

Students' Perceptions of Teacher Feedback in EFL Speaking Classes: A Comparison with AI-assisted Feedback

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Teacher feedback, AI-assisted feedback, EFL speaking classes, Student perceptions, Speaking anxiety

Speaking is a challenging skill that often requires support, making teacher feedback an essential part of EFL speaking instruction. Recent developments in AI have created opportunities for EFL learners to receive feedback during speaking practice. However, in the Vietnamese context, previous research has largely focused on teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback separately, with less attention to students' comparative perceptions of the two feedback sources. This study aimed to examine and compare students' perceptions of teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback in EFL speaking classes. A total of 101 first-year English-major students at University of Transport Ho Chi Minh City participated in the study. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was used, combining Likert-scale questionnaires with semi-structured interviews. Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results showed that students valued teacher feedback for its usefulness ($M = 4.21$) and clarity ($M = 4.13$). In contrast, AI-assisted feedback was valued for its immediacy ($M = 3.99$) and ability to reduce speaking anxiety ($M = 3.80$). Taken together, the findings suggest that teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback can play complementary roles in EFL speaking instruction.

Introduction

Speaking is an important component of communicative competence in EFL learning (Goh & Burns, 2012). However, it remains challenging for many EFL learners (Cao, 2025; Üstünbaş, 2024). These challenges are often associated with limited speaking practice, fear of making errors, and speaking anxiety (Cao, 2025; Üstünbaş, 2024). This issue is particularly relevant in Vietnamese higher education, where large class sizes and limited instructional time may restrict speaking practice (Cao, 2025).

To cope with such challenges, teacher feedback has long been recognized as an important component of effective language instruction, providing learners with guidance on different aspects of their spoken performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In addition to supporting linguistic development, teacher feedback may also help learners enhance their confidence. However, in many EFL contexts, especially those characterized by large class sizes and limited instructional time, providing timely and personalized feedback is challenging (Cao, 2025). These limitations have led to a growing need for technology-supported approaches to feedback.

Recent advances in AI have created new opportunities for technology-supported speaking practice and feedback. These advances allow learners to practice speaking on their own in a lower-pressure environment, thereby reducing the fear of being judged (Cao, 2025; Duc, 2025). AI-assisted tools can also provide learners with immediate feedback and corrections during speaking practice (Shen et al., 2025). Previous studies have reported generally positive perceptions among EFL learners toward AI-assisted tools (Alsalem, 2024; Benek, 2025; Nguyen, 2025). Rizal (2025), a qualitative learner-perception study, similarly reported that participants perceived AI-assisted feedback as immediate and useful for pronunciation and fluency practice. However, students' acceptance of AI tools may be tempered by concerns about the reliability of AI-generated feedback and the tools' limited understanding of cultural and contextual nuances (Braha, 2026).

Existing research has provided valuable insights into learners' experiences with AI-assisted speaking tools (Benek, 2025; Shen et al., 2025) and, more broadly, learners' acceptance of and trust in AI for language learning (Braha, 2026). Most previous studies have examined teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback as separate approaches instead of comparing them. Recent research in Vietnamese tertiary education has explored technology-assisted or AI-supported speaking practice, proficiency, engagement, affect, and autonomy, but few studies have directly compared teacher and AI-assisted feedback from learners' perspectives (Cao, 2025; Nguyen, 2025). A better understanding of learners' perceptions of the two feedback sources is important for designing effective feedback practices. Such understanding may help identify how the two feedback sources can be integrated to enhance the effectiveness of speaking instruction, rather than viewing one source as a substitute for the other.

Literature review

The Need for Feedback in EFL Speaking Learning

According to Bygate (1987), speaking has gradually come to be recognized as an independent field in language teaching, learning, and assessment. From a psycholinguistic perspective, Levelt (1989) described speech production as involving conceptualisation, formulation, articulation, and self-monitoring. These processes operate incrementally and may overlap during real-time communication, requiring speakers to plan messages, formulate language, articulate speech, and monitor their output. Therefore, speaking requires learners to coordinate multiple cognitive processes under time pressure.

Drawing on Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Verenikina (2003) explains a gap between what learners can do independently and what they can accomplish with

support. Learning within the zone occurs when learners perform tasks they cannot complete independently but can accomplish with the guidance of teachers or more capable individuals. At the same time, the support should be adjusted to learners' goals and current development level to help them gradually expand their abilities.

From this perspective, feedback is considered a form of support that helps reduce the gap between learners' current performance and their learning goals (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Mandouit and Hattie (2023) argued that feedback aims to support learners in achieving their learning goals and can positively influence learning by helping them identify what they need to improve to bridge knowledge gaps. Therefore, feedback plays a crucial role in supporting learning and learners' progress.

However, the effectiveness of feedback varies across different forms, and providing more feedback does not necessarily lead to better learning outcomes (Mandouit & Hattie, 2023). Hattie and Timperley (2007) affirmed that effective feedback should help learners answer three questions: Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next? They further suggested that feedback on the learning process can be more effective than feedback focusing only on the task. These perspectives provide a theoretical foundation for examining the roles of different feedback sources in developing EFL learners' speaking skills.

Teacher Feedback in EFL Speaking

Hattie and Timperley (2007) conceptualized feedback as information provided by an agent, such as a teacher, a peer, or the learner, regarding the learner's performance or level of understanding to support learning. They also considered feedback one of the most influential factors affecting learners' learning processes and outcomes. They further distinguished four levels of feedback: task, process, self-regulation, and self. They argued that feedback on the process and self-regulation levels is more effective in promoting deeper learning than feedback directed only at the self. In the context of EFL speaking instruction, teachers also regard oral corrective feedback as an essential component of speaking classes (Tran & Nguyen, 2020).

Oral corrective feedback plays an important role in EFL speaking instruction as it provides scaffolding to support learners in developing their use of the target language (Williyan, 2019). Furthermore, this type of feedback contributes to learners' interlanguage development (Lyster & Saito, 2010). Feedback that supports self-regulation may also encourage learners to become more actively engaged in monitoring and improving their own performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

In speaking classes, oral corrective feedback can take different forms, including explicit correction, recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). However, the effectiveness of feedback may vary depending on its type and the way it is delivered (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The teacher participants in Tran and Nguyen's (2020) study believed that the choice of oral corrective feedback should take learners' English proficiency into account. The study also found that teachers showed the strongest preference for elicitation, followed by metalinguistic feedback.

The study by Laeli and Setiawan (2019) indicated that students perceived repetition, a form of oral corrective feedback in which teachers repeat the erroneous part of learners' utterances to

encourage self-correction, as effective in supporting speaking skills. The study further found that different forms of oral corrective feedback helped learners identify and analyze their errors while providing opportunities for self-correction. In addition, students perceived that feedback could enhance their confidence and reduce their anxiety when receiving it.

AI-Assisted Feedback in EFL Speaking

Verenikina (2003) suggested that learning can be enhanced when learners receive appropriate guidance through mediating tools in a supportive learning environment. She also pointed out that support within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) does not necessarily come solely from teachers, as computer-mediated instruction can also be incorporated into the learning process. Building on this perspective, AI can complement pre-speaking preparation by providing language support before oral production. In a study of 42 Vietnamese English-major participants, Dao (2026) found that participants mainly used ChatGPT for brainstorming, idea development, and language assistance. They reported significantly higher willingness to communicate following the preparation phase. The study concerned text-based preparation before speaking rather than Gemini-based or automated evaluation of recorded speech or the accuracy of pronunciation feedback.

Rizal (2025) reported that participants perceived AI-assisted feedback as immediate, consistent, and helpful for pronunciation and fluency practice. Because the researcher's qualitative study examined students' perceptions, these findings should not be interpreted as objectively measured gains in speaking performance. Evidence from younger learners should be interpreted separately. Nhật et al. (2025) reported confidence-related findings for 120 Grade 5 pupils in a Vietnamese primary-school context; therefore, these findings should not be generalized directly to tertiary English majors.

Nguyen (2025) conducted a 16-week quasi-experimental study involving 240 Vietnamese university students from four institutions. Compared with students completing traditional speaking practice, the SpeakAI group showed significantly greater gains in IELTS speaking proficiency (treatment-group pretest–posttest gain: $d = 1.11$; between-group difference: $d = 0.72$) and higher behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement, although the effects varied across institutional contexts. However, the study examined an AI-powered speaking practice tool and did not isolate AI-generated feedback or directly compare teacher and AI feedback. In addition, complementary evidence from technology-supported speaking practice is provided by Tran (2024), whose 12-week study involving 90 first-year tertiary students found improved speaking performance, particularly fluency, and positive attitudes toward the ChatterKid app.

In addition to its linguistic benefits, AI-assisted feedback also offers affective advantages. Participants in Rizal's (2025) study described AI as providing a safe and nonjudgmental space for repeated speaking practice. Similar low-pressure speaking environments have also been reported in other AI-assisted learning contexts (Duc, 2025). More broadly, AI-assisted speaking practice has been associated with reduced speaking anxiety and greater confidence and engagement (Alsalem, 2024). Shen et al. (2025) further distinguished linguistic and affective outcomes: pre- and post-tests showed significant gains in pronunciation and fluency, whereas motivation and confidence were reported through a post-intervention survey, and perceived

reductions in speaking anxiety emerged from interviews.

Comparison between Teacher and AI-Assisted Feedback in EFL Speaking

Rizal (2025) reported that students viewed AI-assisted feedback as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, teacher feedback. Participants perceived AI-assisted feedback as immediate and useful for targeted pronunciation and fluency practice, but they also reported that it often neglected discourse and pragmatic aspects of speaking. They therefore continued to value teacher input for discourse-level guidance and nuanced performance evaluation. These findings suggest that teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback can serve complementary roles in speaking practice. However, because Rizal (2025) examined students' perceptions rather than directly comparing the performance effects of the two feedback sources, the study should not be interpreted as evidence that teacher feedback produces superior discourse-level performance.

Beyond the respective roles of these two feedback sources, previous studies also suggest that learners tend to use teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback for different learning purposes (Alsalem, 2024; Duc, 2025). While AI-assisted feedback is valued for providing a low-pressure and flexible environment for speaking practice, learners still tend to rely on teacher feedback when they need more detailed explanations, emotional support, and authentic communicative interaction (Duc, 2025). This suggests that learners view AI not as a substitute for teachers but as a supportive tool for independent speaking practice. Consequently, despite their positive attitudes toward speaking practice with ChatGPT, learners continue to prefer interacting with teachers owing to the diversity and authenticity of human communication, which current AI systems have not fully replaced (Alsalem, 2024).

Building on these findings, previous studies have emphasized that AI should be integrated into speaking instruction to balance technological support with teacher guidance (Benek, 2025; Cao, 2025; Duong & Nguyen, 2024). Although AI can provide learners with greater opportunities for independent speaking practice, ongoing teacher support remains essential for helping learners use AI effectively and take responsibility for their own learning (Cao, 2025). For pre-speaking preparation, Dao (2026) found that 42 Vietnamese English-major participants mainly used ChatGPT for brainstorming, idea development, and language assistance. They reported significantly higher willingness to communicate following the preparation phase. Thus, Dao's findings support ChatGPT as a preparation and language-support tool, while broader classroom integration still requires pedagogical guidance (Benek, 2025).

Research Gap

Despite the growing body of research on feedback in EFL speaking, several gaps remain. Research on teacher feedback has mainly examined oral corrective feedback practices, feedback types, and learners' or teachers' preferences (Laeli & Setiawan, 2019; Tran & Nguyen, 2020). In contrast, recent studies of AI-assisted speaking have focused largely on learners' perceptions and affective experiences (Alsalem, 2024), as well as measured speaking outcomes and self-reported affective responses (Shen et al., 2025).

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of maintaining teacher support when integrating AI into language learning (Benek, 2025), while Rizal (2025) reported that learners viewed AI-assisted feedback as a complementary aid rather than a substitute for teacher evaluation. However, relatively little research has directly compared students' perceptions of teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback within the same EFL speaking context. Evidence is particularly limited in Vietnamese tertiary education, where the two feedback sources may serve different but complementary functions. Further research is therefore needed to examine how teacher and AI-assisted feedback can jointly support speaking development while addressing psychological factors such as confidence and anxiety.

Research Questions

In response to these gaps, the present study investigates students' perceptions of teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback in EFL speaking classes. Specifically, it examines how learners compare the two feedback sources regarding perceived usefulness, clarity, accessibility, affective support, and overall preference. The following research questions guide the study:

1. What are students' perceptions of teacher feedback in EFL speaking classes?
2. How do students perceive AI-assisted feedback in speaking practice?
3. How do students compare the perceived usefulness, clarity, accessibility, affective support, and overall preference associated with teacher and AI-assisted feedback?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted in a regular EFL speaking course at the University of Transport Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The course is part of the first-year English Language program and focuses on developing students' pronunciation, fluency, and overall communicative competence. Classes involve a range of speaking activities, during which students receive teacher feedback. This context reflects a typical Vietnamese tertiary EFL environment, where class sizes are often relatively large and opportunities for individualized speaking practice may be limited.

The participants were first-year English majors at University of Transport Ho Chi Minh City. Of the 106 students enrolled in the course, 101 participated in the study, representing approximately 95% of the target population. The participants had previously experienced both teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback in speaking-related activities. Their English proficiency ranged from lower-intermediate to intermediate, which is typical of first-year English majors in this context.

From this group, 10 students were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. The selection aimed to capture variation in speaking confidence and attitudes toward teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback based on their questionnaire responses. This allowed for a deeper exploration of diverse learner perspectives.

Participation in the study was voluntary. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study before data collection and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous.

Design of the Study

To investigate students' perceptions of teacher and AI-assisted feedback in EFL speaking classes, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach, specifically an explanatory sequential design, in which quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to provide deeper explanations of the initial findings.

In the first phase, a questionnaire was administered to identify general patterns in students' views of the two types of feedback. The questionnaire was designed to address the research questions and was informed by previous studies on teacher feedback and AI-assisted language learning (e.g., Alsalem, 2024; Duc, 2025), as well as established feedback literature (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The items were organized to reflect the objectives of the present study and adapted to suit the Vietnamese tertiary EFL context. The questionnaire covered three main areas: perceptions of teacher feedback, perceptions of AI-assisted feedback, and comparative evaluations of the two feedback sources. For RQ3, the comparative items addressed perceived usefulness, clarity, accessibility, and affective support. Because overall preference was not measured by a single item, it was interpreted from the pattern across the comparative items together with the interview responses. The items were subsequently reviewed to ensure clarity and appropriateness for Vietnamese tertiary EFL learners. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS through descriptive statistics and reliability analysis. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire scales.

In the second phase, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences, attitudes, and preferences regarding both types of feedback. The interview questions were designed to further explore learners' views on the effectiveness, strengths, and limitations of teacher and AI-assisted feedback, as well as how these feedback sources could be combined in speaking instruction.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how students perceived and compared the two feedback sources in EFL speaking contexts. The data were collected within regular speaking classes to reflect authentic learning conditions and enhance ecological validity.

Data collection & analysis

The research procedure was conducted in five stages within regular speaking classes.

Stage 1: Introduction to feedback approaches.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher introduced both teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback used in the speaking course. Students were familiarized with different types of teacher feedback provided during classroom activities, as well as the use of Gemini as an AI-assisted feedback tool. The researcher demonstrated how students could record their spoken responses, upload the audio recordings to Gemini, and receive immediate written feedback on their speaking performance. Students also received guidance on how to interpret and utilize the

feedback for self-reflection and improvement.

Stage 2: Speaking practice with the teacher and AI-assisted feedback.

The intervention was conducted over six weeks, comprising 12 speaking sessions integrated into regular classroom instruction. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes. During these sessions, students participated in speaking activities that involved both teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback. Teacher feedback was provided during classroom interactions, focusing on aspects such as pronunciation, fluency, and language use. For AI-assisted practice, students recorded their spoken responses and uploaded the audio files to Gemini, which generated written feedback on their speaking performance. Students were encouraged to review the AI-generated feedback, reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement, and apply the feedback in subsequent speaking practice. Throughout the intervention, students were encouraged to use both teacher and AI-assisted feedback during and beyond class to support their speaking development. The AI prompt used during the intervention was provided to all participants to ensure consistency in the feedback generated by Gemini.

Stage 3: Questionnaire administration.

Following the intervention, students were asked to complete a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items designed to examine students' perceptions of teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback. The comparative section (Q16–Q21) addressed perceived usefulness, clarity, accessibility, and affective support associated with the two feedback sources. Overall preference was not represented by a single item but was interpreted from the pattern across the comparative items and explored further through the interviews.

Stage 4: Semi-structured interviews.

After the questionnaire phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selected group of students. Participants were purposively selected based on their questionnaire responses to capture variation in speaking confidence and attitudes toward the two feedback sources. The interviews focused on learners' experiences with both teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback, including perceived strengths and limitations, emotional responses, and preferences for integrating different feedback approaches in speaking classes. Each interview lasted approximately 10 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent.

Stage 5: Data analysis.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS through descriptive statistics, while interviews were examined through thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns.

The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The results indicated acceptable to high internal consistency across the questionnaire scales, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .685 to .881. Specifically, the positive perceptions of the teacher feedback scale demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = .881$), the positive perceptions of the AI-assisted feedback scale showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .798$), and the comparison scale achieved acceptable internal consistency for exploratory classroom-based research ($\alpha = .685$).

Negatively worded items were reverse-coded before the reliability analysis. Single-item questions (Q7, Q14, and Q15) were analyzed descriptively and not included in the Cronbach's alpha analysis.

Table 1.

Reliability analysis of the questionnaire scales

Scale	Items	Cronbach's α
Positive perceptions of teacher feedback	Q1 – Q6	.881
Positive perceptions of AI-assisted feedback	Q8 – Q13	.798
Comparison	Q16 – Q21	.685

Findings and Discussion

Students' perceptions of teacher feedback in EFL speaking classes

Table 2.

Students' perceptions of teacher feedback

No.	Item	N	Mean	SD
1	Teacher feedback helps me identify my speaking errors.	101	4.74	.594
2	Teacher feedback helps me improve my pronunciation.	101	4.56	.727
3	Teacher feedback helps me improve my speaking fluency.	101	4.31	.809
4	Teacher feedback helps me use vocabulary and grammar more accurately when speaking.	101	4.40	.722
5	Teacher feedback is clear and easy to understand.	101	4.43	.792
6	Teacher feedback increases my confidence in speaking English.	101	4.22	.844
7	I feel anxious when receiving teacher feedback.	101	2.80	1.049

As seen from Table 2, the students generally had positive perceptions of teacher feedback. Most items received high mean scores, ranging from 4.22 to 4.74, indicating that students found teacher feedback helpful in improving their speaking skills. These findings suggest that teacher feedback played an important role in supporting students' speaking development in the classroom context.

Among the items, the idea that teacher feedback helps identify speaking errors received the highest mean score ($M = 4.74$, $SD = .594$). This suggests that students highly appreciated teachers' ability to point out mistakes and provide guidance during speaking activities. Students also reported positive perceptions of teacher feedback in improving pronunciation ($M = 4.56$, $SD = .727$), speaking fluency ($M = 4.31$, $SD = .809$), and the accurate use of grammar and vocabulary ($M = 4.40$, $SD = .722$). This finding is consistent with Hattie and Timperley (2007), who argue that effective feedback helps learners understand what they need to improve to achieve their learning goals. It also supports the findings of Lyster and Saito (2010), who reported that oral corrective feedback contributes positively to second language development. These perspectives help explain why students in the present study valued teacher feedback for improving different aspects of their speaking performance.

In addition, students perceived teacher feedback as clear and easy to understand ($M = 4.43$, $SD = .792$). Many participants also agreed that teacher feedback helped increase their confidence in speaking English ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .844$). The relatively low standard deviation values across

most items suggest that students had fairly similar positive attitudes toward teacher feedback. This consistency may indicate that teacher feedback was widely perceived as a reliable and meaningful part of the speaking learning process. The interview responses also supported the quantitative findings. Several students mentioned that teacher feedback helped them better understand their mistakes, especially in pronunciation and language use. One student shared: “Teachers explain why the mistake happens and help me understand the problem more clearly.” Another participant stated that teacher feedback was more detailed and easier to follow because teachers often provided direct explanations and examples during classroom activities. The interview findings further suggest that students valued not only corrective information but also the explanatory and supportive teachers’ roles during speaking practice. These comments support Hattie and Timperley’s (2007) view that effective feedback should help learners understand how to improve rather than simply point out errors.

However, the anxiety-related item received a lower mean score ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.049$), suggesting that students generally did not feel highly anxious when receiving teacher feedback. At the same time, the higher standard deviation indicates that students’ feelings varied to some extent. This variation may reflect differences in learners’ confidence levels and personal reactions to public correction during classroom interaction. This was also reflected in the interviews, as a few students admitted that they sometimes felt nervous when receiving corrective feedback in front of their classmates. One student explained: “Sometimes I feel nervous because I am afraid of making mistakes in front of the teacher and my classmates.” Despite this variation, many participants still viewed teacher feedback positively and regarded it as an important part of their speaking improvement process.

Students’ perceptions of AI-assisted feedback in speaking practice

Table 3.

Students’ perceptions of AI-assisted feedback

No.	Item	N	Mean	SD
8	AI tools provide me with more opportunities to practice speaking.	101	3.81	.913
9	AI provides immediate feedback.	101	3.99	.781
10	AI tools are easy to use for speaking practice.	101	3.72	.862
11	AI feedback helps me improve my pronunciation.	101	3.49	.901
12	AI feedback increases my confidence in speaking practice.	101	3.53	.831
13	AI helps reduce my speaking anxiety.	101	3.80	.970
14	AI feedback is sometimes unclear or inaccurate.	101	2.97	.854
15	I am concerned about relying too much on AI for speaking practice.	101	2.77	.947

As in Table 3, the students generally perceived AI-assisted feedback in speaking practice positively. Most items received moderate to high mean scores, ranging from 3.49 to 3.99, indicating that students considered AI tools useful in supporting speaking practice and independent learning.

Among the items, “AI provides immediate feedback” received the highest mean score ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .781$). Students also agreed that AI tools offered more opportunities for speaking practice ($M = 3.81$, $SD = .913$) and helped reduce speaking anxiety ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .970$). These findings suggest that students valued AI because it enabled flexible practice and

immediate support beyond the classroom. The results can be considered alongside Shen et al. (2025), who found measurable gains in pronunciation and fluency, while motivation and confidence were reported through a post-intervention survey, and perceived anxiety reduction emerged from interviews.

Students also expressed positive perceptions of the ease of use ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .862$), confidence building ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .831$), and pronunciation improvement ($M = 3.49$, $SD = .901$) offered by AI-assisted feedback. The interview findings supported these results. Several students mentioned that they could practice speaking more frequently because AI tools were available whenever they needed them. Others reported feeling less nervous when practicing with AI, as they were not afraid of making mistakes. These responses indicate that AI created a supportive environment for independent speaking practice. This pattern is broadly consistent with Dao's (2026) finding that participants reported significantly higher willingness to communicate following ChatGPT-assisted pre-speaking preparation.

However, some concerns about AI-assisted feedback were also reported. The item "AI feedback is sometimes unclear or inaccurate" received a mean score of 2.97 ($SD = .854$), while concern about relying too much on AI received a mean score of 2.77 ($SD = .947$). During the interviews, several students mentioned that AI feedback was sometimes too general and lacked detailed explanations compared with teacher feedback. In the broader context of AI-assisted language learning, this concern is consistent with Braha (2026), whose Kosovan university-level EFL participants generally found AI tools easy to use and useful but expressed concerns about the accuracy, reliability, and limited contextual understanding of AI-generated feedback.

Despite these concerns, AI-assisted feedback was still generally perceived as a useful supplementary tool for speaking practice. Rather than replacing teacher feedback, students appeared to view AI as an additional resource for independent practice. This pattern is consistent with Rizal (2025), whose participants valued AI-assisted feedback for targeted pronunciation and fluency practice while also reporting limitations in its attention to discourse and pragmatic aspects of speaking.

Students' comparative perceptions of teacher and AI-assisted feedback

Table 4.

Comparative perceptions of teacher and AI-assisted feedback

No.	Item	N	Mean	SD
16	Teacher feedback is more useful than AI-assisted feedback for improving speaking skills.	101	4.21	.816
17	Teacher feedback is clearer than AI-assisted feedback.	101	4.13	.891
18	Teacher feedback helps me understand my errors better than AI.	101	4.21	.779
19	AI provides more opportunities for speaking practice than teacher feedback.	101	3.55	1.015
20	I feel more comfortable practicing with AI than receiving teacher feedback.	101	3.20	.928
21	AI reduces my speaking anxiety more than teacher feedback.	101	3.46	1.005

As shown in Table 4, students compared teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback across perceived usefulness, clarity, accessibility, and affective support. Overall preference was

interpreted from the pattern across the comparative items and interview responses rather than from a single questionnaire item. The results indicate a context-dependent pattern: teacher feedback was valued particularly for usefulness and clarity, whereas AI-assisted feedback was appreciated for accessibility and low-pressure speaking practice.

Regarding perceived usefulness, students agreed that teacher feedback was more useful for improving speaking skills ($M = 4.21$, $SD = .816$) and helped them understand their errors better than AI-assisted feedback ($M = 4.21$, $SD = .779$). Concerning clarity, students perceived teacher feedback as clearer than AI-assisted feedback ($M = 4.13$, $SD = .891$). These findings suggest that students particularly valued teachers' ability to provide clear explanations and individualized guidance during speaking activities. This interpretation can be considered alongside Tran and Nguyen (2020), whose teacher participants regarded oral corrective feedback as a necessary component of EFL speaking instruction. The interview findings reflected the same pattern. Several students explained that teachers could discuss mistakes more carefully and provide clear examples. One participant shared, *"Teachers can explain my mistakes more carefully and give examples that are easier to understand."* Another student commented that teacher feedback felt more personal and supportive, especially when addressing pronunciation and grammar mistakes. These responses indicate that students valued teacher feedback not only for correcting errors but also for the guidance and encouragement provided during speaking practice.

In terms of accessibility, the item "AI provides more opportunities for speaking practice than teacher feedback" received a mean score of 3.55 ($SD = 1.015$), indicating that students appreciated the flexibility and availability of AI tools. When evaluating affective support, students reported moderate levels of comfort when practicing with AI rather than receiving direct teacher feedback ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .928$), while the anxiety-reduction item received a mean score of 3.46 ($SD = 1.005$). These moderate scores suggest that AI offered a lower-pressure alternative for some students but was not affectively preferred by all participants.

This pattern was also reflected in the interviews. Several participants explained that AI tools allowed them to practice speaking privately and repeatedly without fear of embarrassment. One student stated: "When practicing with AI, I feel more relaxed because I can make mistakes without worrying about other people's reactions." However, students also pointed out that AI feedback was sometimes less detailed than teacher feedback.

Taken together, the findings indicate that students' overall preference was context-dependent rather than absolute. Teacher feedback was preferred when students needed clear explanations, detailed guidance, and interpersonal support, whereas AI-assisted feedback was valued when they wanted accessible, flexible, and lower-pressure opportunities for independent practice. Students therefore viewed the two feedback sources as complementary rather than competing approaches. This finding closely aligns with Rizal (2025), whose participants similarly viewed AI-assisted feedback as a complementary pedagogical aid rather than a substitute for teacher evaluation. Integrating both sources of feedback may therefore provide learners with greater opportunities for independent practice while preserving the benefits of teacher guidance.

Limitation and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the participants were limited to first-year English majors at a single Vietnamese university, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or proficiency levels. Second, the intervention period was relatively short (six weeks) and therefore may not fully capture long-term changes in students' perceptions or speaking development. Third, the AI-assisted feedback in this study focused mainly on pronunciation and fluency, while other aspects of communicative competence, such as discourse organization and pragmatic appropriateness, were not examined. Finally, self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews may be subject to social desirability bias, as students might have provided responses they believed were expected by the researcher.

Future research could expand the scope by including students from different universities, proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds to provide a more comprehensive understanding of learners' perceptions of teacher and AI-assisted feedback. Longer-term studies would also be valuable to examine how sustained exposure to both feedback sources influences speaking proficiency and confidence over time. In addition, future work should explore how AI-assisted feedback is integrated with teacher feedback in hybrid learning environments to maximize both linguistic and affective outcomes. Lastly, further research could examine the impact of feedback on broader communicative skills, including discourse management, pragmatic competence, and intercultural communication, to provide a more holistic view of speaking development in EFL contexts.

Conclusion

This study explored students' perceptions of teacher feedback and AI-assisted feedback in EFL speaking classes in a Vietnamese tertiary education context. The comparative findings revealed different perceptions across usefulness, clarity, accessibility, affective support, and overall preference.

Teacher feedback was perceived as more useful and clearer, particularly when students needed detailed explanations, individualized guidance, and interpersonal support. AI-assisted feedback was valued for its accessibility, flexibility, and capacity to provide lower-pressure opportunities for independent speaking practice.

Students did not express an absolute preference for either feedback source. Instead, their overall preference was context-dependent: teacher feedback was favored for deeper understanding and personalized support, whereas AI-assisted feedback was appreciated for flexible, autonomous, and less anxiety-provoking practice. The two feedback sources were therefore perceived as complementary.

Overall, the findings highlight the value of integrating teacher feedback with AI-assisted feedback in EFL speaking instruction. Combining the strengths of both approaches may better support learners' speaking development, confidence, and engagement while promoting a more balanced learning environment in higher education. In addition, this study contributes to the

growing literature on AI-assisted language learning by providing comparative evidence of students' perceptions of teacher and AI-assisted feedback in the Vietnamese EFL higher education context, where such comparisons remain limited.

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Biodata

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