Research on the Application, Dilemmas and Optimization Strategies of Generative AI in Contextualized Public Speaking Teaching of the a Chinese-medium course: "Professional Communication"

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Abstract. *Zhiye Goutong*(Professional Communication) is a Chinese-medium university course focusing on vocational interpersonal and public-speaking competence. The contextualization of public-speaking training poses a considerable challenge. Generative AI creates new opportunities for contextualized public-speaking teaching by delivering authentic and diverse practical scenarios. While the full adoption of generative AI in teaching facilitates students' learning and practice, it also leads to a general lack of personalization. Three optimization strategies are therefore put forward: optimizing prompts, clarifying the human-AI collaborative relationship, and prioritizing personalized and creative expression in evaluation.

Keywords: Communication, public-speaking, Generative AI.

1 Introduction: Public-speaking Training Is Inseparable from Specific Contexts

Rhetorical Situation Theory (Bitzer, 1968)[1] holds that all effective public-speaking emerges within a specific rhetorical situation. The selection of speech content, expressive forms and communication strategies cannot be divorced from concrete contexts. A rhetorical situation consists of three core elements: exigence, rhetorical audience, and constraints. The quality of a speech is closely associated with how well the exigence is addressed. In practical teaching, public-speaking instruction should not be merely skill-oriented training; rather, it ought to be expressive training tailored to concrete contexts.

In the Chinese-medium university course *Zhiye Goutong* (Professional Communication), public-speaking is regarded as an efficient oral-communication form in the workplace and a vital component of professionals' comprehensive qualities. It integrates multiple capabilities including individual logical thinking, verbal-language competence, empathetic expression, and self-confidence. The renowned orator Shao Shouyi(1985)[2] defines public-speaking as a linguistic communicative activity: within a given time-situation, a speaker uses vocal language (primary) and body language

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(auxiliary) as artistic means to voice opinions and convey emotions concerning social realities and prospects before an audience, so as to inspire listeners and motivate them to take action. Public-speaking cannot exist without a specific "time-situation". Its essence lies in solving real-world communication problems and accomplishing genuine communicative tasks within given circumstances, which explains why public-speaking training requires concrete contexts.

Public-speaking teaching emphasizes practice, and such practice relies heavily on concrete contexts. Pure manuscript-writing and delivery drills detached from real contexts deviate from the practical nature of public-speaking, whose purpose is to resolve communication problems. At present, the most prominent dilemma in public-speaking teaching is the lack of authentic and diverse training contexts. Furthermore, actionable evaluation criteria for contextual appropriateness are frequently overlooked in speech assessment. The advent of generative AI opens new prospects for addressing the difficulties within contextualized public-speaking teaching.

2 Application of Generative AI in Contextualized Public-Speaking Teaching

Against the backdrop of AI-empowered education, generative AI — mainly large language models and multimodal large models — is introduced into every link of teaching practice to address the dilemmas in contextualized public-speaking teaching.

First, AI is adopted before class to guide students in independent inquiry and audience-analysis practice. Truly effective public-speaking is invariably audience-centered, and speakers face different audiences in diverse real-world rhetorical situations. To concretize the contexts and audiences for public-speaking instruction, AI can be leveraged to generate varied specific speech scenarios and support audience analysis. It enables comprehensive audience profiling covering audience composition, listening purposes, cultural backgrounds and other dimensions. This process helps students grasp the practical value of public-speaking and experience the concrete implementation of the "audience-centered" principle.

Large language models are primarily deployed in this stage. The various specific speech scenarios generated by AI are essentially virtual simulated situations constructed through language. Vatz (1973)[3] argues that discourse itself can construct situations, rather than merely respond passively to objectively existing situations. Students can fully treat AI-generated virtual situations as training tasks, select different scenarios for repeated deliberate practice, and improve their ability to analyze situations through iterative training. Below is an example of an AI-generated situation:

Scenario 1: City Marathon Finisher-Sharing Session

Audience: marathon finishers, running enthusiasts and sports promotion staff. Speech delivered by a representative finisher from the general-participant group. Theme: *Measure Perseverance with Every Step — Every Stride Counts*. Share reflections on training from scratch to completing a full-distance marathon.

Scenario 2: High-School Graduation Ceremony

Audience: all senior-three graduates, classroom teachers and parent representatives. Speech delivered by a student representative. Theme: *Youth with Ambition, Sail toward Mountains and Seas*. Look back on striving high-school years and envision future life journeys.

Scenario 3: Community Home-owners' Experience-Sharing Session on Eco-Friendly Home Renovation

Audience: newly-moved-in homeowners planning house renovations. Speech delivered by a homeowner who has completed eco-friendly renovation. Theme: *Build a Green Home for a Healthier Lifestyle*. Share ideas and practical experience of selecting eco-friendly materials and creating livable living spaces.

Generative AI constructs specific scenarios spanning a wide range of professional fields. During simulation-based practice, students may select different scenarios based on their own majors and interests, analyze audience composition and surrounding environments in their respective fields, and select materials to organize speeches. Below is showing student-selected audience profiles from assignments: According to communications with students, they first used AI to analyze the audience characteristics of Scenario 2, then chose scenarios that interested them, and produced rough audience profiles by imitating AI-driven analysis.

Student Response:

I. Audience-Feature Analysis

Scenario: Community Volunteer-Activity Sharing Session for the May Fourth Youth Day

Audience Composition

Community management cadres and staff

Community resident representatives (including middle-aged and elderly residents, and families with teenagers)

Youth volunteer representatives (school students, working young adults, and community youth backbones)

Representatives of public-welfare organizations and personnel from relevant co-construction units

Core Characteristics and Needs

For community residents: They hope to strengthen their sense of community belonging and identity through youth volunteers' sharing, learn about the tangible improvements brought by volunteer services to the community, and experience the warmth of mutual assistance among neighbors.

For youth volunteers: They intend to draw on shared experience, gain value recognition and motivational inspiration, learn how to participate in community services in a standardized and efficient manner, and improve their service capabilities.

For the community and organizers: They expect this sharing session to pass on the positive energy of volunteer services, set youth role models, encourage more residents to engage in community governance, and advance community development featuring joint construction, joint governance and shared benefits.

During classroom implementation, the emphasis lies in speech-script writing. Combining lecturing with practice, how can students produce high-quality manuscripts?

Large language models serve as a powerful assistant for students' speech-script writing, ranging from idea generation to linguistic polishing. This writing mode greatly lowers writing barriers, preserves students' creative enthusiasm, and enables every student to start composing with confidence.

The involvement of large language models in speech-script writing substantially relieves students' writing-aversion sentiment. Nevertheless, AI-generated speech outlines, compiled speech materials, and even complete manuscripts may weaken students' individual self-value recognition. Therefore, classroom tasks should prioritize fostering students' creativity. The AI model should be positioned as an auxiliary tool for speech-script writing to boost the efficiency of translating students' ideas into language. Table 1 presents a simplified checklist for AI-assisted speech-script writing in class. Items 3 and 4 clearly reflect students' individual understanding and command of the rhetorical speech context. Item 7 demonstrates how students apply and steer the AI model throughout the writing process. Item 10 strengthens students' writing self-confidence via self-evaluation and helps them form a more accurate perception of large language models.

Table 1. Simplified Checklist for AI-Assisted Speech-Script Writing in Class

No.	Items	
1	Speech Context	
2	Audience Analysis	
3	Your Outline	
4	Your Materials (list at least 2-3 items)	
5	AI-Revised Outline	
6	Your Evaluation of the Revised Outline	
7	Your AI Prompts	
8	Your Speech Script	
9	AI Polishing of the Speech Script	
10	Self-Evaluation of the Speech Script	

During the after-class practice phase, students conduct repeated immersive exercises to achieve the transition from "writing" to "delivering speeches". At this stage, various foundational multimodal large models are mainly adopted to generate matching background videos and music based on the content of speech scripts. Students immerse themselves in the context and take on assigned roles to carry out immersive practice. This is where the tool-oriented nature of generative AI is best manifested: it restores text-constructed contexts in audio-visual forms, enabling students to practise their public-speaking competence within simulated scenarios.

Thus, contextualized public-speaking teaching forms a complete practical closed loop with the full-process participation of generative AI, which reduces obstacles throughout teaching practice. At present, speech performance is mainly evaluated through a combination of teacher assessment and student evaluation. To stimulate students' self-reflection awareness, personalized agents can be introduced into the evaluation process against the backdrop of AI-empowered teaching. Nevertheless, multimodal evaluation agents are still lacking at this stage. According to recent literature,

the multimodal public-speaking teaching and evaluation platform (Utalk)[4] developed by Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications (BUPT) can track multi-dimensional performance of speakers in the evaluation phase and generate personalized competence-improvement plans. It enables students to identify their weaknesses through self-observation and make progress via targeted training. Nevertheless, this platform is currently applied only to practical training for English public-speaking. It is expected to be extended to Chinese public-speaking practice, so that more young people can master the skills of contextualized public-speaking and tell China's stories well.

3 Dilemmas Encountered in the Application of Generative AI

The teaching model of "AI-empowered contextualized public-speaking" constructed in teaching practice achieves dual improvements in teaching efficiency and effectiveness. It puts the "student-centered" philosophy into real practice and well illustrates the significance of smart teaching in the digital era. Nevertheless, numerous problems have emerged during implementation, generally manifested as the dilemma of depersonalization.

3.1 From the Perspective of Pre-class and In-class Application

While generative AI stimulates students' enthusiasm for writing, it weakens their spirit of deliberate revision and refinement. Students' writing efficiency rises, yet the room for practical training is compressed.

In the Internet-plus era, from audience analysis to speech-script composition, students' information-searching process involves keyword searching, screening, reading, reflection, reference and reorganization. On this basis, students complete their works by integrating their own ideas and existing materials. After the intervention of generative AI, the threshold for writing is lowered. When students interact with different large language models, the phenomenon of "output equals finished work" arises. Assignments get completed, but students' individual thinking and linguistic competence are not genuinely trained. Without solid practical practice, students cannot achieve real improvement in writing ability, which in turn exerts negative impacts on young people's self-confidence and self-identity.

3.2 Stereotyped Language Style and Lack of Vivid Personalized Expression

In the speech-script writing phase, texts generated by large language models vary in linguistic style across different models, yet they tend to feature rigid structures and lack linguistic creativity. Below is an excerpt from a student speech script for Reading Day generated by Doubao:

Reading calms our emotions. On the journey of growth, we inevitably experience confusion, anxiety and grievance. When you are impetuous and lost, settling down to

read a few pages will gradually soothe your mind; when you are frustrated and depressed, the stories and characters in books will bring you courage and spiritual healing. Reading is not intended to bring immediate changes, but to subtly shape us into insightful, composed and broad-minded individuals through gradual influence.(This passage is from a student's Chinese composition and has been translated into English)

Such expressions are universally applicable. They are impeccable both in sentence structure and word choice, so many students consider them ready-to-use. Nevertheless, they contain hardly any personalized expressions and fail to reflect students' personal experiences and insights. Accustomed to accepting sample texts generated by AI during learning, students may fail to develop independent thinking and expression capabilities, which runs counter to the objectives of contextualized public-speaking teaching. Although large-language models gain stronger imitative capabilities after being trained on massive personalized corpora[5], human creativity and rich personal experiences still cannot be reflected within speech scripts. Students must carry out personalized revisions based on AI-generated texts.

3.3 Weakened Awareness of Standardized Formats for Speech Scripts

As manuscripts for practical expression, speech scripts are supposed to follow standard formatting and be organized in paragraphs and sections. Text outputs from large language models are content-centered and mostly structured in the style of classroom lectures. Judging from speech scripts submitted by students, nearly half of them have no proper paragraph or section formatting at all.

3.4 Shifted Focus of Students' Practice and Reflection in Public-speaking Training

During public-speaking training, students tend to figure out how to get higher-quality outputs from AI, while neglecting how to compose fine speeches on their own. When polishing outputs from large language models, students mainly work on prompts. The most widely-used prompt template follows the pattern of "role + task + requirements", which is irrelevant to core public-speaking competencies. The core objectives of speech-script writing training are to develop students' abilities in information collection and processing, logical thinking, and linguistic expression.

4 Optimization Strategies for the Teaching Process

Since the rapid development of Transformer-based large language models in 2018, we have entered an era marked by continuously expanding AI capabilities, a growing number of AI users, and rising attention to AI agents. The influence of AI on humanity is irresistible. Despite accompanying challenges, embracing transformation and exploring new human-AI collaboration modes has become an inevitable choice for this new era. In view of various dilemmas arising from AI adoption within contextualized public-speaking teaching, the reflections below are put forward.

4.1 Accurately Position and Express Oneself in Interaction with Generative AI

In the human-AI collaboration model of the AI era, humans should remain the subject of all activities, while generative AI serves merely as a tool. When applying generative AI in each link of contextualized public-speaking teaching, core training tasks must first be clarified, and AI tools shall be leveraged to improve students' personal competencies. The core pre-class task is audience analysis, which relies on concrete public-speaking contexts. Generative AI excels at supplying abundant concrete scenarios and opportunities for repeated practice, rather than finishing assignments on students' behalf. Meanwhile, the training contexts offered by AI are not real-world situations but simulated linguistic contexts constructed through language. Students may also optimize and adjust these simulated contexts according to practical conditions during training.

The core task in classroom teaching is to compose personalized speech scripts and improve writing competence. AI assistance can relieve students' fear of writing, yet the "output equals finished assignment" phenomenon in learning should be avoided. AI shall be fully utilized to boost students' writing capabilities, for instance by polishing structural frameworks, collecting relevant materials, and refining language. Students' subjective perceptions and creative ideas ought to be reflected in speech-script writing. Only in this way can each speech script be endowed with vitality, preventing individuals from becoming mere disseminators of AI-generated language.

At every teaching stage, it is vital to fully recognize the tool-oriented nature of AI. AI should not act as the subject for thinking and solving problems; instead, it is a tool that empowers learners to enhance their own abilities.

4.2 Learning and Mastering More Effective Prompts

To reduce stereotyped writing styles in speech scripts during interactions with generative AI, it is essential to adopt more effective prompts so that AI-generated and revised contents carry stronger personal characteristics. Practical, well-specified prompts should go beyond the technical-level "task-plus-requirement" template. Fundamentally, prompts are built upon professional and in-depth understanding of given problems. They are used to articulate problem-solving ideas, expected writing standards, and directions for revision. As a bridge for human-computer interaction, prompts constitute a channel for humans to solve problems creatively.

From the perspective of competence development, the ability to write effective prompts is not equivalent to one's own logical thinking and linguistic expression capabilities. The improvement of such core capacities still hinges on repeated practice.

4.3 Promote Creativity through Evaluation: Strengthen Personalized Expression in the Evaluation System

The evaluation system is an indispensable component of teaching and a vital means to examine teaching objectives. Evaluation criteria set the direction for practical training.

Evaluation results should exert multiple functions including guidance, diagnosis, inspection and motivation, so as to boost teachers' professional competence and enhance students' learning capabilities[6]. In traditional public-speaking teaching, evaluation mostly focuses on dimensions such as language, content and structure, with excessive emphasis on skill-oriented assessment. To counter the depersonalization brought by the integration of generative AI into contextualized public-speaking teaching, the weight assigned to creative expression can be increased within the evaluation mechanism to guide speech-script writing. When personalized expression, creative frameworks, and personal life experiences receive positive assessment, they will be given greater priority at the initial stage of creation, thereby mitigating the negative impacts caused by AI.

5 Conclusion

While the revolution of AI technology brings convenience to people, it inevitably produces drawbacks and may even shape human values. In contextualized public-speaking teaching, generative AI provides classrooms with technical methods, emotional value guidance, structural frameworks, sample manuscripts and more. Nevertheless, it also gives rise to drawbacks such as reduced creativity and depersonalization. At every stage of teaching, regardless of technical tools adopted, the core objective remains unchanged: students, as the main subjects of learning, shall continuously receive training and improvement in logical thinking, linguistic expression, and the ability to sort out and process information and materials.

Note: This research is mainly based on classroom teaching of Chinese public-speaking. Generative AI tools have been utilized for polishing English expressions in this paper. This statement is hereby provided.

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