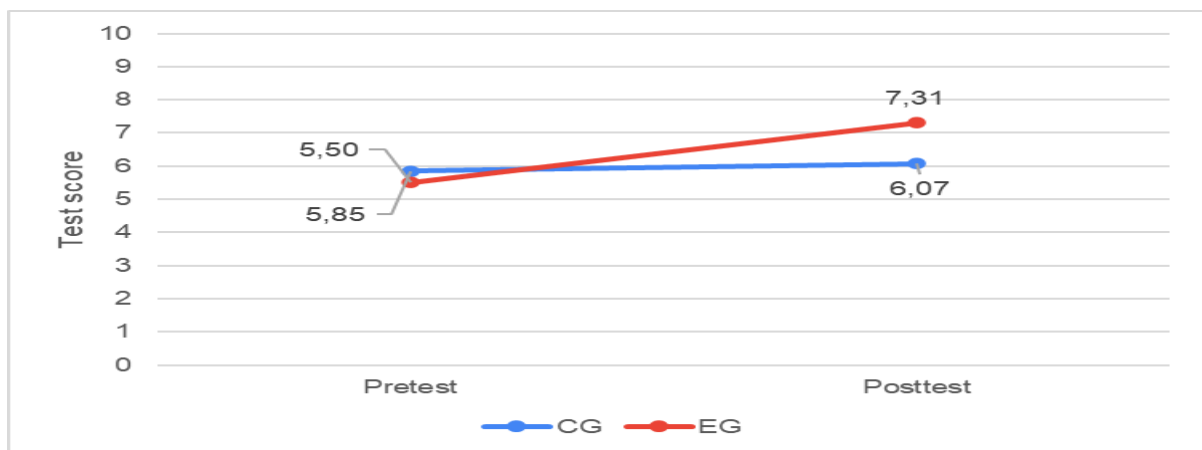
Subsequently, an Independent Samples T-test was conducted in Table 4.8 to determine whether this difference between the mean scores of the CG and EG was statistically significant. First, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances shows a significance value of 0,443 ($> 0,05$), meaning the assumption of equal variances is met. Therefore, the results for "Equal variances assumed" are reported.

Table 4.8 Post-test results of Independent Sample T-Test*Independent Samples Test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
									Lower Upper
Post_test_results	Equal variances assumed	,627	,443	2,585	13	,023	1,24107	,48002	,20405 2,27809
	Equal variances not assumed			2,504	9,776	,032	1,24107	,49560	,13338 2,34876

As demonstrated in the Independent Samples Test table, the t-test results prove that the difference between the post-test means of the CG and EG is statistically significant $t=2,585$, $df=13$, $\text{Sig. } \backslash (2\text{-tailed}) = 0,023 < 0,05$). The mean difference is 1,24107, and the 95% confidence interval (ranging from 0,20405 to 2,27809) does not include zero. Hence, it can be confidently concluded that the speaking performance of the two groups changed significantly after the treatment. Specifically, the communicative proficiency of the EG staff was considerably higher, providing strong evidence for the positive impact of the ELSA English-Speaking Learning App.

The improvement can be visually seen in Figure 4.5.

**Figure 4.5. Comparison of means of pretest and posttest scores**

4.1.3 Individual Participant Profiles: Before and After the Intervention

To provide a more comprehensive picture of the intervention's impact, this section presents individual profiles of the eight Experimental Group (EG) participants. Each profile describes the participant's observable English communication behaviors and challenges before the ELSA intervention, and the notable changes reported after completing the five-week programme. The speaking scores are drawn from Appendix A, while the behavioral descriptions are derived from the semi-structured interview data (Section 4.3) and researcher observations. This participant-level analysis complements the group-level statistical findings reported in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2, and provides the qualitative grounding needed to understand the individual trajectories of change.

Table 4.9. Individual Participant Profiles: Before and After the ELSA App Intervention

No .	Department / Role	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Gain	Key Behaviors/Challenges BEFORE the Intervention	Key Changes/Improvements AFTER the Intervention
P1	Receptionist	6.00	7.50	+1.50	Mispronounced common hospitality words (e.g., “luggage”, “receipt”); struggled with final consonants; occasionally hesitated during check-in interactions	Corrected pronunciation of key terms; now understood immediately by guests; more confident and

						fluid in check-in conversations
P2	Receptionist	6.00	7.50	+1.50	Felt intense pressure to speak perfectly at the front desk; self-imposed perfectionism caused hesitation and freezing when foreign guests approached	No longer panics or freezes at the front desk; pronunciation noticeably clearer; expresses ideas confidently and calmly in English
P3	F&B Staff	4.00	7.00	+3.00	Lowest pre-test score; feared judgement from colleagues for pronunciation errors; regularly deferred to the manager when taking orders from foreign guests	Largest individual gain (+3.00); takes orders directly from guests without managerial assistance; improved listening comprehension and intonation awareness

P4	Housekeeping	6.50	8.00	+1.50	Experienced fear and anxiety during hallway encounters with guests; coped by smiling, nodding, and walking away rather than attempting communication	Calmer and more courageous during guest interactions; built speaking confidence through consistent daily private practice on the app
P5	Security/ Bellboy	5.00	6.50	+1.50	Felt overwhelmed when speaking English in front of groups; struggled to give directions naturally and felt that everyone was focused on his mistakes	Independently assisted a group of five tourists with luggage and directions; overcame public speaking anxiety; communicates naturally and confidently
P6	Maintenance	7.00	8.50	+1.50	Highest pre-test score; had limited structured English practice; not engaged with language	Highest post-test score; highly motivated by app's scoring

					learning beyond immediate job requirements	system; regularly practices to achieve higher scores; demonstrated strong intrinsic motivation
P7	Administrator	5.50	7.00	+1.50	Slow response time in real-time conversations; frequently stumbled when quick replies were required; lacked confidence in reactive, spontaneous communication	Responds more quickly in conversational role-plays; no longer hesitates or stumbles; natural reflexes improved through dialogue simulation exercises
P8	Administrator	4.00	6.50	+2.50	Unable to attend formal English classes due to rotating shifts; had no consistent self-study habit; relied on memorized phrases only	Established daily practice habit (15 min. during breaks or before sleep); feels in control of own learning;

						actively searches for hospitality vocabulary on the app
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As presented in Table 4.9, all eight EG participants achieved score improvements following the five-week intervention, with individual gains ranging from +1.50 (Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7) to +3.00 (Participant 3, F&B Staff). The two participants with the lowest pre-test scores (P3 = 4.00; P8 = 4.00) demonstrated the most substantial improvements, achieving post-test scores of 7.00 and 6.50 respectively. This pattern is consistent with the hypothesis that lower-proficiency learners benefit disproportionately from structured, individualized AI feedback, as the app’s error-correction mechanisms address deeply ingrained pronunciation habits more directly than the informal self-study strategies previously used by these participants.

Beyond test scores, the profiles reveal a consistent pattern of psychological transformation. Before the intervention, the dominant barrier across all eight participants was not a lack of vocabulary or grammar, but a compound issue of pronunciation anxiety, fear of public judgement, and low communicative confidence. After the intervention, interview data indicates that private, gamified AI practice served as a “judgment-free zone” that allowed participants to build muscle memory and confidence simultaneously. As a result, participants transitioned from avoidance behaviors (deferring to colleagues, walking away from guests) to proactive, self-initiated communication in real hospitality contexts.

4.2. Questionnaire

4.2.1 Overall English Communication Proficiency

Table 4.10 illustrates the reliability of the questionnaire and the concept pertaining to the efficacy of the ELSA English-Speaking Learning App in enhancing overall English communication proficiency.

Table 4.10 Reliability of constructs 1

<i>Reliability Statistics</i>	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,863	8

A Cronbach's alpha value of 0,863 (which is significantly greater than the standard acceptable threshold of 0,7) demonstrates a high and satisfactory internal consistency among the 8 items in this construct. This strongly indicates that the questionnaire is reliable and accurate in measuring the same underlying concepts concerning the staff's perceived improvements in their overall English communication proficiency.

First of all, the feeling of being more confident to speak English was moderately positive among the employees. According to the Table 4.11 and Figure 4.6, 50.0% (or half of the respondents), agreed or strongly agreed that they became more confident in speaking English after using the ELSA App (M = 3,38, SD = 1,061; 37,5% agree, 12,5% strongly agree), 25% of the answers were neutral, It means that although the app helps build confidence in many people, a large portion of the respondents is uncertain about its instant psychological effect, which can reflect individual differences in prior proficiency or learning rates.

Table 4.11 Descriptive statistics for Overall English Communication Proficiency

Descriptive Statistics

	I feel more confident speaking English after using the ELSA App.	My ability to understand spoken English has improved with the ELSA App.	I can respond to guests in English more effectively since using the ELSA App.	I am able to express my thoughts in English clearly after practicing with the ELSA App.	I have improved my pronunciation of English words due to the ELSA App.	I can engage in workplace conversations in English more comfortably since using the ELSA App.	My vocabulary in English has expanded through the use of the ELSA App.	I find it easier to participate in English-speaking activities in the workplace after using the ELSA App.	Valid N (listwise)
N	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Minimum	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Mean	3,38	4,25	3,87	3,87	3,88	4,25	3,75	4,00	
Std. Deviation	1,061	,886	,835	,835	,835	,886	,886	,756	

Regarding listening proficiencies, an overwhelming majority (75%) reported that their ability to comprehend spoken English improved with the ELSA App ($M = 4,25$, $SD = 0,886$; 25% agree, 50% strongly agree), with 0% saying otherwise and 25% responding neutrally. This trend indicates that ELSA have generally been praised as a tool that assists in the achievement of improved listening comprehension in hospitality settings.

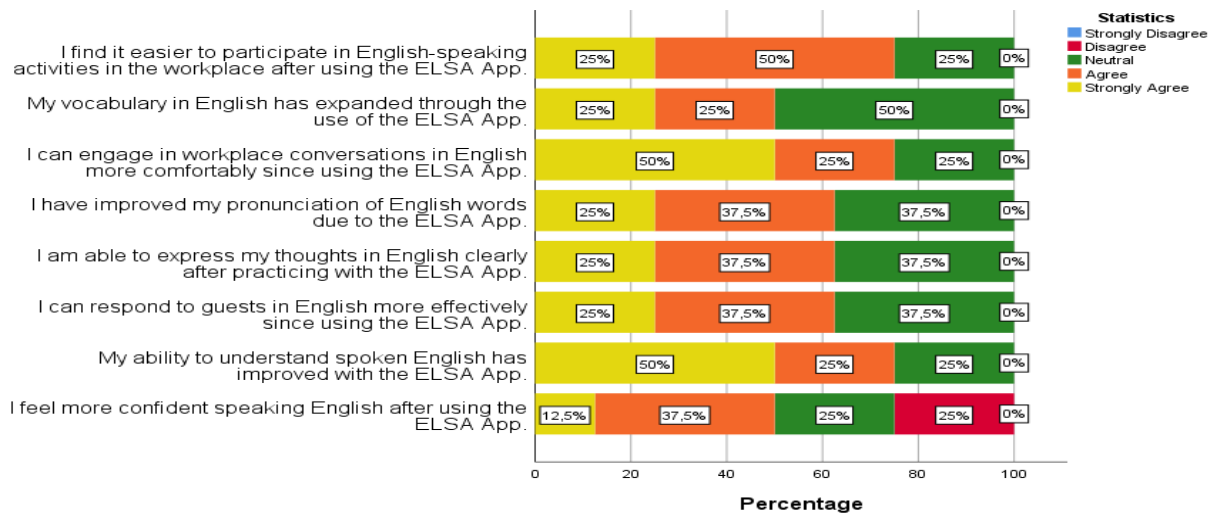


Figure 4.6 Overall English Communication Proficiency

When it comes to addressing guest interactions, 62,5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they can respond to guests in English more effectively since using the ELSA App ($M = 3,87$, $SD = 0,835$; 37,5% agree, 25% strongly agree), while a considerable proportion (37,5%) were neutral, and just 0% disagreed. This distribution

shows there is a general tendency to feel more competent in service situations but the high neutral rate could be a result of hesitation or dependency on the already acquired workplace experience and not only the app.

With regards to clear expression, 62,5% agreed or strongly agreed that they are able to express their thoughts in English clearly after practicing with the ELSA App ($M = 3,87$, $SD = 0,835$; 37,5% agree, 25,0% strongly agree), where the rest (37,5%) were neutral. This kind of discovery supports the idea that MALL is taken as a powerful tool of developing clear and articulate communication.

Regarding phonetic accuracy, 62,5% of the respondents agreed/ or strongly agreed that they have become more accurate in their pronunciation of English words because of the ELSA App ($M = 3,88$, $SD = 0,835$; 37,5% agree, 25% strongly agree), and 37,5% gave a neutral answer. The given finding emphasizes the significance of the smart speech recognition of the app as one of its primary values that help to fix pronunciation mistakes committed by non-native speakers.

When asking about workplace interactions, 75% either agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to hold conversations in the workplace in English more comfortably since using the ELSA App ($M = 4,25$, $SD = 0,886$; 25% agree, 50% strongly agree), and 0% disagreed. This indicates one of the most common tendencies toward feeling at ease and avoiding social discomfort when communicating with international guests and colleagues.

Nevertheless, responding to the question of whether the ELSA App has expanded their vocabulary in English, the answers were less expressive. Only 50% agreed or strongly agreed ($M = 3,75$, $SD = 0,886$; 25% agree, 25% strongly agree), while a majority (50.0%) were neutral. This means that the application of the app in vocabulary development may not be the most certain thing as a possible point, which might be a sign that ELSA is seen as a pronunciation tool more so than a vocabulary-developing one.

Finally, looking at overall participation, 75% of the staff agreed or strongly agreed that they find it easier to participate in English-speaking activities in the workplace after using the ELSA App ($M = 4,00$, $SD = 0,756$; 50% agree, 25% strongly agree), with 25% remaining neutral. That shows that the app manages to close the gap between isolated practice and active participation in the workplace.

In conclusion, most of the participants showed positive attitudes towards their general English communication skill post-ELSA use with the exception of a few neutral responses giving a little doubt on the topic of expanding vocabulary and initial confidence. The results highlight the importance of the app in ensuring improved listening, better pronunciation, and more comfortable interactions in the workplace, as well as the areas of hesitation or contextual dependence that require improvements among the users.

4.2.2 Activities on the ELSA App that Improve Speaking Skills

Table 4.12 demonstrates the reliability of the questionnaire and the construct related to specific activities on the ELSA App that improve speaking skills.

Table 4.12 Reliability of constructs 2

<i>Reliability Statistics</i>	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,784	6

A Cronbach's alpha value of 0,784 (which is greater than the standard acceptable threshold of 0,7) suggests a satisfactory level of internal consistency among the 6 items in this construct. Thus, the questionnaire is highly reliable in measuring the perceived benefits of the application's features. This strongly indicates that the items are valid at assessing the same underlying concepts concerning the effectiveness, engagement, and

motivational effect of learning activities within the ELSA app on the hotel staff at Pham Gia Hotel.

Firstly, the ELSA App speaking exercises were received very positively by the staff. As the figures on Table 4.13 and Figure 4.7 indicate, there was a large group (87.5%) that agreed or strongly agreed that these exercises had made them improve their speaking skills ($M = 4,38$, $SD = 0,744$; 37,5% agree, 50% strongly agree). Only 12,5% were neutral. This implies that the activities practiced are very helpful and well-liked by nearly all people.

Table 4.13 Descriptive statistics for Activities on the ELSA App that Improve Speaking Skills

	The speaking exercises provided by the ELSA App are helpful in improving my speaking skills.	I find the pronunciation feedback feature on the ELSA App beneficial for my learning.	The interactive dialogues on the ELSA App enhance my ability to speak fluently.	The vocabulary -building activities on the ELSA App strengthen my speaking capabilities.	I enjoy the speaking challenges on the ELSA App, as they motivate me to practice more.	The regular assessments on the ELSA App help me track and improve my speaking progress.	Valid N (listwise)
N	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Minimum	3	3	3	2	3	3	
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Mean	4,38	4,13	4,13	3,75	4,38	4,00	
Std. Deviation	,744	,835	,641	1,165	,744	,926	

Regarding the technology of the app, the majority (75%) of people indicated that the pronunciation feedback feature was effective to their learning ($M = 4,13$, $SD = 0,835$; 37,5% agree, 37,5% strongly agree). The remaining 25% were neutral. This demonstrates that the instant error correction is a useful device of enhancing pronunciation.

In considering real life scenarios, 87,5% of the staff both agreed and strongly agreed that the interactive dialogues assisted them in speaking more fluently ($M = 4,13$,

SD = 0,641; 62,5% agree, 25% strongly agree). Only 12,5% were neutral. This informs us that the role-play activities of practicing conversations are well liked by people.

When it comes to learning new words, half (50%) responded agree or strongly agree that the vocabulary-building activities improved their speaking (M = 3,75, SD = 1,165; 12,5% agree, 37,5% strongly agree). Nevertheless, one-third of the individuals (37,5%) responded with a neutral response and 12,5% disagreed. That proves that though ELSA is excellent in speaking, not all staff believes that it is the most effective tool to learn vocabulary.

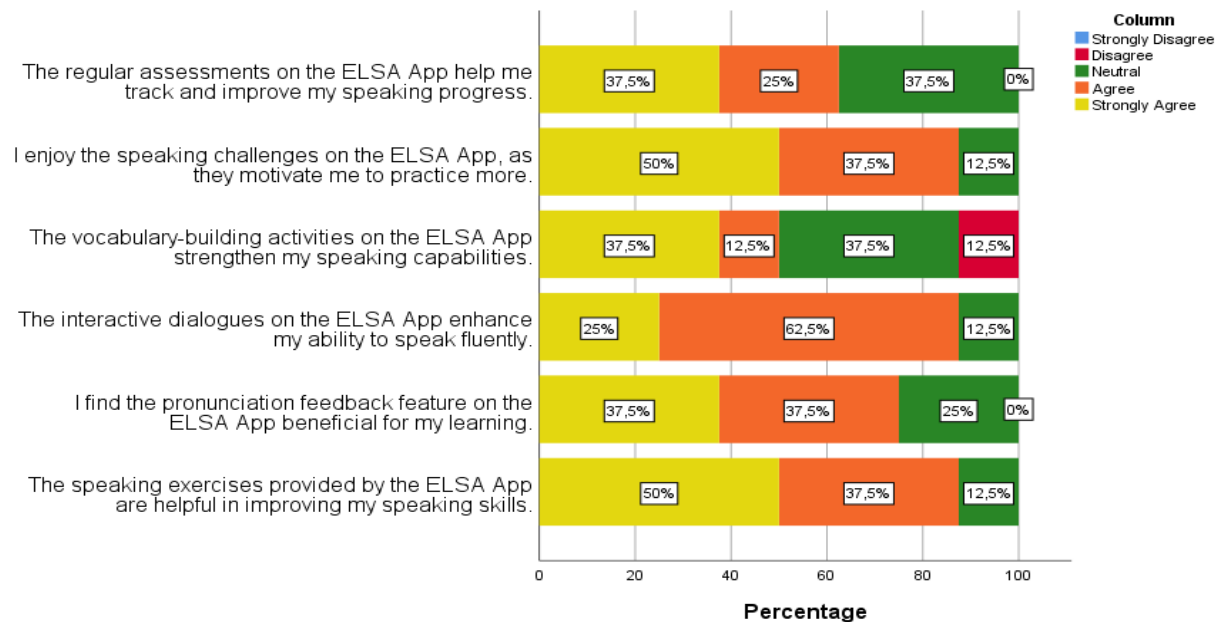


Figure 4.7 Activities on the ELSA App that Improve Speaking Skills

Regarding motivation, 87,5% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they like the speaking challenges as they encourage them to practice more (M = 4,38, SD = 0,744; 37,5% agree, 50% strongly agree). In the meantime, only 12,5% were neutral. This finding indicates that fun challenges also matter a lot in order to make busy hotel staff continue practicing.

Lastly, regarding monitoring their own progress, 62,5% indicated that they began with the regular assessments, and they thought the assessments helped them track and improve their speaking ($M = 4,00$, $SD = 0,926$; 25% agree, 37,5% strongly agree). The remaining 37,5% were neutral. This demonstrates that the scoring system of the app is preferred by many learners to establish goals and track their progress.

In summary, save from a few mixed responses on vocabulary activities, the majority of staff expressed highly favorable opinions about ELSA's learning attributes. The results demonstrate that the speaking exercises, conversations, and engaging challenges significantly enhance self-study and motivation.

4.3. Interview

The researcher administered an interview with the EG subsequent to distributing the questionnaire. Consequently, they would be capable of delivering an assessment of the app's effects. To safeguard their true identity, the interview participants were designated as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 5, Participant 6, Participant 7, and Participant 8. The replies to the interview questions are presented as quoted and summarized below. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes. The data analysis derived from interviews was conducted by textual processing.

4.3.1. Perceived Improvements in Pronunciation and Listening

All eight interviewees provided exceptionally favorable feedback regarding their views on utilizing the program to improve their English speaking abilities. They acknowledged the benefits of AI pronunciation feedback, interactive dialogues, and practice exercises in enhancing confidence, fluency, and overall communicative competence.

The interviewees emphasized that the app's practice sessions provided them with regular opportunity to engage in spoken English within a highly supervised setting. For instance, Participant 1 (Receptionist) stated:

"...Participating in these app exercises has helped me a lot. During the practice, I was corrected on my pronunciation and learned how to organize my thoughts more fluently, which has made me much more confident when using English in conversations. In the past, I often said the word 'luggage' or 'receipt' wrong, but thanks to the app correcting my ending sounds, foreign guests now understand me immediately."

Similarly, Participant 5 (Security) shared:

"...At first, I was very hesitant to communicate, but after joining the role-play challenges on the app, I started to feel more comfortable. The more I practiced, the more confident I became, and my fluency improved significantly. Giving directions to guests has now become very natural."

The team has highlighted the benefits of the app in enhancing listening comprehension and intonation awareness. This platform provided them the opportunity to acclimate to many pronunciations, so enhancing their auditory skills and service competencies. Participant 3 (Food and Beverage Staff) articulated:

"...Practicing restaurant communication situations on the app helped me think in English and respond better. It also taught me to listen and understand different word stresses, which improved both my vocabulary and grammar."

Participant 2 (Receptionist) added:

"...I really liked that I could take my time to listen to the model voice over and over again and then repeat it. It was less stressful than speaking directly to a real teacher, but it still helped me learn how to express my ideas clearly in English."

Finally, the method of practicing through dialogues was particularly praised for its ability to help learners react faster. As Participant 7 (Administrator) commented:

"The role-play exercises helped me practice real-life conversations. It felt very natural, and I no longer stumble when I need to give quick responses to the guests."

4.3.2. Enhanced Confidence and Less Fear of Mistakes

Prior to the training, numerous staff members expressed concerns about feeling anxious and self-aware when speaking English in the presence of international tourists. In the hospitality sector, communication occurs in real-time, and personnel frequently apprehend issues related to grammatical or pronunciation inaccuracies. They feared that consumers or even their coworkers could judge them. The interviews indicated that this psychological burden significantly diminished when individuals practiced privately with an AI coach on their mobile devices.

Speaking about their initial fears, Participant 4 (Housekeeping) spoke about one of the most common emotional barriers:

"...When I had to speak English to guests in the hallway, I often felt nervous and self-conscious. I was afraid that they might judge my bad pronunciation. This fear made it difficult to express myself clearly, and sometimes I just smiled, nodded, and quickly walked away. However, practicing privately with the mobile app every day helped me stay calm and build my courage."

This statement highlights the emotional challenges that hotel personnel encounter daily, which substantially impede their ability to provide excellent customer service. Another prevalent difficulty mentioned was the fear of being judged by colleagues. The ELSA app provides a platform for the private evaluation and discussion of mistakes, so fostering a greater sense of security among the staff to make errors and learn from them. Participant 3 (Food and Beverage Staff) elucidated the rationale for this alteration:

"...I used to feel uneasy speaking English in the restaurant because I worried my colleagues would laugh at my mistakes if I said something wrong. But the app does not judge me at all. I can repeat a single sentence ten times until I get a high score. Now, I

feel brave enough to step forward and take the guests' orders directly without asking the manager for help."

This struggle and subsequent improvement illustrate that the apprehension of judgment can be alleviated to facilitate more consistent and calm practice. The strain to maintain fluency and accuracy may impose significant stress on the staff's daily activities. The application assisted them in overcoming their perfectionist mindset, providing positive reinforcement and illustrating their gradual improvement in pronunciation. This preparedness was elucidated by Participant 2 (Receptionist):

"Speaking English at the front desk used to make me feel stressed because I put a lot of pressure on myself to perform perfectly. I wanted to sound fluent, but the fear of making a mistake made me overly cautious and held me back. Using the app every day gave me a sense of preparation. I know my pronunciation is much clearer now, so I don't panic or freeze when a foreigner approaches the desk."

Ultimately, the enhanced confidence acquired during the private digital study was applied to actual and dynamic environments. Previously, the personnel experienced overwhelm due to the substantial influx of individuals in a congested hotel lobby, where numerous patrons were engaged in listening. They were more adequately prepared following the intervention and ready to manage the scrutiny. Participant 5 (Security/Bellboy) recounted an experience of conquering this particular fear:

"I found it particularly difficult to speak English in front of a big group of tourists because I felt like everyone was paying attention to my mistakes. It was very overwhelming. But after seeing my high scores on the app, I realized my English is actually okay and people can understand me. Last week, I confidently helped a group of five guests with their luggage and gave them directions without feeling shy at all."

The interview statistics significantly corroborate the survey findings regarding psychological comfort. The elevated standards the personnel established for themselves

before constrained their readiness to participate. However, the app's confidential, supporting, and correcting features effectively alleviated their speaking fear, resulting in increased confidence and proactivity in workplace communication.

4.3.3. High Motivation for Self-Study and Autonomy

A significant discovery from the interviews was the staff's pronounced motivation for independent research. In the hospitality sector, personnel typically engage in demanding and rotating shifts, including morning, afternoon, and night schedules. Due to their weekly schedule fluctuations, attending conventional English classes is nearly unfeasible for them. The mobile application addressed this issue by providing users the autonomy to study at their convenience, regardless of location.

Participant 8 (Administrator) noted the effect of this flexibility on keeping a daily learning habit:

"My shifts change constantly, so I cannot go to normal English centers. With the ELSA app, I just open my phone and study for 15 minutes during my break or before I go to sleep. Having the freedom to choose my own study time is great. I don't feel forced, so I actually want to learn every day."

In addition to flexibility, the app's gamification features significantly contributed to maintaining learner engagement. The application comprises a scoring system, progress monitoring, and daily challenges. This renders the learning experience akin to a game rather than tedious homework. Participant 6 (Maintenance) expressed enthusiasm over the scoring method.

"I am not a person who likes studying from books. But the app gives me a score out of 100 for my pronunciation. It feels like a challenge. If I get 70%, I want to try again to get 90%. Seeing my score go up makes me feel very proud and motivates me to practice more, even when I am tired after work."

The personnel experienced an increased sense of accountability as they assumed control over their own learning. They were not obligated to depend on an instructor to identify their mistakes; rather, they also acquired the ability to listen to themselves to rectify their own errors. Participant 1 (Receptionist) articulated this sensation of autonomy:

"I only practiced English when the manager organized a training session. Now, I can actively search for vocabulary related to hotel check-in on the app and practice it myself. I feel like I am the one controlling my improvement, not anyone else."

This theme unequivocally endorses the notion that when adult learners possess autonomy and perceive the learning process as enjoyable, their intrinsic motivation escalates. The tool effectively converted a typically unpleasant task into an enjoyable daily ritual.

4.3.4. Reported Challenges and Limitations

Despite the predominantly favorable response, the interviews also underscored certain practical challenges encountered by the personnel in utilizing the web program. The absence of genuine human interaction, technical difficulties, and the physical work environment were the most prevalent issues.

A hotel is inherently a noisy and bustling environment. One of the primary challenges was locating a quiet spot to converse. Excessive background noise impedes the AI's ability to discern the user's voice. Participant 2 (Receptionist) articulated this exasperating experience:

"...Sometimes I tried to practice during my break in the staff room or near the lobby, but it was very noisy with people talking and music playing. The app's microphone caught the background noise and gave me a low score, or it said it could not hear me. I had to wait until I went home to practice properly, which was a bit annoying."

The obstacles were physical exhaustion and screen fatigue. After completing an 8-hour workday involving walking, standing, and viewing computer screens, numerous employees were too fatigued to engage with their mobile phones. Participant 4 (Housekeeping) noted a physical constraint.

"...The app is very helpful, but after a long day of cleaning rooms, my body and my eyes are very tired. Looking at a small phone screen to read the English sentences sometimes gives me a headache. On those tired days, I just skip the practice."

Finally, several employees have expressed that the software excels in pronunciation; yet, it cannot wholly substitute the unpredictability of genuine human connection. Foreign guests do not consistently utilize the regular AI voice. They communicate with diverse accents, articulate rapidly, or employ unusual slang. Participant 5 (Security/Bellboy) highlighted this distinction:

"The app helps me pronounce words correctly, but interacting with a machine is different from talking to a real person. Sometimes, a tourist from Australia or India speaks with a very strong accent that I have never heard on the app. The AI also doesn't teach me how to read the guest's body language or facial expressions."

These problems illustrate that while mobile learning is a potent tool, it necessitates a reliable internet connection, a tranquil environment, and effective time management. Furthermore, this application should be utilized in conjunction with practical training to prepare the team to effectively manage unforeseen circumstances.

4.3.5. Summary of Qualitative Findings

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews can be effectively aligned with and elucidate the quantitative data received from the surveys. The ELSA application effectively assisted the hotel personnel in enhancing their pronunciation and auditory comprehension skills. Moreover, it alleviated their apprehension about errors, enhanced their self-assurance, and inspired them to engage in autonomous study through its

adaptable and gamified attributes. To utilize the app effectively, the staff must surmount practical obstacles such as noisy environments, screen fatigue, and the necessity for genuine human engagement. The digital gadget demonstrates its efficacy and use in aiding busy hospitality personnel.

4.4. Discussion

This part aims to elucidate and condense the findings from Chapter 4 to directly address the research questions. This talk demonstrates the app's success by triangulating quantitative data from speaking exams and questionnaires with qualitative data from interviews, while elucidating the psychological and pedagogical rationales for these changes. The findings are linked to prior research and fundamental beliefs on MALL and adult language acquisition.

4.4.1. Research Question 1: What is the effect of the ELSA English Speaking Learning App on the overall English communication proficiency of hotel staff at Pham Gia Hotel?

The empirical data from this study demonstrates a positive association between mobile application engagement and the overall English communication proficiency of the hotel staff at Pham Gia Hotel. This upward trend is observed not only in the measured test scores but also connects closely with their self-reported confidence in real-world workplace interactions. To begin with, the quantitative data from the speaking pre-test and post-test provides a baseline for this associative relationship. The Independent Samples T-test showed that both the Control Group (CG) and the Experimental Group (EG) shared an equivalent starting level. However, the EG displayed a significantly higher post-test mean score ($M = 7.31$) compared to the CG ($M = 6.07$). This statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) suggests that the higher speaking proficiency coincides with the 5 weeks of continuous practice with the app, rather than natural workplace exposure alone. In the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), adult learners

frequently encounter deep-rooted pronunciation habits that are highly resistant to change, a phenomenon widely recognized as phonetic fossilization (Ortega, 2014). This positive variance in scores aligns with the recent international findings of Karim et al. (2023), Fauziah et al. (2024), and Putri et al. (2024), which similarly noted a strong correlation between regular interaction with Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) tools and enhanced oral performance. The results indicate a clear link where intensive, individualized digital feedback co-occurs with the disruption of established native-language phonetic habits among working professionals.

Second, the survey data (Construct 1) explored the specific elements of "overall communication proficiency." A large majority of the staff (over 75%) reported a positive connection between using the app and their listening comprehension as well as pronunciation accuracy. This finding highlights a well-known associative relationship in language learning: the ability to pronounce English sounds (phonemes) correctly often correlates strongly with the ability to hear and perceive those same sounds from native speakers. In the context of SLA, this alignment between speaking and listening skills is closely linked to the faster processing of incoming information. This survey trend is highly consistent with the findings of Putri et al. (2024), who noted that repetitive pronunciation practice via digital tools is positively associated with better listening comprehension. Furthermore, the data suggests that understanding guest requests faster co-occurs with greater fluency and coherence in real workplace situations, such as at the front desk or the restaurant. This observation aligns with the international research by Gusrianto & Iswahyuni (2025) and Fauzi & Purnomo (2025), which demonstrated that structured phonetic practice correlates with smoother, more coherent interactions in practical contexts. Rather than stating the app directly causes these skills to improve, the evidence shows that regular digital pronunciation practice acts as a highly supportive factor linked to the staff's overall communicative readiness.

Third, the psychological aspect of "communication proficiency" shows a strong correlation with app usage. This was explored deeply through the qualitative interview data (Themes 1 and 2). Before the training, the biggest barrier for the staff was not a lack of vocabulary, but the fear of making mistakes and the pressure of being judged by guests or colleagues. The mobile app provided a private, "judgment-free zone". Regular practice in this private space was closely linked to a reduction in these psychological barriers. As staff members repeated conversations to reach higher scores, their reported confidence grew alongside their decreasing fear. This associative relationship aligns perfectly with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis (Zixu Luo (2024), which suggests that a low-anxiety environment is connected to better language acquisition. Furthermore, this finding strongly supports the international studies by Nushi & Sadeghi (2021) and Ramdhani & Rahmaniah (2025). Both studies observed that AI tools correlate with lowered speaking anxiety because learners feel safer making mistakes with a machine rather than a human. Consequently, this lowered affective filter was positively associated with the staff becoming more willing and proactive in starting conversations with foreign guests.

Finally, this combination of linguistic and psychological support is associated with highly favorable conditions for language acquisition. However, to fully understand the app's role, it is important to note a point of divergence from the international literature. While studies like Gusrianto & Iswahyuni (2025) suggest that mobile learning applications broadly support vocabulary expansion, this study found a weaker correlation in that area, as only half of the staff reported noticeable vocabulary growth. This contradiction suggests that while the AI tool strongly correlates with mechanical speaking skills and confidence, its link to contextual vocabulary learning is more limited in a specialized workplace. Therefore, rather than claiming the app completely "upgrades" all language abilities, the evidence shows that it functions as a highly

effective, targeted support system. Its regular use is positively associated with the staff's overall communication proficiency and readiness in their real working environment.

4.4.2. Research Question 2: What are the activities on Elsa App that can help learner to improve their speaking skills?

To answer the second research question, the survey and interview data indicate that not all mobile learning features share the same level of association with skill improvement. Three key activities: Instant Pronunciation Feedback, Interactive Dialogues, and Gamified Speaking Challenges, showed the strongest correlations with the staff's communicative development.

First, the Instant Pronunciation Feedback feature was highly valued, with 75.0% of the staff reporting a positive connection to their learning. In a conventional classroom, a teacher can hardly find time to correct every single sound for every student. However, the app's AI acts as a personal tutor, and its real-time, phoneme-level error detection is closely linked to improved accuracy. The interview data (Theme 1) highlighted that regular use of this feature correlates strongly with overcoming "mother-tongue interference." In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), this interference is a primary reason why Vietnamese learners tend to drop ending sounds or misplace word stress. The immediate correction co-occurs with the rebuilding of mouth muscle habits (neuromuscular programming). This finding aligns consistently with the international studies by Nushi & Sadeghi (2021) and Karim et al. (2023), which demonstrated that immediate Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) feedback has a strong positive association with reducing first-language (L1) interference. Therefore, rather than claiming the app directly causes perfect pronunciation, the evidence suggests that continuous AI feedback is a highly supportive factor associated with clearer and more accurate speech.

Second, the Interactive Dialogues feature demonstrated a strong connection between theoretical learning and actual hospitality practice. According to the survey data, 87.5% of the staff reported a positive association between role-play exercises and speaking more fluently. The qualitative analysis provides insight into this associative relationship: language in the service industry is highly action-based. The app's simulation of real-world scenarios (such as hotel check-in, giving directions, or taking orders) is closely linked to the development of rapid, conditioned reactions. In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), this process relates to the formation of "lexical chunks" (formulaic language). Instead of translating word-by-word from Vietnamese to English in their minds, learners retrieve whole phrases automatically. This finding aligns well with the recent international studies by Ribhan et al. (2025) and Fauziah et al. (2024), which observed that scenario-based digital interactions are positively associated with situational readiness and conversational automaticity in adult learners. Therefore, the data suggests that practicing with simulated dialogues co-occurs with the staff having appropriate phrases ready to use as soon as a guest asks for help.

Third, the Gamification and Assessments system shows a strong association with the learners' sustained engagement. This observation connects deeply with Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Because hotel employees work on rotating shifts, their schedules are often linked to physical exhaustion and a high dropout rate in traditional English courses. However, the app's scoring and progress-tracking functions positively correlate with their psychological need to improve. The interview data (Theme 3) suggests that observing daily score improvements is closely linked to satisfying their need for "competence." Simultaneously, the flexible ability to study anytime is associated with fulfilling their need for "autonomy." This finding is highly consistent with the international research by Putri et al. (2024) and Ramdhani & Rahmaniah (2025), which demonstrated that gamified mobile applications correlate strongly with sustained

learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation in adult education. Therefore, rather than stating the app magically creates dedication, the data indicates that this combination of psychological fulfillment co-occurs with a shift from extrinsic pressure (job requirements) to stronger intrinsic motivation. Ultimately, this psychological shift is positively associated with maintaining a long-lasting self-study habit among busy hotel staff.

Even so, this discussion also points out a practical limitation, as explored in Theme 4. While the ELSA app shows a strong correlation with better pronunciation and fluency, it has a much weaker association with learning new vocabulary, as only 50.0% of the staff reported noticeable growth. This finding presents a clear divergence from the international study by Gusrianto & Iswahyuni (2025), which suggested that mobile applications broadly support vocabulary expansion. Furthermore, the qualitative data reveals that digital AI practice cannot completely substitute for the complexity and unpredictability of real human interaction. In a real hospitality environment, foreign guests use a wide variety of accents and body language. These are natural human factors that current AI cannot entirely simulate. This observation aligns closely with the conclusions of Ribhan et al. (2025) and Nushi & Sadeghi (2021), who noted that while AI tools are highly linked to building foundational speaking reflexes, they cannot provide the full dynamic experience of human-to-human communication. Therefore, the data suggests that the app is most effective when it functions as a targeted support instrument, rather than a complete replacement for authentic workplace interactions.

4.4.3 Summary of Discussion

In summary, triangulating the quantitative and qualitative data sources provides a comprehensive answer for this study. The engagement with the ELSA Speak app demonstrated a clear and positive association with the overall communication proficiency of the staff at Pham Gia Hotel. The data suggests that regular use of the app

is closely linked to the reduction of the three largest barriers for working adults: (1) Its real-time AI feedback strongly correlates with the correction of false pronunciation patterns; (2) Its private and secure practice space is positively associated with a lowered affective filter, which aligns with reduced low self-esteem and fear of making mistakes; and (3) Its flexibility, autonomy, and gamification features co-occur with sustained self-study motivation. Although there are still practical limitations, such as the lack of authentic human interaction and occasional noise problems during practice, ELSA Speak serves as a highly practical and cost-effective supplementary training tool that correlates well with improved workplace communication in the hospitality industry.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study sought to examine the impact of the ELSA Speak app on the English communication proficiency of Pham Gia Hotel personnel. The objective was to identify which app activities most effectively improve learners' speaking proficiency. The study was guided by two primary research objectives, and the data were analyzed using a mixed methods technique, which included speaking tests, questionnaires, and in-depth interviews, based on a sample of hotel employees.

The findings indicate that the ELSA Speak app significantly enhances the staff's overall ability in English communication. The quantitative data from the speaking assessments (Pre-test and Post-test) indicated a significant enhancement in the scores of the experimental group following the 5-week intervention. The application not only facilitated the staff's improvement in pronunciation accuracy, particularly in last sounds and word stress, but also augmented their listening comprehension and reflexes. Significantly, the qualitative data indicated that the application effectively addressed the primary psychological obstacles faced by adult learners: language anxiety and the apprehension of judgment. By offering a private and secure practice environment on a mobile device, ELSA Speak reduced the "affective filter. This enhanced the staff's confidence and proactivity in communicating with international guests in genuine situations. These findings are entirely consistent with the theoretical principles of MALL.

The study found that speaking skills improved mostly owing to three key activities on the app: rapid AI pronunciation feedback, interactive role-play dialogues, and a gamified challenge system. The AI functionality functioned as a personal instructor, aiding the workers in rectifying entrenched pronunciation errors caused by

their native language. Simultaneously, the role-play discussion exercises acquainted them with authentic circumstances in the hospitality sector, fostering rapid linguistic reflexes.

The app's grading and progress-tracking system effectively addressed the incentive deficit among employees on rotating shifts. The SDT posits that the app's flexibility granted staff autonomy in their learning. Simultaneously, the scoring tasks fulfilled their need for "competence. This combination effectively transformed work pressure into a heightened degree of intrinsic motivation, enabling the maintenance of a consistent self-study habit.

To sum up, the incorporation of the ELSA Speak app constitutes a thorough and incisive training solution. It enhances professional language skills while effectively eliminating temporal and psychological constraints. This demonstrates that it is an exceptionally effective support tool for busy personnel in the hospitality sector.

5.2. Limitation of the Study

Despite the favorable outcomes of this study demonstrating the efficacy of the ELSA Speak app for hotel personnel, many limitations warrant careful consideration when interpreting the results:

Commencing with the sample size: The limited study utilized a little sample size. The study had 15 people in the quantitative data (8 in the experimental group and 7 in the control group) and 8 individuals in the qualitative interviews. The results may be constrained by the restricted number of participants, thus affecting generalizability. They cannot serve as a genuine representative of the total workforce within the vast hospitality sector.

However, as discussed in Section 3.2, the sample was purposively selected to represent all English-communicating staff categories at the research site and approximates the total relevant population within the bounded case context. The

limitation therefore pertains primarily to external generalizability rather than to the internal validity of the findings within Pham Gia Hotel.

Secondly, about the scope of the study: This case study focuses on the Pham Gia hotel in Vietnam. The work atmosphere, operational procedures, and target clientele here can be distinctly characterized. The findings may not be applicable to the context of 5-star multinational hotel chains or establishments in different locations and countries.

Third, the duration of the intervention: The utilization of the application occurred during a brief period of 5 weeks. Despite the findings indicating a distinct and prompt enhancement in speaking abilities, the study was unable to assess the staff's long-term language retention. There exists uncertainty over whether their self-study motivation would diminish after a few months.

Fourth, about the assessed competencies: The study predominantly focused on oral communication, encompassing pronunciation, listening abilities, and fluency. This study excluded other crucial language abilities pertinent to the hotel sector, such as reading and writing (related to responding to emails or managing written guest requests), as well as intercultural competency.

Lastly, self-report bias: The data collected through questionnaires and interviews was predominantly reliant on the participants' self-assessment. At times, the personnel may reply in socially desirable manners to impress the researcher or may inaccurately self-assess, rating themselves higher or lower than their true capabilities. This may affect the absolute objectivity of the collected data.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

The empirical findings of this study yield several concrete pedagogical implications for hotel management, language training coordinators, and ESP practitioners in the hospitality sector. Unlike general recommendations derived from the

broader MALL literature, the following implications are grounded specifically in the quantitative and qualitative data collected from the fifteen participants of this study.

First, a structured five-week MALL intervention is sufficient to produce statistically significant communicative gains in hotel staff. The experimental group improved from a pre-test mean of $M = 5.50$ to a post-test mean of $M = 7.31$ (a gain of 1.81 points), compared to the control group's marginal improvement from $M = 5.85$ to $M = 6.07$ (a gain of 0.22 points). This disparity demonstrates that even a brief, systematically implemented MALL programme - without additional classroom instruction - can yield measurable and significant improvements in professional English communication. Hotel training managers should therefore consider adopting a formalised, app-based English training cycle of four to six weeks as part of their standard staff development calendar, rather than treating mobile learning as an informal or supplementary activity.

Second, AI-powered pronunciation feedback should be the foundational feature of any MALL programme adopted in hospitality training. Survey data showed that 75% of the experimental group ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.835$) reported the pronunciation feedback feature as effective to their learning. Qualitative interviews further confirmed that participants valued the app's ability to detect and correct Vietnamese phonological interference - specifically, difficulties with final consonants and word stress - in ways that traditional group training settings cannot accommodate due to time constraints and the social anxiety associated with public correction. Training coordinators should therefore prioritise MALL tools that provide immediate, granular, and private phonetic feedback over those that focus primarily on vocabulary or grammar.

Third, interactive role-play dialogues designed around real hospitality scenarios are the most effective single feature for developing functional speaking fluency. The study found that 87.5% of experimental group participants ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.641$)

agreed that the interactive dialogues helped them speak more fluently.

Correspondingly, 75% reported being able to hold workplace conversations in English more comfortably, and 62,5% indicated improved ability to respond to guests effectively. These figures suggest that scenario-based practice - simulating check-in procedures, room service requests, and complaint handling - directly transfers to real-world communicative performance. Hotel language programmes should therefore select or configure MALL tools that include hospitality-specific dialogue modules rather than generic conversational exercises.

Fourth, gamified progress-tracking systems are a practical and effective solution to the motivational challenges unique to rotating-shift workers. One of the key findings of this study is that the scoring and challenge system within ELSA Speak successfully sustained self-study habits among participants who work irregular and demanding schedules. Consistent with Self-Determination Theory's framework of intrinsic motivation, 62.5% of participants ($M = 4,00$, $SD = 0,926$) reported that the assessment system helped them track and improve their speaking. Notably, 75% reported finding it easier to participate in English-speaking activities following the intervention - a figure that reflects not only linguistic improvement but also a sustained behavioural change. Hotel managers should therefore view gamification not as a trivial design feature but as a psychologically grounded mechanism for converting external training requirements into self-directed learning behaviour.

Fifth, the reduction of language anxiety should be treated as a primary pedagogical objective, not a secondary outcome. The qualitative data revealed that the private and non-judgmental practice environment provided by the ELSA app was a decisive factor in the experimental group's willingness to speak. Several participants reported that the fear of speaking incorrectly in front of colleagues or managers had previously suppressed their communicative efforts. The app's private interface

effectively lowered the affective filter, enabling participants to practise extensively without social risk. This finding implies that hotels conducting in-person language training should complement group sessions with individual MALL practice time, specifically to address the anxiety that is inhibiting employees who already possess sufficient linguistic knowledge but lack the confidence to deploy it in real service interactions.

5.4. Recommendations for Further Research

This research suggests potential avenues for future investigation based on the findings and limitations presented. It will enhance the understanding of MALL within the hospitality sector.

First, augment the sample size and research sites: Subsequent study ought to replicate this model utilizing a broader and more diverse sample size. This should encompass personnel from many types of accommodations, including small boutique hotels, 4-5 star worldwide hotel brands, and resorts. This will aid in improving the reliability, representativeness, and generalizability of research outcomes.

Moreover, employ a longitudinal design: Researchers should extend their investigations beyond short-term interventions by implementing follow-up studies that last several months to a year. This aims to assess the staff's long-term language retention. Moreover, this will assist in determining whether their self-study motivation and app usage habits are sustainable once the initial enthusiasm diminishes.

Furthermore, conduct comparison analyses: Comparative studies would be advantageous in which ELSA Speak evaluates its efficacy against other language learning applications available in the market. It may also be likened to blended training methodologies under the leadership of human instructors by the researchers. Evaluating this correlation will allow hotel management to choose the optimal investment tool.

In addition, conduct a comprehensive skills evaluation: In addition to listening, talking, and pronunciation, future research should extend the evaluation to other language skills such as reading and writing. These abilities are quite essential in responding to emails and written guest complaints. In particular, researching intercultural competence is also an important missing piece that has not been deeply explored.

Finally, compile perspectives from both management and guests: To enhance the objectivity of the self-reporting approach, subsequent study must devise instruments that facilitate the acquisition of responses regarding actual enhancements in work performance or the perspectives of genuine hotel patrons. The triangulation of data from a third-party perspective will yield the most accurate and impartial proof.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Staff's scores of pre-test and post-test

No.	PRE-TEST		POST-TEST	
	CG	EG	CG	EG
1	6.00	6.00	6.00	7.50
2	5.00	6.00	5.50	7.50
3	6.50	4.00	6.50	7.00
4	7.50	6.50	7.50	8.00
5	5.50	5.00	6.00	6.50
6	3.50	7.00	4.00	8.50
7	7.00	5.50	7.00	7.00
8		4.00		6.50
	M= 5.85	M= 5.5	M= 6.07	M= 7.31
	SD: 1.34	SD: 1.10	SD: 1.13	SD: 0.70

APPENDIX B. Survey questionnaire

Dear staff members of Pham Gia Hotel,

This questionnaire surveys your experiences and feelings about using the ELSA Speak application to improve your English communication skills. The results of this questionnaire will help evaluate the effectiveness of this mobile app and improve future English training programs for hotel staff. Therefore, your cooperation is extremely essential for my study.

Please be noted that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, and this survey is not a part of your job performance evaluation, so please give your opinions sincerely. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and used for research purposes only.

Thank you very much for your valuable time and responses!

Please tick (✓) the answer that you find most appropriate. You can choose only ONE answer.

1-Strongly Disagree 2-Disagree 3-Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree

Full name:

(1) Overall English Communication Proficiency	1	2	3	4	5
1. I feel more confident speaking English after using the ELSA App.					

2. My ability to understand spoken English has improved with the ELSA App.					
3. I can respond to guests in English more effectively since using the ELSA App.					
4. I am able to express my thoughts in English clearly after practicing with the ELSA App.					
5. I have improved my pronunciation of English words due to the ELSA App					
6. I can engage in workplace conversations in English more comfortably since using the ELSA App.					
7. My vocabulary in English has expanded through the use of the ELSA App.					
8. I find it easier to participate in English-speaking activities in the workplace after using the ELSA App.					

2) Activities on the ELSA App that Improve Speaking Skills	1	2	3	4	5
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1. The speaking exercises provided by the ELSA App are helpful in improving my speaking skills.					
2. I find the pronunciation feedback feature on the ELSA App beneficial for my learning.					
3. The interactive dialogues on the ELSA App enhance my ability to speak fluently.					
4. The vocabulary-building activities on the ELSA App strengthen my speaking capabilities.					
5. I enjoy the speaking challenges on the ELSA App, as they motivate me to practice more.					
6. The regular assessments on the ELSA App help me track and improve my speaking progress.					

APPENDIX C. Interview questions

Interview questions

1. How does the ELSA Speak app help you improve your pronunciation and speaking reflexes?
2. How do you feel (psychologically) when communicating with foreign guests before and after using the app?
3. What are the challenges of maintaining your daily practice on the app while working rotating shifts?

APPENDIX D. Data Collection Procedure

Phase 1: Preparation and Pre-test (Week 1): Official permission and informed consent were obtained from the hotel management and 15 participating staff members. A speaking pre-test simulating real-life hotel scenarios was administered to both the Experimental Group (EG, n=8) and the Control Group (CG, n=7), with performances objectively graded by two independent raters.

Phase 2: The Intervention (Weeks 2 – 6): The EG participants utilized the ELSA Speak application on their smartphones for daily independent practice (10-15 minutes/day) focusing on hospitality vocabulary. Concurrently, the CG proceeded with traditional self-study using regular hotel English handbooks without AI assistance.

Phase 3: Post-test and Questionnaire (Week 7): A speaking post-test of identical format and difficulty was administered to both groups and evaluated by the same raters to measure pronunciation and fluency improvements. Subsequently, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to the EG to assess motivation and the app's perceived usefulness.

Phase 4: Interviews and Data Handling (Week 8): Semi-structured, 15-minute face-to-face interviews were conducted with the EG participants to gather qualitative insights into their user experience. All qualitative audio was transcribed, and quantitative data were compiled into SPSS for final statistical analysis.