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FROM ANXIETY TO AUTONOMY: LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AI FEEDBACK IN ORAL PRESENTATION REHEARSALS IN OMANI HIGHER EDUCATION [ABSTRACT]

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	This study aimed to explore how Microsoft Teams' *Speaker Progress*, an AI-powered feedback tool, can enhance oral presentation skills, reduce anxiety, and increase self-confidence among undergraduate students in Oman. The research sought to determine learners' perceptions of the tool's real-time and post-session feedback, as well as its impact on self-regulated learning and communication performance.
Background	Public speaking and oral presentations are vital competencies in higher education. Yet, learners, especially in Gulf contexts, often face heightened anxiety and limited rehearsal opportunities due to cultural and linguistic barriers. Artificial intelligence (AI) feedback systems offer individualized, private, and immediate feedback that can scaffold learner reflection, reduce apprehen-

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	sion, and promote autonomous skill development. While research supports AI-assisted speaking practice globally, little is known about its effectiveness in conservative higher education environments.
Methodology	This mixed-methods pilot case study involved 120 undergraduate students across business writing, public speaking, and biology courses at a private Omani college over an eight-week period. Quantitative data were collected through a validated 35-item questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$–0.89) and analysed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative reflections were examined using VADER sentiment analysis to identify emotional valence and perception trends.
Contribution	The study integrates the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) with Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) theory to present a dual-mode AI feedback framework. This framework demonstrates how real-time and delayed feedback cycles promote reflection, performance monitoring, and adaptive learning in oral communication. It contributes to the growing field of AI-mediated learning analytics in higher education, especially in culturally sensitive contexts.
Findings	Results revealed notable gains in confidence ($M = 3.67$), performance ($M = 3.79$), and anxiety reduction ($M = 3.60$). Approximately 95% of participants reported reduced stress, and 88% felt more confident presenting after using Speaker Progress. Sentiment analysis showed 67% positive and 24% neutral reflections, confirming high acceptance and perceived usefulness. Students valued the immediacy, privacy, and constructiveness of AI feedback, although many requested additional rehearsal attempts and more specific, example-based guidance.
Recommendations for Practitioners	Instructors should integrate AI feedback tools as formative rehearsal aids, enabling students to practice privately before graded tasks. Embedding dual-mode AI feedback early in communication-based courses helps develop self-monitoring and confidence. Educators should align AI metrics with existing rubrics to ensure coherence and provide brief guided debriefings to contextualize AI feedback for learners.
Recommendations for Researchers	Future research should employ control and longitudinal designs to evaluate the causal effects of AI feedback on oral proficiency and affective change. Comparative studies across disciplines and cultural contexts would enhance generalizability. Combining AI analytics with observational and interview data can offer deeper insights into learner motivation and metacognitive development.
Impact on Society	This study demonstrates how AI-driven, culturally responsive feedback mechanisms can democratize access to communication training and reduce performance anxiety. By enabling students to rehearse autonomously in psychologically safe environments, AI fosters confidence, employability, and lifelong learning – key graduate attributes in the digital era.
Future Research	Further research should examine adaptive AI models that deliver more personalized, multimodal feedback – combining visual, textual, and video exemplars – and track progress over multiple semesters. Investigations into faculty perceptions and institutional integration strategies will also support the adoption of sustainable, ethical, and scalable AI in higher education.

Keywords artificial intelligence (AI), oral presentation skills, anxiety and confidence, higher education in the Gulf, AI-powered feedback, critical thinking, self-regulated learning, autonomous learning, learning analytics

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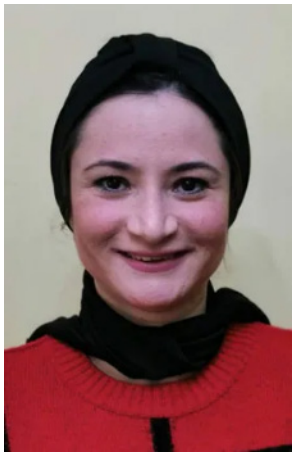

Dr. Abdelfattah is an assistant professor and a PhD holder in applied linguistics with a master's degree in TEFL. In addition, she is a certified teacher trainer and a CELTA-certified instructor. Dr Abdelfattah has over 20 years of experience teaching English as a second language in the Middle East. Moreover, she has extensive experience teaching a variety of courses, including general English and conversation courses, EAP, ESP, business writing, presentation skills, IELTS (both general and academic), TOEFL iBT, and personal health. Her research interests include teaching pedagogies, TESOL, applied linguistics, semantics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, contrastive analysis, cognitive linguistics, critical discourse analysis, inclusive classrooms, sustainable education, stylistics, educational technology, AI in education, teacher training, curriculum development, etc. She is a member of IATEFL and NileTESOL.

Ahmed Al Mata'ni holds a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction (ESOL/Bilingual Education) from the University of Florida and an MA in TESOL from the University of Missouri, St. Louis. He has taught ESL, EFL, critical thinking, public speaking, and interpersonal communication in Oman and the USA. His expertise includes accreditation, applied linguistics, and assessment. His research spans CALL, teacher education, curriculum development, social justice, critical race theory, and emerging work in raciolinguistic and decolonial perspectives. He has presented locally and internationally and is a member of TESOL, TESOL Arabia, FABE, and AACTE.

Jennifer Y. Paquibut is an accomplished educator and healthcare professional currently serving as a Lecturer and College Nurse at the Modern College of Business & Science in Muscat, Oman, since 2016. She has extensive clinical and academic experience, having worked as a Staff and Unit Charge Nurse at Perpetual Succour Hospital in Cebu City and later as a Clinical Instructor at the University of Cebu–Banilad and the University of San Carlos. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Cebu and a Master of Arts in Nursing (Medical-Surgical Nursing) from Southwestern University and has published and presented award-winning research focused on nursing education, online teaching, and healthcare practices.

Hazar Hedi Ayadi is an experienced lecturer and researcher specializing in English language and literature. With a master's degree in literature and Cross-Cultural Poetics from the University of 7 Novembre/Carthage in Tunis, she has taught at various institutions in Oman and Tunisia, including the Modern College of Business and Science and Mazoon College. Her research interests encompass contemporary literary theory, modernist and postcolonial poetry, and translation studies. Fluent in English, French, and Arabic, Hazar is also a skilled translator.