

Practicing Soft Skills for Medical Students in English Speaking Lessons at Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy

Ngo Thi Hong Linh

Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy, Vietnam

ABSTRACT : Nowadays, soft skills have a great influence on the success or failure of our lives. Unlike hard skills that humans can learn, measure and define many things completely. Soft skills don't contain expertise. However, they will determine your success or failure. Speaking or communication skills are considered as one of the most important soft skills. In English lessons, practicing speaking is a skill that shows how persuasively you behave to others and how its results you achieve. This is also an extremely important soft skill in English lessons. In this article, the author uses research methods of observation and interviews conducted by 100 medical students who can answer some teacher's questions and practice speaking based on the classroom curriculum. Then the author proposes some solutions to help students practice soft skills and apply them to teaching English speaking skill to medical students in English lessons at Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy.

KEYWORDS : Practicing, soft skills, solutions, apply, speaking skill.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, with the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the quality of human resources has become a central factor that determines the competitive capacity of each nation. Therefore, the requirements for human resources go beyond academic qualifications, degrees, certificates, and professional training (hard skills). It is crucial to have a process of learning, training, and accumulation to develop soft skills. For professionals in the medical field, including Pharmacy, in addition to the general standards of the healthcare industry such as intelligence, logical reasoning, high level of expertise, critical thinking, and creativity, soft skills are also highly necessary and important. They contribute to creating a generation of professionals with the essential qualities and skills required in the field of Pharmacy. In the scope of this article, the author proposes several solutions to enhance the content of soft skills training and apply it to teaching English speaking skills for students majoring in Pharmacy at the Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Soft Skills : According to Rani S. (2010), "Soft Skills are the skills that individuals use to interact, work with others, resolve conflicts, be friendly, optimistic, and persuade others". According to Nancy J. Partrick (2008), "Soft Skills is a term used to refer to the intellectual and emotional skills of individuals, such as certain personality traits (time management, relaxation, crisis management, creativity, and innovation), diplomacy, interpersonal skills, habits, optimism, teamwork skills... These are factors that influence the establishment of relationships with others. Soft Skills determine who you are, how you work, and measure high effectiveness in your job". In summary, Soft Skills are complementary skills, the ability to adapt one's behavior and changes to align with positive human interactions, effectively control and manage needs, as well as challenges in life.

The Importance of Soft Skills : Soft skills play a crucial role in today's professional landscape. They are essential for individuals to thrive in their personal and work lives, fostering effective communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and adaptability. While technical expertise and qualifications are important, possessing strong soft skills sets individuals apart and enhances their overall success. According to a study by Stanford (2018), it is affirmed that the success of an individual is only 25% based on their domain knowledge and technical expertise, while the remaining 75% is reliant on their communication skills and interpersonal talents, which encompass the effectiveness of their soft skills. In modern society, soft skills are highly valued. While educational attainment and qualifications are important criteria for evaluating the competence of workers, they are only necessary conditions. It is the complementary soft skills that serve as sufficient conditions for individuals to achieve success in life. Soft skills not only help workers enhance productivity and job effectiveness but also prove beneficial in all aspects of life, including family and social interactions. Soft skills

play a particularly crucial role in personal and professional development. Looking at the current reality, many students excel academically while in school but struggle to achieve the desired success when entering the workforce. Unlike hard skills that can be easily acquired through learning, soft skills do not have a specialized nature. They require constant improvement and regular practice to be applied proficiently. Enhancing the educational content of soft skills for students will help them meet the requirements of fundamental and comprehensive educational reforms in the era of innovation and integration.

Categorizing Some Fundamental Soft Skills: Nancy, J. Patrick (2008) conducted research and identified 10 fundamental soft skills that contribute to success in the workplace, playing a central role:

- a. Learning to learn: The ability to acquire new knowledge, skills, and information effectively and continuously.
- b. Self-leadership and personal branding: Taking initiative, being accountable, and managing oneself to achieve personal and professional goals. Developing a positive personal image and building a strong personal brand.
- c. Initiative and enterprise skills: Thinking creatively, taking risks, and seizing opportunities to innovate and create value.
- d. Planning and organizing skills: Setting goals, creating action plans, and efficiently managing time, tasks, and resources.
- e. Listening skills: Actively listening and understanding others' perspectives, ideas, and concerns.
- f. Presentation skills: Effectively delivering information, ideas, and messages to an audience in a clear, engaging, and persuasive manner.
- g. Interpersonal skills: Building positive relationships, communicating effectively, and collaborating with others in various social and professional contexts.
- h. Problem-solving skills: Analyzing problems, identifying solutions, and making informed decisions to overcome challenges.
- i. Teamwork: Collaborating with others, contributing to group goals, and fostering a cooperative and supportive team environment.
- j. Negotiation skills: Engaging in discussions, finding mutually beneficial solutions, and resolving conflicts through effective communication and compromise.

These 10 soft skills, as identified by Nancy J. Patrick, are crucial for achieving success in the workplace. Developing and honing these skills can enhance personal and professional growth, promote effective communication, and contribute to career advancement.

According to Alec Fisher (2001), if you can communicate, you can survive. But if you can communicate skillfully, you can create wonders.

According to Klippel, F. (1991), a good speaker is considered someone who knows how to integrate skills and knowledge to succeed in specific speaking activities. The knowledge and skills involved include producing clear sound, rhythm, and intonation in speech, using accurate grammar structures, selecting appropriate vocabulary related to the topic being discussed and suitable for the context, and incorporating gestures or body language. Barry, S., & Stievano, A. (2021) conducted a study titled "Enhancing Medical English Skills Through Collaborative Learning in Virtual Classrooms: A Case Study in Italy," which focused on improving medical English skills through collaborative learning in virtual classrooms. The authors conducted a case study in Italy and utilized collaborative learning methods to enhance the medical English skills of students. The research findings revealed that collaborative learning can enhance communication abilities and confidence in using medical English. Maher, R., Kazi, A. M., & Abbasi, S. (2022) published a paper titled "English Language Learning and Soft Skills Development for Medical Students" in the Journal of Education and Learning. The study focuses on the relationship between English language learning and the development of soft skills among medical students. The authors explore how proficiency in the English language can contribute to the acquisition of essential skills such as communication, teamwork, and empathy. The research findings provide valuable insights into the importance of English language education in the medical field, highlighting its role in fostering well-rounded medical professionals. In the current era of international integration and globalization, workers in general, and university and college students in particular, need to learn, practice, improve, and enhance these 10 fundamental and crucial soft skills for their future learning and career development. These essential soft skills will help students improve their quality of life and be beneficial to them in various aspects, enhancing their productivity and job effectiveness, significantly improving their quality of life and contributing to their social and cultural development in the future.

There are several reasons why it is important to educate and train students in soft skills: In today's competitive job market, it has become increasingly important to equip college and university students with not

just academic knowledge but also with essential soft skills. Soft skills are the non-technical abilities that enable individuals to effectively interact and communicate with others, adapt to new situations, and solve problems efficiently. There are several reasons why it is crucial to prioritize the education of soft skills among students in higher education institutions. Firstly, employers now value soft skills as much as, if not more than, technical skills. While technical skills are important for performing specific job tasks, soft skills are essential for collaboration, teamwork, leadership, and effective communication in the workplace. In October 2016, the Prime Minister of the Government approved the national qualification framework in Vietnam, which consists of eight levels: Elementary (three levels), Intermediate, Junior College, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees. Each level of education has minimum study requirements and provides a general description of the knowledge and skills to be achieved.

For the Bachelor's degree level, the output standards for students are as follows: "Confirming the educational level of learners with a solid practical knowledge, comprehensive and in-depth theoretical knowledge in a specific field of study, basic knowledge of social sciences, politics, and law; possessing cognitive skills related to criticism, analysis, synthesis; practical professional skills, necessary communication skills to perform complex tasks; working independently or in a team under changing work conditions, taking personal responsibility and responsibility within the team for guiding, disseminating, and promoting knowledge in the field of study, supervising others in task implementation". The study conducted by Shukr Idris, N., Haque, M., & Idris, R. (2020) focuses on assessing soft skills in medical education. The research emphasizes important soft skills such as communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, and teamwork in the context of medical education. The authors evaluate existing soft skills training programs and recommend ways to enhance the development of soft skills in the field of healthcare. Nayar, U. S., & Alam, S. (2020) employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate soft skills training in medical education. The authors conducted interviews and surveys to gather data from medical students and faculty. The research findings indicate that soft skills training needs to be integrated into the medical curriculum and student engagement should be enhanced through practical activities.

In addition to the requirements for specialized knowledge, in the aforementioned content, the development of soft skills is also a crucial aspect. Soft skills enable individuals to learn, work, and thrive, even in challenging situations. Therefore, acquiring and honing soft skills is essential, as it not only enhances students' productivity and job efficiency but also provides significant benefits in all aspects of life, including family, educational institutions, and society. It significantly improves the quality of life in a civilized and modern society and contributes to changing human values. Therefore, the demand for enhancing the development of soft skills for students to improve their learning and work capabilities is a necessary requirement in the current educational reform.

The necessity of providing soft skills education to students in the field of Medicine and Pharmacy: It is crucial to prioritize the education of soft skills for students specializing in Medicine and Pharmacy. While technical knowledge is essential in these fields, the development of soft skills is equally important for future healthcare professionals. Medical and pharmaceutical professionals interact closely with patients, colleagues, and other healthcare providers. Effective communication and interpersonal skills are vital in building trust, establishing rapport, and providing quality patient care. Soft skills such as empathy, active listening, and effective communication play a significant role in patient-centered care, where understanding patients' needs and concerns is essential. Additionally, healthcare professionals must possess critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The ability to analyze complex medical situations, make informed decisions, and adapt to changing circumstances is crucial in providing accurate diagnoses, selecting appropriate treatment plans, and addressing patient safety concerns. The healthcare profession has its own unique characteristics. Practitioners interact with patients who have different personalities, occupations, regions, and social backgrounds. As a result, there is considerable pressure on each healthcare professional, as they may not always earn the trust of their patients in their expertise. Additionally, the medical profession faces public scrutiny.

Furthermore, there are other factors such as lack of understanding from family members regarding working hours, personal hardships, and competition within the field. All of these factors can negatively impact the attitude and behavior of healthcare professionals in their work. If there are mistakes or misconduct, not only in terms of professional competence but also in terms of character, behavior, or gestures, it can significantly impact the entire healthcare industry. Therefore, training in ethics and professional conduct for students in the medical and pharmaceutical fields is crucial in producing a new generation of healthcare professionals with the

necessary qualities for their student life and future careers. Developing ethical and professional conduct skills aims to prepare graduates to easily integrate into modern life during the period of international integration.

There are several benefits when students are trained in soft skills through English speaking classes at the Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy: Effective communication is essential in the medical and pharmaceutical fields, as it allows healthcare professionals to effectively interact with patients, colleagues, and other stakeholders. Training in soft skills for students in the medical and pharmaceutical fields through English speaking classes at the Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy is a legitimate and practical need for them. In addition to developing fundamental skills relevant to their field, students are also equipped with a crucial and essential skill in today's world: English language proficiency. Proficiency in a foreign language is highly valued in the current era of globalization, as it provides students with advantages and opportunities in their future careers. While fluency in English may not be a strict requirement for their future jobs, at the very least, students should possess basic communication skills and the ability to comprehend English materials for work, study, and professional research purposes. To improve their English proficiency, students must practice, accumulate knowledge, and continuously enhance their skills. This process also fosters their determination and passion for their work. Training in soft skills through English speaking classes at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Da Nang provides students with an important tool in their journey towards achieving their goals, whether as students or in their future lives

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

On the basis of documents and research works in the world and in the country related to the assessment of teaching activities of instructors, the author analyzes, synthesizes and generalizes the documents to build building a theoretical framework and instrumental concepts as a theoretical basis for the research problem. At the same time, from the survey results will conduct qualitative and quantitative research to make conclusions and recommendations. The object of the study is 100 students of 2 English classes for medicine and pharmacy at Danang University of Technology and Pharmacy. Most students have studied English in high school for at least 7 years. The research topic utilizes observation and interviews as research methods. Observation and interviews are conducted in the form of teacher-led interviews and practical speaking exercises based on the curriculum taught in class. The teacher performs observation and interviews with 100 students, at least 8 to 10 times, within 45 class sessions of each English for Medical and Pharmaceutical Sciences course. The results of the teacher's observation and interviews are recorded, focusing on aspects such as the students' level of participation in speaking activities, consistency in their participation, their level of interest in speaking activities, and the appropriateness and effectiveness of their language use in communication based on their proficiency level. These observations and interviews aim to help the author identify existing issues in students' soft skills. Based on these findings, the author proposes solutions to contribute to the development of students' soft skills through English speaking classes at the Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through the process of observing, interviewing, analyzing situations, the author has found out a number of situations that students majoring in Medicine and Pharmacy often encounter during their KNM training at the Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy. Thanks to that, we also propose solutions to help students overcome the above situation.

Research status

- Actual situations of communication, presentation, negotiation

In communication and behavior situations, we obtained 50% of students using inflexible words, having many difficulties in expressing and presenting, 30% of students knew how to behave sociably and temporarily with everyone. people around, only about 20% of them communicate and behave well.

- Facts about teamwork, planning and organizing work

Up to 55% of students do not have the ability to cooperate, their teamwork skills are still limited, they are almost afraid, timid, do not dare to work in groups, slow to adapt to the working environment. new job. About 30% of students know how to work in groups, know how to plan work at a moderate level. Only 15% of children work in groups, plan and organize their work well.

- Current status of learning and self-study, creative and risky thinking, problem solving

Up to 57% of students do not self-motivate, work lacks discipline, discipline, and behavior is not agile. Sometimes they work passively, their working style is still spontaneous and arbitrary, and their sense of organization and discipline is still lacking. About 25% of them know how to study and study on their own at an average level. Only about 18% of students have very good self-study, creative thinking, risk-taking and problem-solving skills.

➤ Realities of listening, self-leadership and personal image

The majority of students (65%) lack self-discipline and the ability to handle work pressure. They often lack perseverance in improving their professional expertise and frequently detach themselves from the group, which sometimes results in a loss of internal cohesion. Approximately 22% of them have the ability to evaluate their own competence and maintain a moderate level of teamwork. A total of 13% of students possess the skills of active listening, self-leadership, and have a very positive personal image

➤ Solutions to develop soft skills for students majoring in Medicine and Pharmacy

From the identification of the above situations, we have also found a number of solutions to train and overcome KNM for students of Medicine and Pharmacy through English speaking lessons at the University of Medical Technology- Da Nang Pharmacy is as follows:

➤ For curriculum and instructors

The program and content for English Speaking classes are developed by teachers to incorporate beneficial and flexible activities that effectively engage students. These activities aim to captivate students' interest and ensure effective learning. Teachers encourage students to describe pictures, use language games, provide guidance on independent work, and teach them how to construct question-and-answer situations, conduct interviews, give presentations, engage in discussions, fill in information gaps, debate, or solve problems. The exercises, scenarios, and activities directed by the teachers in the KNM education approach for students not only provide joyful, enjoyable, and relaxing moments during classroom hours but also create opportunities for students to develop their personal capacities such as critical thinking skills, analytical and synthesis skills, problem-solving abilities, quick reflexes, timely responses, and creativity in various situations. The teacher must create activities and practice situations during English Speaking classes to provide opportunities for students to develop essential skills such as teamwork, planning, presentation, communication, problem-solving, personal and career development, and effective creative work. During the process of teaching English Speaking, the teacher needs to establish a connection and design practice situations that closely align with the lesson content. This is done to help students understand and realize the relationship between the components of essential skills.

➤ For learners

Students need to change their cognitive habits and accurately identify the objectives of developing essential skills to serve their classroom learning and meet the job requirements of society after graduation. They should exhibit a positive and proactive attitude towards their learning process, striving to study, understand, and closely follow the content of the English Speaking curriculum. With a clear learning motivation and detailed, appropriate study plans, students will be equipped with the necessary essential skills in their English Speaking classes according to the specific criteria set by the instructor.

a. High work spirit: In various speaking exercises and scenarios, the teacher requires students to be motivated and dedicated to completing tasks, regardless of their simplicity or complexity. Students are obliged to be committed and have a readiness to practice, meet, and perform tasks to the best of their abilities and efficiently.

b. Positive attitude: The speaking exercises designed by the teacher should prioritize students who are optimistic and positive. In class, students should always generate energy and have a strong will. They must proactively refer to the course, lessons, speaking practice scenarios, and strive to be confident and maintain a positive attitude during class.

c. Effective communication skills: The teacher establishes criteria and requirements for students in English Speaking practice scenarios that emphasize fluent, concise, understandable, engaging speech, and particularly,

the ability to listen to others. In expressing their needs in different scenarios, students should know how to create connections with the teacher, their groupmates, or people around them.

d. Time management skills: In speaking exercises, the teacher designs requirements that help students prioritize tasks and handle multiple tasks simultaneously. Meeting this requirement means students are gradually learning to use their time wisely and efficiently.

e. Problem-solving skills: Students should be resourceful and capable of solving unexpected problems. The teacher designs practice scenarios to encourage students to demonstrate their courage, prompting them to take responsibility and never shift it onto others.

f. Team spirit: During speaking classes, the teacher can easily identify students who are efficient team players. The teacher requires all students to harness this skill. When students perform well in this skill, it means they are training themselves to be cooperative and willing to take on leadership roles when assigned.

g. Confidence: The teacher encourages students to genuinely believe in their abilities. The teacher designs exercises and scenarios to help students build trust with those around them. During this time, students should be asked to pose necessary questions and comfortably present their ideas.

h. Acceptance and learning from criticism: After each speaking exercise or presentation in English classes, the teacher provides students with scenarios and methods to handle criticism and suggestions, even if they come from classmates or other student groups in the class. The teacher designs requirements to cultivate openness to learning and personal development as individuals and professionals.

i. Flexibility and adaptability: Students are required to constantly adapt to new situations and challenges created during class. They also need to be trained to accept change and be open to new ideas from the teacher, their peers, or lesson requirements.

j. Working well under pressure: English Speaking classes provide students with a period where they can easily access, become familiar with, and recognize the pressures that come with deadlines and challenging situations. This is the time when students are trained to navigate and perform their best under pressure.

V. CONCLUSION

Soft skills needs to be seriously recognized as a process of training and accumulating experience from the vibrant, diverse life in modern society. This can be seen as the golden key to success in the process of learning, self-improvement, personal development, and career establishment for each student. Based on their own practical abilities and specific goals for the future, students should now build a training roadmap for themselves, especially focusing on developing their soft skills through daily learning and class hours. This will enable them to confidently navigate the dynamic circumstances of life after graduation, ready to conquer and fulfill their dreams and aspirations. This practical contribution helps build our homeland, keeping it constantly innovative in the era of global integration, industrialization, and modernization. At the Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy, the teaching and training methods for soft skills in English Speaking classes are rich and diverse, designed by teachers. Engaging in discussions, analyzing typical cases, solving scenarios, and organizing simulation games, and expressing continuous opinions are implemented in class hours to effectively train soft skills for students majoring in Medicine and Pharmacy. When graduating, soft skills helps students perform their professional tasks with skills, professional ethics, and social responsibility, especially the ability to apply English in practice. This also helps them become representatives of the community, playing an educational role, setting examples, guiding others, and being conscious and responsible in building a society with positive skills, civility, and health, including medical document translation skills and communication with international delegations. This issue becomes even more practical and urgent in the current context, where society demands individuals who are studying or working to have standardized soft skills to handle life's issues with creative and effective ideas.

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Biographies and Photographs

Ms. Ngo Thi Hong Linh



Ms. Linh has been working at Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy since 2011 and is currently working in the Department of Foreign languages, Faculty of Basic Science. She graduated and received a master's degree in English from University of Foreign language Studies – The University of Danang.

Linh's research areas are interested in English teaching and learning methods, students' communication skills and soft skills training in English speaking lessons, and the influence of soft skills on students and their lives after graduation.