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RHETORIC AND PUBLIC SPEAKING TRAINING USING AI.

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Abstract. Public speaking is a core communicative competence, yet school learners rarely receive enough individual practice and feedback to develop it, especially when they speak in a second language. This article examines how generative artificial intelligence (AI) can support the teaching of rhetoric and public speaking without replacing the teacher or the learner's own voice. Using a conceptual-analytical design and thematic analysis of nineteen sources on rhetoric, learning theory, formative feedback and AI in education, the study derives four pedagogical principles and proposes a four-stage instructional cycle (plan, shape, rehearse, reflect) aligned with the classical rhetorical canons.

Keywords: rhetoric education, public speaking, artificial intelligence, formative feedback, second-language teaching, scaffolding, assessment.

The teaching of speech has a long history. From Aristotle's systematic account of the means of persuasion [1] to modern curricula that treat oral communication as a key competence, educators have agreed that the ability to structure an argument and deliver it to an audience is central to civic and professional life. In everyday school practice, however, this ideal meets hard constraints. A teacher who works with thirty learners can listen carefully to only a few speeches per lesson. Individual feedback is delayed, and fear of speaking in front of classmates limits voluntary practice. These difficulties are sharper in multilingual settings. In Uzbek-medium schools, for example, Russian is studied as a second language, and learners must develop fluency, argumentation and control of register at the same time.

Generative AI offers a new kind of practice partner. Large language models can suggest ideas, play the role of an interlocutor, and comment on a text at any hour [9]. Interest in such tools is growing quickly, but the research record has gaps. A systematic review of studies on AI in higher education found that educators and pedagogical theory were weakly represented in the literature, and school-level work on speech remains scarce. At the same time, the limits of the technology are well documented. Language models produce statistically probable text without understanding it, and they may reproduce errors and social bias [3].

The study is conceptual and analytical in design, with a design-oriented focus on classroom use. The material consisted of nineteen scholarly sources selected for their relevance to four areas: classical and contemporary rhetoric [1]; learning theory, including social constructivism, self-efficacy, self-regulation and cognitive load [2]; formative assessment and feedback [4; 7]; and the use and limits of AI and conversational agents in education [3]. Works on dialogic talk in the classroom were also included [12].

The procedure had three steps. First, the sources were read and coded using thematic analysis [5]. Codes captured the functions that AI tools might perform (for example, generating counter-arguments or giving structural feedback) and the conditions under which learners are known to benefit. Second, the themes were grouped into pedagogical principles and compared across theoretical traditions to check whether they were compatible. Third, the principles were mapped onto the five classical canons of rhetoric (invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery) [6], which provided the

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structure of the instructional cycle. The assessment rubric was derived from the same canons and from criteria of effective feedback [7].

The study has an important limitation. It does not report data from a classroom experiment. The framework is a reasoned proposal that follows from the literature and is intended to be tested in later pilot work. Its claims should be read in this light.

The analysis yielded four principles that should govern any use of AI in speech training.

Principle 1: speech develops through interaction, and support must be withdrawn. Vygotsky's account of the zone of proximal development holds that learners accomplish with a more capable partner what they cannot yet do alone, and later internalize it [17]. Research on classroom talk shows that dialogue in which participants reason together improves thinking and language [12]. An AI system can act as a responsive partner and a source of scaffolding. Because scaffolding is useful only while it is needed, AI support in the model is reduced as learners gain independence.

Principle 2: safe practice builds self-efficacy. Bandura identified mastery experiences as the strongest source of self-efficacy [2]. A private rehearsal with an AI partner removes the social risk of failing before peers, and repeated successful attempts can raise confidence. The evidence on conversational agents, however, suggests caution. A study of chatbot learning partners reported that interest in chatbot-based tasks declined over a semester, which warns against assuming that novelty will last [6]. AI rehearsal should therefore complement, not replace, speaking to real audiences.

Principle 3: feedback must be criterion-based and actionable. Formative assessment improves learning when it tells learners where they are going, how they are doing and what to do next [4; 7]. AI can deliver comments immediately, but unguided comments tend to be generic. Feedback is useful in this model only when the learner or teacher supplies explicit criteria, so that the system evaluates against a rubric and not against its own preferences.

Principle 4: tasks must manage cognitive load and encourage self-regulation. Learners who have to plan content, choose language and control delivery at once can easily be overloaded [13]. Dividing the work into stages, and using clear, well-organized materials [11], reduces this burden. Self-regulated learners set goals, monitor progress and reflect on results, and the cycle below builds these habits into each task.

The four principles led to a cycle of four stages, each linked to rhetorical canons and to a specific, limited role for AI.

Stage 1. Plan (invention). Learners choose a topic and formulate a claim. They then develop it using Toulmin's scheme of claim, grounds and warrant [14]. AI serves as a questioning partner. It is asked to challenge the claim, propose counter-arguments and point out missing evidence, but not to write the speech. The learner records which objections are accepted and why. This keeps the intellectual work with the student.

Stage 2. Shape (arrangement and style). Learners draft an outline and a text. AI may propose alternative outlines or alternative formulations of a sentence. The learner compares the options and justifies the choice in a short note. For second-language learners, this stage is a natural place to study register, for instance by asking for the same message in a formal speech and in a conversation and discussing the differences in vocabulary and syntax. The comparison, not the generated text, is the learning activity.

Stage 3. Rehearse (memory and delivery). Learners rehearse aloud. Speech-to-text tools can produce a transcript, which learners analyse for filler words, pace, repetition and unclear transitions. AI can also play the audience and ask questions after the speech, preparing the student for the unplanned part of a real performance. Teacher supervision and age-appropriate tools are required at this stage (see section 3.4). The stage ends with a live performance before classmates, which preserves the social dimension of public speaking.

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Stage 4. Reflect (review of the whole process). Learners compare their performance with the rubric, request criterion-based comments from AI, and write a short reflection that answers three questions: what worked, what should change, and how AI was used. The teacher holds a brief conference and gives the final assessment. Reflection links this task to the next one and supports self-regulation.

Across the cycle the teacher designs the tasks, sets the prompts, verifies the accuracy of AI output and assigns the grade. The use of AI is gradually reduced. In early cycles learners may use all four stages with AI support, while in later cycles they take over the planning and reflection stages and keep AI mainly for audience simulation.

The rubric has five dimensions, each described at four levels from emerging to proficient.

1. Content and argument: clarity of the claim, quality of evidence, handling of counter-arguments.
2. Organization: logical sequence, introduction and conclusion, transitions.
3. Language and style: accuracy, appropriateness of register, richness of vocabulary.
4. Delivery: voice, pace, eye contact, gesture, composure.
5. Reflection and responsible AI use: quality of the self-assessment, transparency about how AI was used, and independent judgement in accepting or rejecting its suggestions.

The fifth dimension is an addition to traditional rubrics. It makes the learner's critical use of AI an explicit learning goal and a part of the grade.

Five risks were identified, each with a corresponding safeguard.

Overreliance and loss of authorship. Students may submit speeches written by AI. The safeguard is to assess the process and not only the product: drafts, notes on accepted and rejected suggestions, and a live performance followed by questions.

Inaccuracy and bias. Language models can produce confident errors and biased formulations [3]. Learners are taught to verify claims against reliable sources, and the teacher reviews the prompts and a sample of the outputs.

Privacy and age. Voice recordings and personal details are sensitive, and many tools have age restrictions. Guidance for education recommends data protection and age-appropriate use. Learners should not enter personal data, and schools should select tools that comply with these requirements.

Unequal access. Not all learners have devices or stable internet. The cycle should therefore include offline alternatives, such as peer audiences and teacher-prepared question cards, so that AI is not a condition for participation.

Erosion of personal voice. Repeated exposure to polished, uniform AI phrasing may flatten individual style. Learners are encouraged to treat suggestions as options to be evaluated and to preserve expressions that reflect their own thinking.

The proposed framework is consistent with a broad view in the literature that AI should extend teachers' capacity and not replace their judgement [8]. It differs from many general discussions of AI in education in that it ties each AI function to a specific rhetorical canon and to a stated learning principle. This makes it possible to say why a particular use of AI is appropriate. Generating counter-arguments in the planning stage supports invention, whereas asking the system to write a speech for the learner removes the very activity that the course is meant to teach.

The framework has particular relevance for teaching Russian in Uzbek-medium classes. Learners in this context often have good receptive skills but limited chances to speak, and they may be hesitant to make errors in front of peers. A private rehearsal stage lowers the stakes, and the comparison of registers addresses a typical difficulty of second-language learners. At the same time, the framework does not assume that AI output in Russian is always correct. The requirement that learners and teachers verify language, as well as content, is therefore essential. The analysis of

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classical Russian rhetoric provides a useful bridge, because it allows the traditional canons to be taught in a way that connects with the learners' language of study.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The framework rests on a review of selected literature and has not been tested with learners. Some of the cited evidence comes from higher education or from adult language learning and may not transfer directly to school-age students. The technology is also changing quickly, so specific tools will change while the underlying principles are expected to remain relevant. Finally, the rubric has not been validated for reliability.

These limitations point to a research agenda. A quasi-experimental pilot could compare classes using the cycle with classes following a conventional programme, measuring rubric scores, speaking anxiety, self-efficacy and learners' attitudes. Qualitative data from learner reflections and teacher interviews would show how the stages work in practice and whether the novelty effect noted in earlier research [6] appears in speech training. Studies are also needed on how to fade AI support most effectively.

The article has proposed a pedagogical framework for teaching rhetoric and public speaking with AI in school classrooms. It rests on four principles (interactive scaffolding that is withdrawn, safe practice for self-efficacy, criterion-based feedback, and managed cognitive load with self-regulation) and is realized in a four-stage cycle of planning, shaping, rehearsing and reflecting. A five-dimension rubric and a set of safeguards support assessment and responsible use.

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