

Research on the Feasibility and Strategies of AI-enabled Formative Assessment in College Oral English Teaching

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With the development of globalization, college oral English teaching has put forward higher requirements for students' competence development. Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology provides feasible support for formative assessment in college oral English teaching and can make up for the shortcomings of traditional assessment. By analyzing the current situation of formative assessment in college oral English teaching, this paper demonstrates the feasibility of AI technology empowerment and proposes implementation strategies for AI-enabled formative assessment in college oral English teaching, aiming to provide references for improving the quality of college oral English teaching and students' oral English proficiency.

Keywords: AI technology, college oral english teaching, formative assessment

Introduction

Today, with the accelerating process of globalization, proficient oral English skills have become essential for students to showcase themselves, participate in international affairs, and compete on the global stage. As international exchanges grow increasingly frequent, both business cooperation and academic communication have placed higher demands on college oral English teaching. However, college oral English teaching currently faces certain challenges: although the traditional issue of “dumb English” has been improved to some extent, there is still a need to further enhance the quality of students' language expression.

As the traditional summative oral assessment methods gradually give way to the more effective formative assessment, students' enthusiasm and initiative in learning have been further enhanced. Formative assessment, whose primary goal is to promote students' learning and development, emphasizes continuous attention to and feedback on the learning process. This enables the timely identification of problems in students' learning, followed by positive guidance and feedback to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of oral English learning. With the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, its application in the field of education has become increasingly widespread. AI technology possesses powerful data processing and analysis capabilities, which can provide more scientific, objective, and comprehensive data support as well as personalized services for formative assessment. Therefore, integrating AI-enabled technology into the formative assessment of college oral English can not only make up for the shortcomings of existing assessment methods but also bring new opportunities to college oral English teaching.

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Analysis of the Current Situation of Formative Assessment in College Oral English Teaching

Formative assessment in college oral English teaching serves as a core feedback indicator for improving students' oral proficiency. It is crucial for students to enhance their oral skills and for teachers to elevate their teaching standards. Given the strong practical nature of college oral English courses, where in-class oral teaching mostly revolves around various "oral tasks", students' participation in these tasks and the outcomes of such participation are key indicators of oral teaching effectiveness (Song, 2024, p. 7). However, in the current practice of implementing formative assessment, there are still several issues that limit its ability to fulfill its intended role.

First, student self-assessment is relatively lacking in the current assessment system. In more traditional college oral English teaching assessment, teachers are the main assessors. They evaluate students' oral performance based on their own professional knowledge and experience. As a result, even highly experienced oral English teachers can hardly avoid subjectivity caused by a single evaluation perspective during the assessment process. The absence of a student self-assessment component makes it difficult to guide students to recognize their own weaknesses in oral English, leading to vague learning goals. Even when peer assessment is incorporated, due to students' limited assessment capabilities, they only focus on superficial fluency, which has little reference value for evaluating students' actual oral proficiency.

Second, the current formative assessment of college oral English overemphasizes linguistic aspects, while the assessment of students' affective attitudes and intercultural communicative competence remains underdeveloped. At present, the content of many formative assessments focuses on language application, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency. However, it is difficult to assess soft skills in oral communication, including active interaction, intercultural communication skills, and the logical coherence of language expression. These capabilities are indispensable in real communicative scenarios.

Third, the feedback of current formative assessment is delayed, making it impossible to intervene in students' oral English learning in a timely manner. Given the generally large class sizes, most students receive assessment feedback in the form of after-class homework comments. Students have to wait for teachers' feedback after submitting their assignments, and this waiting period usually lasts for a week. By the time they receive the feedback, students often cannot recall the specific context of their oral expression, making it hard for them to develop a deep understanding of the issues pointed out by teachers. Furthermore, if teachers fail to provide detailed comments on students' oral performance and only give feedback in the form of a numerical or graded score, students will be even less likely to identify their specific problems.

Finally, an objective current reality is that the formative assessment of college oral English currently lacks corresponding technological empowerment. Teachers usually record the problems in students' oral expression through audio recordings or notes, which is prone to interference from subjective factors and results in relatively low assessment efficiency. Moreover, due to the limitations of classroom teaching venues and formats, it is difficult to assess students' language application in real-life scenarios without technical support. Therefore, without technical assistance, teachers cannot accurately collect the process-oriented data of students' learning process. They can only rely on phased evaluations to assess students' oral English learning and are unable to conduct evaluations tailored to students' individual learning characteristics.

The Feasibility of AI-enabled Formative Assessment in Oral English Evaluation

First, AI technology can provide timely feedback on issues in students' in-class oral communication. As mentioned earlier, teachers are often unable to give immediate feedback on students' oral expression due to time constraints and large class sizes. However, this can be easily achieved with the help of AI technology. Equipped with advanced speech recognition and natural language processing technologies, AI can monitor students' oral expression in real time and provide evaluative feedback with almost no delay. Relevant experiments show that after using AI interactive oral English practice tools, "students can develop better structures for oral expression, and their vocabulary richness also improves after extensive input and use" (Wu, 2025, p. 122). Therefore, whether AI intelligent software or devices are adopted in class, or students are arranged to practice oral English through AI software after class, students can immediately receive evaluations on their oral communication. This allows them to promptly adjust aspects such as pronunciation, vocabulary, logic, and grammar, thereby improving learning efficiency.

Second, AI technology can simulate real oral communication scenarios, making up for the shortcomings of in-class interaction. Since AI technology can provide resources such as digital humans, VR-simulated scenarios, or oral dialogue scenarios, students can conduct real-scenario communication training through real-time interaction. This makes oral evaluation more aligned with real life situations, which is almost impossible to accomplish through in-class evaluation alone. Additionally, AI technology can configure different dialogue scenarios based on students' majors. Students from different majors can select relevant oral contexts, such as business negotiations, trade fairs, market research, and tourism and culture, allowing them to practice oral English in line with their professional content.

Third, AI technology can provide students with personalized oral English learning plans and resources, and design customized oral practice content based on students' varying oral proficiency levels. For the problems students encounter in their oral English practice, AI can offer targeted exercises to help them address their weaknesses, responding to every request. Meanwhile, AI can push relevant corpus resources according to students' needs, significantly saving the time students would otherwise spend searching for materials online. Furthermore, AI can adjust feedback indicators in a timely manner based on students' learning progress to adapt to their evolving learning needs. These capabilities are hardly achievable in traditional classroom settings.

Implementation Strategies for AI-enabled Formative Assessment in Oral English Teaching

First, the current formative assessment system for oral English has not yet integrated AI evaluation results into its framework. Therefore, it is necessary to build a diversified assessment system that incorporates AI evaluation into the assessment scope. With AI technology empowering oral English courses, "a knowledge graph between computer systems and oral English teaching has been constructed, which structurally represents data in various aspects of oral English teaching, such as student performance analysis, oral communication, oral expression, and listening comprehension" (Wang, 2024, p. 143). In this regard, the first step is to clarify the role and position of AI oral English evaluation in the overall assessment system, integrate AI evaluation, teacher evaluation, and student self-assessment, and formulate reasonable assessment indicators. At the same time, based on the characteristics of each assessment method, the weight of each indicator in the final

assessment result can be clearly defined. For instance, AI evaluation excels at assessing aspects like students' pronunciation and speech rate; teacher evaluation can focus more on students' learning attitudes and progress; and student self-assessment can draw on the above indicators to evaluate their own oral English learning from a subjective perspective. By properly adjusting the weight of each assessment method, an accurate and comprehensive assessment result can ultimately be obtained, providing objective feedback and guidance for students' oral English improvement.

Second, faced with a wide range of AI technology platforms, teachers should possess the ability to evaluate and select the most suitable oral English assessment platform for teaching purposes. AI platforms primarily leverage technologies such as speech recognition, natural language processing, and deep learning to assess users' oral English from multiple dimensions, while providing detailed feedback and personalized learning recommendations. Specifically, speech recognition technology converts users' speech into text for identification, laying a textual foundation for assessment. Subsequently, natural language processing analyzes the content of the text to evaluate the accuracy of the oral expression. Deep learning technology, on the other hand, trains models using large volumes of data, enabling the models to align more closely with assessment standards and thus assess users' oral English with high precision.

Currently, there are numerous similar oral English testing and assessment platforms available on the market. These platforms all support learners in practicing and assessing their oral English through voice interaction, providing real-time feedback on aspects like pronunciation, speech rate, and intonation, as well as personalized suggestions. However, differences exist among these platforms. For example, some platforms can conduct oral assessment at the word or phonetic symbol level, allowing for precise judgment of pronunciation accuracy; some offer comprehensive oral assessment and provide an overall score; some can not only capture students' pronunciation but also record dynamic images during oral communication, thereby enabling a more holistic assessment of students' language expression; and others present assessment results in the form of visual reports, offering a more intuitive overview of students' oral English performance. Therefore, teachers should fully consider the compatibility of AI platforms with college oral English teaching, select platforms suitable for formative assessment of college oral English, and better leverage AI technology to support the curriculum. Certainly, they can also integrate the advantages of different platforms for comprehensive use. Additionally, full consideration should be given to the usability, stability, and security of AI technology platforms. While ensuring ease of use for both students and teachers, measures should be taken to safeguard the security of students' private data.

Third, in the AI-enabled formative assessment of college oral English, the role of teachers has undergone a significant transformation. Teachers have shifted from assessors to designers of learning plans, data analysts, technical instructors, and developers of personalized learning programs. Therefore, teachers must first possess strong AI technology application skills. They should accurately grasp the functions of various AI platforms and apps, help students learn to use AI oral assessment technology, formulate learning goals, and strengthen students' weak areas. Meanwhile, teachers should also have certain data collection and analysis capabilities. They need to interpret assessment reports generated by AI, analyze changes in students' oral English performance through these reports, and identify problems in students' oral learning. To this end, teachers should actively participate in various AI technology training sessions and teaching seminars, share experiences accumulated during the use of AI technology platforms, discuss and solve problems encountered, and continuously improve their AI literacy and teaching application capabilities.

Undoubtedly, the emergence of AI technology platforms has posed certain challenges to the teacher-student relationship, and teachers' authority may be impacted. Therefore, teachers should change their teaching concepts, rethink their role positioning in teaching, and shift from controllers of teaching to guides and problem-solvers for learning. Although AI technology provides excellent assessment methods and content, there are still many hidden risks without teachers' guidance and supervision. For example, AI technology often adopts a "one-size-fits-all" approach to assessment indicators; it cannot take into account students' individual circumstances, such as different cultural backgrounds and life experiences, which may damage students' confidence in learning oral English. Additionally, students lack the ability to analyze data and cannot gain a deep understanding of the generated assessment results, so they cannot achieve good learning outcomes without teachers' support.

Finally, in the process of using AI technology, teachers should pay attention to students' attitudes toward AI and monitor their usage of AI technology in a timely manner. Most students are unfamiliar with using AI technology for oral English assessment when they first encounter it and require guidance and assistance from teachers. Therefore, schools can arrange specialized courses to provide AI technology tutoring for students, instructing them on how to use oral English learning and assessment tools. At the same time, teachers should also explain in detail the advantages and evaluation criteria of the assessment platforms to students, encourage them to learn new technologies, help them understand the principles of oral English platform evaluation, and promote the efficient use of AI technology by students.

On the other hand, with the increasing application of AI technology in oral English learning, some students may over-rely on the assistance provided by AI, neglecting their own subjectivity in learning and critical thinking abilities. Therefore, teachers should also monitor students' use of AI technology, urge them to attach importance to cultivating independent learning abilities, and emphasize real-life communication and cooperation while interacting with technology. Teachers can organize group cooperative oral English practice activities to help students improve their oral English skills through actual communication.

In summary, this study analyzes the feasibility and strategies of AI-enabled formative assessment in college oral English teaching. The results show that AI technology, with its core advantages such as real-time feedback, real-scenario simulation, and personalized learning support, can effectively make up for the shortcomings of traditional assessment and provide a practical technical path for the optimization of formative assessment in college oral English teaching.

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