# MICROSOFT TEAMS SPEAKER PROGRESS: WHY AND HOW TO USE IT

Samantha Kawakami

National Institute of Technology, Matsue College, Japan

Samantha Kawakami (s-kawakami@matsue-ct.ac.jp)

**Speaker Progress is the latest Learning Accelerator in Microsoft Teams. It is a combination of Teams' Reading Progress and PowerPoint's Reading Coach. To use Reading Progress, the teacher gives students a text to read. Students get AI feedback on word-level pronunciation, reading speed, intonation. This is a fantastic tool for getting students to read a text before class or reinforce pronunciation after class. On the other hand, PowerPoint's Reading Coach allows students to practice saying their own presentation content and gives additional feedback including eye contact. Speaker Progress has elements of both programs. Speaker Progress can be used with video to practice and record a presentation, and with audio only to have students read out loud their own writing. Using Speaker Progress to have students record and submit video assignments is a smooth process for both students and teachers. Using other recording methods, students record a video on their device and upload it to the assignment. This method sometimes has issues with file size and uploading based on device type. Speaker Progress is a simpler process because the recording is made directly in the assignment, removing the need to upload files. Another advantage is that students can receive real-time AI feedback. This immediate feedback means that students can learn what to do to improve their presentation, re-record the assignment, and submit a better recording. Speaker Progress is also useful as a tool for having students read out their own written assignments, submitting the audio along with the written assignment. Recently, when writing reports in a second language, students often use machine translation. When used correctly, machine translation is a valuable tool which can also deepen students' language abilities. However, when machine translation is used incorrectly, students turn in assignments that they do not understand, and they do not have the ability to verify whether the information is correct. Based on observations in both presentations and written assignments, if students are unable to say the words they have submitted, they do not understand the meaning. Using Speaker Progress along with written assignments is one way to gauge students' understanding of their work.**

**Speaker Progress uses AI to generate immediate feedback for students. However, the AI feedback is not 100% accurate, so teachers cannot rely on it exclusively to determine students' grades, but it can help teachers save time when assessing students' work.**

***Keywords:*** *AI, assessments, feedback, Teams assignments, Speaker Progress*

## Introduction

Back in 1985, Steve Jobs was prescient when he said, "Computers themselves, and software yet to be developed, will revolutionize the way we learn." Technology is forever changing the way teachers teach and the way students learn. It is changing the way we give and accept assignments. It is changing the way students complete those assignments. AI is accelerating the revolution.

Technology, particularly AI, often makes things easier for both teachers and students, but it also brings new sets of problems. Two crucial issues that arise are originality and accuracy. Is content created with the assistance of AI original and authentic, and to what degree? This is a question that many people are still debating and having a difficult time reaching consensus on. Even if we cannot agree on the proper usage of AI, I think we can agree that AI still has real and serious issues with accuracy. As long as teachers keep this accuracy issue in mind, AI can be useful for both teachers and students. In this paper, I am not going to try and answer these questions, but they are always in the back of my mind as I use AI and teach my students to use AI.

What this paper is going to look at is the usage of AI in Microsoft Teams, which has been incorporating AI into its learning tools since 2021, when it introduced Reading Progress, a fun and easy way to give students reading practice outside of class using teacher-assigned texts. Also in 2021, Microsoft introduced PowerPoint's Rehearse with Coach, which was fantastic for students to get feedback on their presentations and pronunciation. However, Rehearse with Coach had limitations. It was only available in the English mobile version of PowerPoint, and because of this there was no good way to assign it to students to practice their own presentations. It seemed to be a really cool bit of software that was stealthily slipped into certain versions of PowerPoint. Then in 2023 Microsoft rebranded its AI in Teams assignments as Learning Accelerators, adding new accelerators for math and online searching. In August 2024, Speaker Progress was finally added. Essentially, it is PowerPoint's Rehearse with Coach added to

assignments as a Learning Accelerator. As an English teacher, the combination of Reading Progress and Speaker Progress opened up new possibilities for assignments, feedback, and assessment.

## Pedagogy

In this section I will explain some important aspects of Teams Learning Accelerators Reading Progress and Speaker Progress, assignment purposes, and what students are taught regarding AI usage.

First, in Reading Progress, the content is determined by the teacher, so all the students are reading the same content. The AI provides numerical data about pronunciation markers and an overall accuracy score. However, students cannot see the AI feedback until after the teacher checks the content and returns the assignment with a score. Because the feedback is based solely on the audio file, I do not require video for Reading Progress assignments. Results from an average recording might look something like Figure 1.


Figure 1. Average Reading Progress AI result (purple: mispronunciations, pink: omissions, green: insertions, blue: repetitions, grey: self-corrections)

In the assignment directions, students are instructed that the assignment is worth 2 points. If their AI score is 50% or better, they can get the full 2 points. If it is less, they will get 1 point. 50% is a relatively low bar, so most students do get the full points, with an average of 3-4 students out of 40 getting only 1 point. One reason that students only get 1 point is that they need to practice reading the text a few times before recording. In this case the AI has correctly judged their accuracy as less than 50%. Another reason has to do with recording quality and background noise. Some students speak too quietly in the recording while others record in a place that is too noisy for AI to accurately pick up their voice. Unfortunately, students cannot see the AI feedback before submitting the assignment. But they can listen to their own recording before choosing to use it. Students are encouraged to do this to check their recording quality. If the AI assessment does not fit into normal patterns, I more closely check the listening. Figure 2 is an example from a student who was speaking too quietly in the recording so the AI could not pick out the individual sounds and words. However, when I listened to the recording, I could pick out the words, even though they were a bit quiet, so the student received 1 point on the assignment.

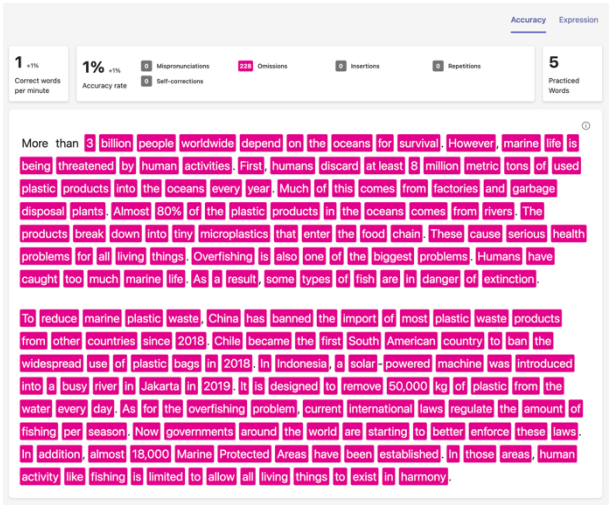


Figure 2. Poor Reading Progress AI result (pink: omissions)

However, there have been issues with a few students' Reading Progress recordings. On at least 2 occasions, students have tried to pass off an AI reading of the text. A more common issue is students reading the first sentence followed by a minute or two of either gibberish or silence. In these cases, the AI results may show 1 or 2%, and then all pink "omissions", so their AI results are also similar to the results in Figure 2. In these cases, the students get 0 on the assignment and are informed about the reason through assignment feedback.

I use Reading Progress assignments for two different purposes. The first is to practice pronunciation that we have already done in class. In these assignments I want to encourage spaced repetition and get students to practice the pronunciation a bit more outside of class. Students generally score fairly high because they have already had some practice reading the text out loud during class. The second purpose is to introduce them to a text, usually from their textbooks, before class. In an ideal situation, students would read the text as requested and check the words they do not know – most of which are in a class Quizlet. However, in reality it is very difficult, almost impossible, to get the majority of students to do this level of studying before a class without some kind of graded assessment. A Reading Progress assignment where they read the text aloud guarantees that they have read through the text at least once before coming to class. Some students clearly practice reading the text before recording, while others do not. Overall students have lower scores on assignments introducing a text before class, but at least they have seen and read the text once before class even if their comprehension may be low. Reading Progress has been a great tool for introducing new content before class and reviewing pronunciation skills after class.

Table 1. Comparison of Reading Progress and Speaker Progress

| | **Reading Progress** | **Speaker Progress** |
|---|---|---|
| **Content** | Teacher-assigned texts<br>All students read the same text. | Student-generated text<br>Each student reads/presents different text. |
| **Medium** | Voice/Video | Voice/Video |
| **Purpose of Assignments** | - Review/practice pronunciation (voice only okay)<br>- Enforce reading of text before class to prepare (voice only okay) | - Submit presentation videos (video required)<br>- Check for misuse of AI (translation software/Chat GPT) when writing a report (voice only okay) |
| **AI Feedback Timing** | Later, when the graded assignment is returned by the teacher | Immediate, before submitting |
| **AI Feedback Content** | Accuracy<br>- Correct words per minute (number)<br>- Accuracy rate (mispronunciations, omissions, insertions, self-corrections, repetitions) (percentage)<br>Expression<br>- Monotone score (period, exclamation, question, extended pause, rushed reading, read in a monotone voice) (percentage) | Speaking time<br>Detailed AI feedback/advice<br>- Pace (words/min) (number and chart)<br>- Body language (eye contact, clear view, distance)<br>- Repetitive language<br>- Filler words<br>- Pitch<br>- Inclusiveness<br>- Pronunciation<br>Numerical data<br>- Delivery (pace, filler words, pitch, mispronunciation)<br>- Content (non-inclusive language, repetitive language)<br>- Audience engagement (lost eye contact, too close or too far from camera, obstructed view) |
| **AI Feedback Notes** | Pronunciation feedback more detailed<br>Feedback more quantifiable | More detailed feedback in most areas other than pronunciation<br>Feedback more qualitative |

A large part of what I teach are presentation skills. The semester ends with a group presentation. But in addition to the final group presentation, I also want students to practice making presentations and giving them throughout the semester. However, there is not enough class time to have everyone give multiple presentations throughout the semester, so I have the students submit videos of themselves giving their presentations. Before Speaker Progress, I would have students record themselves giving their presentation and attach the video to the assignment. The issue was that students often had videos that exceeded file size limits and could not upload them. Speaker Progress is an ideal answer to this problem.

Speaker Progress is quite different from Reading Progress (Table 1). In Speaker Progress, the content is determined by the student, so each student can work with different content. The AI feedback provided is much more qualitative, although there are a few quantitative values. Also, a huge benefit to Speaker Progress is that students can see the AI feedback before submitting an assignment. This means that students can consider the feedback and rerecord their presentation to improve it and get a higher score. Another major difference is that the AI also gives some feedback on content and "audience engagement". Results from a good recording might look something like Figure 3.

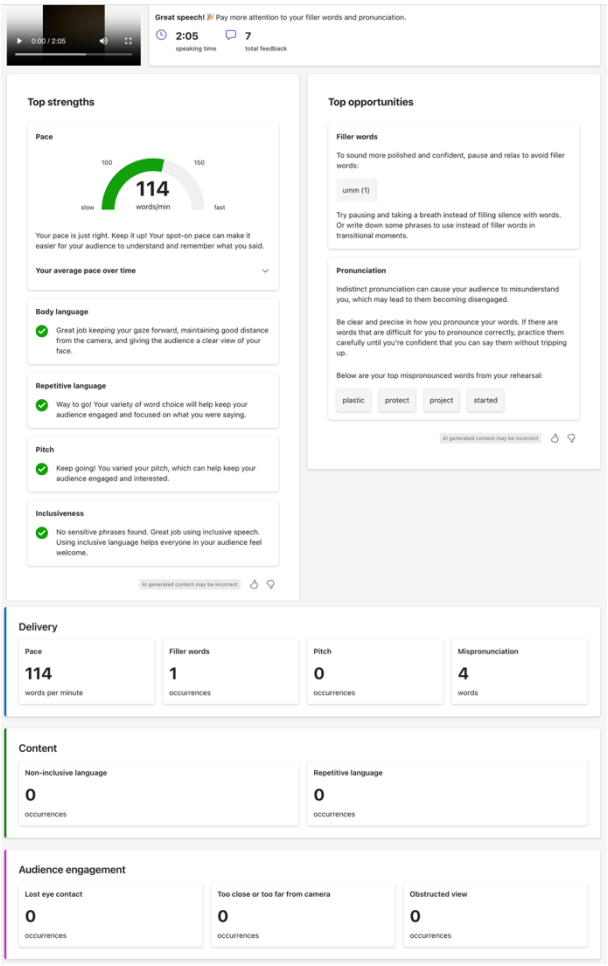

Figure 3. Speaker Progress AI feedback

Teachers can easily watch the student's Speaker Progress video within the assignment, open their own rubric in a panel on the right side of the screen, and give a score to the student. So, Speaker Progress eliminates students' issues with video file sizes, gives them immediate AI feedback, and makes it easy for teachers to assess.

There is one more way that I use Speaker Progress. It is not as the main assignment, but as a way to confirm comprehension. An added benefit is that it also gives students more speaking practice. In English Communication, students must generate their own content – written reports, presentation scripts, and presentation slides. As first year students in my class, they are taught certain rules about using AI, which includes machine translation and ChatGPT. Students are encouraged to use AI to help them produce better reports and scripts. However, there are rules:

1. Students need to understand the meaning of the report/script they are submitting.
2. Students need to be able to say all the words in their report/script.

Students cannot just automatically submit an English translation of their report written in Japanese. They must look at the English and confirm that it is correct. If the generated English is too difficult, meaning the student cannot understand the sentences due to vocabulary and grammar, they are taught to go back and rewrite their report using shorter Japanese sentences. Then they should translate the report again, and check that English. In the future as engineers, they will use AI to assist them in writing reports and essays. The danger is in assuming that AI is always correct. Machine translation is improving year by year, so that the language produced is becoming more and more natural. However, it still makes mistakes which can often produce the opposite meaning of what is intended. Teachers I know have started using software to try and "catch" students using AI, but I want students to use the AI to help them write simple sentences that they themselves understand. I want them to not only learn English but also gain skills that will help them in the future. So, I was searching for a way to verify with reasonable accuracy whether or not they actually understood their content and had confirmed the meaning of the English words and sentences they had submitted. With about 200 first years and 200 second years reports to check, it needed to be something relatively easy to confirm. I also work with the students on pronunciation and presentation skills and have noticed that there is generally a correlation between comprehension and the ability to read something out loud.

So, during the second semester of 2024, I attached a Speaker Progress Learning Accelerator and added the requirement that students read their reports out loud. Because I was checking the reports for about 200 students in a limited period of time, I was not able to listen to all their recordings in their entirety. I briefly looked at the Speaker Progress AI feedback for all the reports. But I only fully listened to the recordings for students whose reports seemed to be a bit beyond their normal level of English. If their reading of the report was mostly smooth and only had a few mispronounced words, I assumed that they had spent some time with the English in the report they had submitted and mostly understood the content. On the other hand, if their reading of the report was very broken and had a high number of mispronounced words, I assumed that they did not understand the report they had submitted and messaged the students.

## Results and Discussion

My idea that poor pronunciation in the readings of the reports turned out to be correct. When I messaged the students with poor pronunciation in their recordings, all of them immediately confessed to not fully understanding the English in the papers they had submitted. At this point, I gave the students a chance to edit their papers and submit something that they could understand, along with a new recording. While my assumption about poor pronunciation indicating poor comprehension was correct, at this time I do not have confirmation that good pronunciation really does indicate good comprehension.

Another interesting observation had to do with the pace of the recordings. Students who had read their reports and pronounced most words correctly had a pace around 115 words per minute. But students who admitted to not understanding the content had a pace around 100 words per minute. So, using Speaker Progress to look at pronunciation and pace helped identify students who had incorrectly used AI.

However, there are also some issues with Speaker Progress. One major issue is feedback accuracy. Because Speaker Progress does not work from a script, like Reading Progress, it sometimes makes mistakes analyzing students' content. About 200 students recorded themselves reading their final SDG reports. Recording lengths were anywhere from 1 minute to 5 minutes. Approximately 1 out of 20 recordings were flagged for 1 occurrence of non-inclusive language. In the "Top opportunities" section which provides more qualitative feedback, the inappropriate word would be written as "b*****" or "f***". However, when I went back and carefully analyzed the recording, I could find no instance of the offensive word. Furthermore, I could not even identify any potentially mispronounced words that AI may have mistaken for the inappropriate word. So, without a script to work from, the AI feedback regarding pronunciation has reduced accuracy.

Speaker Progress also does not accurately report on audience engagement. Poor eye contact is often not flagged by the AI unless it is extremely egregious. Based on my experience, I also recognize that this is an area where the original PowerPoint Rehearse with Coach was a bit weak. So accurately recognizing eye contact, or a lack thereof, is something that the AI in Teams is not able to do well yet.

## Conclusions

Existing research regarding reading pace is related to extensive reading. However, this research focuses on reading pace related to comprehension of the text students have read. This research is focused more on how reading pace is related to and affects comprehension. However, I could not find research discussing the reverse – statistical data showing how students' comprehension of a text affects their pace when reading aloud. Quantitative

research needs to be done to get a better grasp of the correlation between reading aloud pace and accuracy related to comprehension when the text is self-generated. A better understanding of this correlation would help teachers identify misuse of AI more easily.

In conclusion, Speaker Progress is a very useful, if imperfect, tool. It is important for both teachers and students to keep in mind that it is not fully accurate. However, if used with discernment, it can help students improve presentations before submitting them or giving them in front of an audience. It can also provide students with more opportunities to practice speaking outside of class. For teachers, it can provide a starting point for presentation feedback for presentation recordings, while helping identify cases of improper usage of AI in report content. Again, keeping in mind that current AI limitations do plague Speaker Progress, it is still a helpful step up in education technology.

**References**

*Getting started with Speaker Progress for educators—Microsoft Support*. (n.d.). Retrieved May 1, 2025, from https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/topic/getting-started-with-speaker-progress-for-educators-8ed1e5cd-cd78-4f15-bdb5-8a1e22c3cb19

Hasegawa, Y. (2016). Does Reading Aloud Contribute to EFL Reading Fluency Among Learners with Higher/Lower Phonological Awareness? *Bull. Joetsu Univ. Educ.*, *36(1)*. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://juen.repo.nii.ac.jp/record/7215/files/kiyo36_1-15.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwjF5e7Rw6aNAxVzhKgCHeiYMwMQFnoECBQQAQ&usg=AOvVaw2m496g7orjYWqu00nw9Ruc

MURAO, R., ISAJI, T., TANEMURA, S., SHIRONO, H., YAMANAKA, J., ISHIKAWA, J., & NORO, T. (2018). *Does Reading-Aloud Training Facilitate the Improvement of English Stress-Timed Rhythm? A Comparison Between Repeating and Parallel Reading* (No. 0). The Japan Society of English Language Education. https://doi.org/10.20581/arele.29.0_289

Sari, N. G. (2012). *THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' READING ALOUD ACTIVITY AND THEIR ABILITY IN PRONUNCIATION ACCURACY AT MTS BAHRUL ULUM AL ISLAMY KAMPAR REGENCY*. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://repository.uin-suska.ac.id/9386/1/2012_2012129.pdf&ved=2ahUKEwiNyuOCxKaNAxViaPUHHV4FNroQFnoECBcQAQ&usg=AOvVaw31hQi5dXwuLlBdji96mL-K