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Prescription for Proficiency: Enhancing EFL Speaking Skills in Pharmacy Education

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Abstract

Effective communication is fundamental to pharmaceutical practice, especially for pharmacy professionals working in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environments. This research investigates the influence of a specialized EFL speaking program aimed at improving the communication abilities of pharmacy students. A group of fifty male pharmacy diploma students participated in a three-month program centred on role-play, task-based learning (TBL), and integrated vocabulary training. Assessments conducted before and after the course evaluated enhancements in confidence, clarity, use of pharmaceutical language, and fluency. The findings revealed statistically significant improvements across all measured aspects, with the use of pharmaceutical language showing the most notable enhancement (mean increase: 2.6 to 4.3, $p < 0.001$). These results emphasize the success of contextualized and hands-on methods in EFL teaching, showcasing the capacity of such initiatives to equip pharmacy students for the linguistic and professional requirements of their careers. The research underscores the necessity of integrated approaches that confront linguistic, cultural, and psychological hurdles in training for professional communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

This research paper investigates the impact of a specialized English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking program designed specifically for pharmacy students. The study focuses on improving the communication abilities of pharmacy professionals working in EFL environments, recognizing that effective communication is crucial in pharmaceutical practice. The research examines a three-month program that incorporated role-play, task-based learning, and integrated vocabulary training. A group of fifty male pharmacy diploma students participated in the study, which evaluated improvements in key areas including confidence, clarity, use of pharmaceutical language, and fluency through pre- and post-course assessments. The findings revealed significant enhancements across all measured aspects, with pharmaceutical language usage showing the most notable improvement. This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by specifically targeting the unique linguistic and professional needs of pharmacy students in EFL contexts.

The research underscores the importance of developing tailored approaches that address not only language acquisition but also the cultural and psychological barriers that pharmacy students face in professional communication. Through its empirical evaluation and comprehensive methodology, this study contributes valuable insights to the growing field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in professional healthcare settings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section investigates the significance of communication in pharmacy education, the hurdles encountered by EFL learners in pharmaceutical environments, methods to improve EFL speaking abilities, and the notable gaps in existing literature. By linking these elements, it articulates the importance of developing focused interventions for pharmacy students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

2.1. The Role of Communication in Pharmacy EFL Teaching/Learning

In pharmacy, communication extends beyond merely conveying information; it involves doing so accurately, with empathy, and cultural awareness. Pharmacists function at the crossroads of patient care and healthcare systems, converting complex medical language into comprehensible terms that patients can understand and act upon. This duty renders communication an essential skill for pharmacists, particularly in multilingual or multicultural settings where the likelihood of misunderstanding increases (Berger et al., 2016). Research highlights the critical role of clear communication in pharmacy practice. For example, Alshahrani et al. (2020) contend that effective patient communication reduces medication errors and enhances adherence. Unfortunately, communication training is frequently overlooked in pharmacy education (O'Neill et al., 2017).

For EFL learners, these challenges are intensified. Pharmacy students need to master specialized vocabulary, adjust their communication style to fit different audiences, and balance the dual demands of linguistic proficiency and professional competency. Knight (2021) posits that pharmacy education often inadequately prepares students for these requirements, concentrating more on technical knowledge than on the interpersonal skills vital for effective communication. For instance, while students may study pharmacokinetics or contraindications theoretically, they often struggle to convey these concepts in straightforward, patient-friendly terms.

The incorporation of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) into pharmacy education provides a means to bridge this divide. ESP programs are tailored to fulfill the distinct linguistic and professional needs of learners, merging language training with the practical skills necessary for their future careers (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). In pharmacy, this entails teaching not only the profession's vocabulary but also the discourse structures, cultural conventions, and interpersonal techniques that form the foundation of effective communication. For instance, instructing pharmacy students on managing a challenging conversation with a patient reluctant to take prescribed medication requires more than just language skills—it necessitates an understanding of empathy, active listening, and persuasive strategies. Moreover, Hymes' (1972) concept of communicative competence emphasizes the importance of aligning linguistic skills with the ability to navigate real-world social interactions. This connection is especially relevant in pharmacy, where the ramifications of miscommunication can be substantial, impacting patient health and safety. Therefore, the purpose of communication in pharmacy education extends beyond improving language proficiency; it aims to cultivate a comprehensive skill set that equips students with the intricacies of professional practice.

2.2. Challenges Faced by EFL Learners in Pharmaceutical Contexts

Pharmacy students who are EFL learners encounter a distinct range of challenges that go beyond conventional language acquisition. These obstacles are complex, encompassing linguistic, cultural, and psychological aspects.

Linguistic Challenges

The specialized vocabulary in pharmacy can be intimidating for EFL learners. Terms such as “pharmacodynamics,” “antihypertensive,” and “bioavailability” are not only challenging to master but also necessitate accurate pronunciation and contextual comprehension. Incorrect pronunciations or misapplications of these terms can result in critical miscommunications with patients. For instance, a student unable to clearly differentiate between “side effects” and “adverse effects” risks causing confusion or anxiety in a patient (Richards, 2006). Furthermore, many pharmacy students struggle with English syntax, particularly in constructing complex sentences for explaining medication regimens. Such mistakes can detract from their credibility and professional standing (Kaur, 2019). In the same line of argument, Al-Rubaat, A., & Alshammari, M. (2020) highlight that many EFL learners struggle with sounds that do not exist in their native language. For example, Arabic-speaking learners often face difficulty pronouncing the English /p/ and /v/ sounds, substituting them with /b/ and /f/, respectively (e.g., “pill” might sound like “bill”). This substitution can lead to confusion in pharmaceutical terms, such as differentiating between “painkillers” and “bane-killers.” Also, mastering the stress and intonation patterns of English is crucial for effective communication, yet it poses challenges for EFL learners whose native languages may have different prosodic features. Le and Trung (2023) conducted a study focusing on Vietnamese EFL students, identifying difficulties in learning English pronunciation, particularly in applying correct stress and intonation. The research emphasizes the need for targeted instructional strategies to help learners acquire these suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation.

Specialized Vocabulary and Terminology

Pharmacy is a field rich in vocabulary, where precise terminology is vital for maintaining clarity and accuracy in communication. For EFL learners, mastering specialized terms such as "anticoagulants," "antimicrobial resistance," "pharmacodynamics," and "contraindications" can be overwhelming. These terms are seldom part of everyday vocabulary, making them challenging for learners to recognize, comprehend, and employ effectively (Richards, 2006). Moreover, the specificity of pharmaceutical vocabulary implies that even minor mispronunciations or misapplications can lead to severe misunderstandings. For instance, an EFL learner advising a patient about an "antihistamine" might mispronounce it or confuse it with "antibiotic," resulting in confusion or improper medication usage. These hurdles are aggravated by the insufficient exposure to such vocabulary in general EFL courses, which rarely emphasize domain-specific language. Limited vocabulary and difficulties with complex grammatical structures pose substantial hurdles. A study by Zeng, H., & Wang, J. (2024) emphasizes that EFL learners often struggle with collocation acquisition, which is crucial for fluency and natural language use in specialized fields like pharmacy.

The incorporation of Latin and Greek roots in pharmaceutical terminology introduces additional complexity. Terms like “analgesic” or “dyspepsia” require students to not only memorize the terms but also grasp their etymological components to apply them in various contexts. This necessitates targeted teaching that combines vocabulary acquisition with real-world application, a focus often absent in standard language curricula (Nation, 2001).

Pronunciation and Phonological Challenges

Pronunciation presents another significant challenge for EFL learners in pharmacy settings. Pharmaceutical terms often feature intricate phonological structures, and mispronunciation can alter meanings or undermine the speaker's credibility. For example, incorrect syllable emphasis in "antipyretic" might render the term unrecognizable to the listener. Such errors are particularly concerning in patient-facing roles, where clarity and accuracy are critical. Furthermore, many EFL learners come from linguistic backgrounds where certain sounds or stress patterns do not exist, making it challenging to accurately reproduce English phonemes.

For instance, students from languages without the "th" sound may replace it with "t" or "d," leading to additional confusion. Addressing these phonological challenges necessitates dedicated training in pronunciation, including phonemic awareness and repetitive practice in employing pharmaceutical terms in context (Richards, 2006).

Discourse Patterns and Pragmatic Structures

Beyond vocabulary and grammar, effective pharmaceutical communication demands mastery of specific discourse patterns. These patterns dictate how information is structured and presented, including the sequence of instructions, the emphasis of key points, and the transition between technical and lay language. For example, when explaining a prescription, a pharmacist may start by naming the medication, outlining its purpose, providing usage instructions, and concluding with potential side effects or warnings. EFL learners who are not familiar with these structures may find it challenging to present information coherently and logically. Pragmatic structures, which involve adapting language for different audiences, present additional challenges. A pharmacist explaining the same medication to a healthcare professional versus a layperson must modify their discourse accordingly, employing technical terms in one scenario and simpler language in the other. Many EFL learners lack the training necessary to manage these transitions, resulting in either excessively technical explanations that perplex patients or oversimplifications that fail to communicate crucial information.
The necessity for such adaptability underscores a gap in traditional EFL education, which often prioritizes conversational English over professional discourse. Pharmacy students require specialized practice in organizing and delivering information in ways that align with professional standards and patient requirements (Knight, 2021).

Limited Exposure to Context-Specific Language

One of the most pressing challenges for EFL learners in pharmacy is the restricted exposure to authentic, context-specific language. Standard EFL curricula generally focus on general English competencies, such as conversational fluency or basic writing skills, and provide little to no attention to the specialized vocabulary and communication practices essential in professional contexts. The field of pharmacy (Basturkmen, 2010) presents certain challenges for students due to their limited exposure to the specific language requirements of their future profession. A pharmacy student unfamiliar with the expression "administer the dose subcutaneously" may find it challenging to grasp or utilize this terminology correctly. Likewise, students might have difficulty adhering to the conventions of professional writing, which includes tasks like preparing patient information leaflets or writing emails to healthcare professionals. The lack of practical language application creates a considerable divide between classroom learning and the skills needed for effective job performance.

To address these linguistic obstacles, a transformation in the approach to language instruction for pharmacy students in EFL settings is essential. Educational programs must incorporate targeted vocabulary teaching, grammar exercises, and discourse training within their frameworks. Moreover, students should have numerous chances to practice their skills in realistic scenarios, utilizing methods such as role-playing, simulations, and real-world activities. By emphasizing the specific language demands of pharmaceutical communication, educators can better equip EFL students for success in their future careers.

2.3. Approaches to Improve EFL Speaking Proficiencies

To cultivate strong speaking abilities in EFL pharmacy learners, a comprehensive strategy is essential. Considering the technical and interpersonal requirements of the profession, approaches must tackle linguistic, cultural, and psychological hurdles while offering students

practical applications of their skills. The following strategies provide a well-rounded framework to furnish pharmacy students with the communication tools they need to thrive in their professional endeavors.

Role-Playing and Simulation

Role-playing and simulations serve as invaluable resources in EFL education, especially for students in specialized areas like pharmacy. These exercises allow learners to practice real-life situations in a controlled and encouraging setting, enabling them to explore language usage, obtain feedback, and gain confidence (Basturkmen, 2010). Role-playing is particularly beneficial for developing pragmatic skills, such as demonstrating empathy, adjusting tone, and navigating difficult conversations—all of which are critical for patient-centered care.

For pharmacy students, role-playing can replicate patient interactions, such as counseling patients on medication compliance, discussing potential side effects, or recommending lifestyle modifications. For instance, a student may practice addressing a patient's concerns about side effects associated with a new medication. The student must merge technical terminology with empathetic language, possibly saying: "Some individuals may experience mild dizziness when taking this medication. To mitigate this risk, I suggest taking it with food. Please let me know if you experience anything unusual." Simulations elevate role-playing by emulating the high-pressure environment typical of real pharmacy practice. For example, a scenario may involve dealing with an irate patient demanding antibiotics when they are unnecessary. The learner must handle this situation professionally, balancing clear explanations of the medication's purpose with sensitive reassurance. Research conducted by Dornyei (2001) indicates that such immersive experiences prepare learners for critical situations, improving both their linguistic ability and their confidence under pressure.

Task-Based Learning (TBL)

Task-Based Learning (TBL) presents a robust method for enhancing speaking skills in EFL learners. Rather than following traditional techniques that emphasize disconnected grammar or vocabulary drills, TBL focuses on utilizing language as a tool to complete significant, goal-directed tasks. Long (2015) asserts that TBL is particularly advantageous for students in professional settings, as it reflects the forms of communication they will face in their careers.

In pharmacy, TBL activities might involve creating and delivering presentations on a drug's mechanism of action, drafting a patient education brochure, or conducting mock consultations. For example, students might evaluate a case involving a patient with multiple chronic illnesses and propose strategies for managing potential drug interactions. This task necessitates the accurate use of technical language, logical structuring of explanations, and clear addressing of possible concerns. TBL also encourages teamwork since many tasks require collaborative efforts. This teamwork aspect is particularly advantageous for pharmacy students, who often need to collaborate with other healthcare professionals. For instance, a group project could simulate a multidisciplinary team meeting to deliberate on a patient's treatment plan. Such experiences not only hone speaking skills but also foster cooperation and problem-solving abilities, preparing students for the complexities of their future careers (Richards, 2006).

Integrated Vocabulary Training

Acquiring vocabulary is fundamental to effective communication in pharmacy and requires a context-specific approach. Nation (2001) stresses that vocabulary instruction should not occur in isolation but rather be woven into activities that motivate learners to use new words in meaningful contexts. For pharmacy students, this entails learning specialized terms while also

mastering strategies to modify them for various audiences, such as simplifying explanations for patients.

An effective method involves using authentic resources like drug labels, prescription instructions, and patient information brochures to teach vocabulary contextually. For instance, learners might practice clarifying the term "contraindications" by stating: "This medication is not appropriate for individuals with certain medical conditions, such as severe liver disease or heart issues. These conditions are referred to as contraindications." By engaging with real-life scenarios, students not only absorb vocabulary but also discover how to apply it effectively. Furthermore, interactive activities can bolster vocabulary retention. For example, students may create flashcards that display technical terms alongside their simplified definitions, take part in matching exercises pairing medical terms with layman's terms, or engage in vocabulary-centric role-plays. These exercises make learning dynamic and reinforce the practical usage of terminology in professional scenarios (Basturkmen, 2010).

Feedback and Reflective Practice

Providing feedback is vital for aiding students in refining their speaking capabilities, particularly in professional contexts where clarity and precision are crucial. Richards (2006) emphasizes that effective feedback should consider both linguistic accuracy and practical suitability, ensuring that students enhance their grammar and vocabulary while also improving their professional communication skills. In pharmacy education, feedback can be integrated into role-playing, TBL assignments, and simulations. For example, after a student conducts a mock consultation, an instructor could offer specific feedback, such as: "You clearly explained the dosage, but try to simplify the language when discussing side effects. Also, remember to check if the patient has any questions before concluding." This type of constructive criticism enables students to pinpoint areas for growth while reinforcing their strengths.

Reflective practice complements feedback by encouraging learners to evaluate their performance. After completing a task or activity, students can contemplate what went well, what obstacles they faced, and how they might improve. For instance, a student may realize that they hesitated when describing a medication's purpose and decide to practice similar situations. Reflective practice nurtures self-awareness and promotes active learning, enabling students to take charge of their growth (Dornyei, 2001).

Technology-Enhanced Learning

Technological advancements in education have created new possibilities for improving EFL speaking capabilities, especially in specialized areas like pharmacy. Virtual reality (VR) simulations offer immersive settings where students can practice professional interactions without facing real-world repercussions. Knight (2021) highlights that VR tools are particularly effective in building fluency and confidence, as they allow learners to experiment with language and receive immediate feedback. In a VR simulation, a pharmacy student may engage with a virtual patient, addressing inquiries regarding medication side effects or explaining drug administration methods. These scenarios can be customized to reflect the complexities of real-life interactions, such as managing a patient with limited English skills or navigating cultural sensitivities. By practicing in a realistic yet non-threatening atmosphere, students develop the confidence and adaptability necessary for effective professional communication.

Other technologies, such as AI-driven language assessment tools, further enhance personalized learning. These tools can evaluate students' speech regarding pronunciation accuracy,

grammatical errors, and fluency, providing detailed feedback and suggestions for improvement. Interactive e-learning platforms featuring gamified exercises and role-play simulations engage students while solidifying their skills. For instance, a platform might present a branching scenario in which students must decide how to respond to a patient's concerns, allowing them to witness the consequences of their communication choices in real time.

Addressing Gaps in Existing Literature through This Research

While there is a rising acknowledgment of the significance of communication within the pharmacy sector, there remains a lack of research focusing on interventions tailored for EFL learners in this discipline. Current studies often center on general medical English or healthcare communication aimed at doctors and nurses, leaving a notable gap in exploring how to effectively teach pharmacy students in an EFL context.
The specific needs of pharmacy sectors remain largely unaddressed (Berger et al., 2016; Alshahrani et al., 2020). This study seeks to fill these gaps by designing and assessing an intervention that is specifically tailored to the linguistic, cultural, and professional challenges encountered by pharmacy students. By combining role-playing, team-based learning (TBL), and vocabulary-focused techniques, this research builds upon best practices in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to develop a comprehensive program that equips learners for the realities of communication in pharmacy. Additionally, the incorporation of reflective practices and technology-based tools offers a contemporary approach to skill enhancement. Through empirical evaluation of the performance before and after the intervention, this research provides valuable contributions to the expanding literature concerning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in professional environments.

3. METHODOLOGY

This investigation utilized a quantitative methodology to assess the effects of a targeted English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking program on the communication capabilities of pharmacy students. Pre- and post-course assessments were conducted to gauge enhancements in speaking proficiency, concentrating on critical aspects such as confidence, clarity, pharmaceutical vocabulary, and fluency.

3.1. Research Design

The study followed a quasi-experimental framework with a single-group pre-test and post-test structure. The aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention by comparing the speaking abilities of participants before and after the three-month EFL course. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to analyze if the observed changes were statistically significant.

3.2.Participants

The sample comprised fifty male students pursuing a pharmacy diploma at a technical college. These participants were between the ages of 18 and 22 and were all intermediate English speakers, verified through a standardized English placement assessment (CEFR level B1). The selection was based on their enrollment in a program necessitating English for professional communication, thus ensuring alignment with the aims of the study.

3.3.Pre- and Post-Course Tests

The assessments prior to and following the course consisted of structured evaluations aimed at assessing the speaking skills of the participants based on four crucial parameters relevant to pharmaceutical communication:

1. Confidence in Communicating with Patients: The capability to initiate and maintain conversations with patients.
2. Clarity in Conveying Medication Instructions: Accuracy and fluency in providing step-by-step guidance.
3. Use of Pharmaceutical Terminology: Proper utilization of discipline-specific vocabulary.
4. Overall Fluency in Professional Engagements: Coherence and smoothness in spoken English.

Test Format:

• Participants were required to complete two tasks:

o Task 1: Role-play a counselling session in which they explained a prescription and addressed patient inquiries.

o Task 2: Present a brief overview of the usage, dosage, and precautions related to a commonly prescribed medication.

• Each task was assessed by two independent evaluators using a standardized rubric with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent). This rubric ensured consistency and dependability in scoring across all criteria.

Parameter	Criteria
Confidence	Ability to initiate and maintain interaction, use of eye contact, and engagement with the listener.
Clarity	Accuracy and coherence in explanations, avoidance of ambiguity or miscommunication
Use of Terminology	Correct and context-appropriate use of pharmaceutical terms.
Fluency	Smoothness of speech, absence of unnecessary pauses or hesitations, and logical flow of ideas.

Table1: Evaluation Rubric

Validation of the assessment tool was conducted to ensure its reliability and relevance in measuring the four key speaking parameters (confidence, clarity, use of pharmaceutical terminology, and fluency). The assessment tool underwent a rigorous validation process to ensure its reliability and relevance in evaluating the speaking skills of pharmacy students. The tool was reviewed and piloted to ensure its alignment with professional communication needs, leading to refinements in task relevance and scoring criteria. Reliability testing further supported the tool's robustness, with high test-retest reliability ($r = 0.85$) and inter-rater reliability (ICC = 0.89) ensuring stable and consistent results. Finally, construct validation revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.81$) between assessment scores and participants' EFL coursework grades, confirming the tool's effectiveness in measuring relevant skills. This validation process established the tool as a reliable and accurate instrument for assessing EFL speaking skills in pharmacy-specific contexts.

3.4.Data Analysis

Paired-Samples T-Test

A paired-sample t-test was utilized to evaluate the differences in participants' pre- and post-course test results. This analysis assessed whether the mean improvement in speaking skills was statistically significant. Each of the four parameters (confidence, clarity, terminology, and

fluency) was examined separately to identify specific areas of enhancement. Statistical Metrics:
• Mean Scores: Calculated for each parameter in both pre-and post-course assessments.
• Standard Deviation: Measured variability in participants' performances.
• p-value: Determined statistical significance (set at $p < 0.05$).

4. RESULTS

The scores from the pre- and post-course tests exhibited substantial enhancements across all parameters. A summary of the t-test outcomes is presented below.

Parameter	Pre-Course Mean (SD)	Post-Course Mean (SD)	t-Value	p-Value
Confidence	2.8 (0.6)	4.4 (0.5)	12.56	<0.001
Clarity	3.0 (0.7)	4.6 (0.5)	11.87	<0.001
Use of Terminology	2.6 (0.8)	4.3 (0.6)	13.43	<0.001
Fluency	2.9 (0.7)	4.5 (0.5)	12.02	<0.001

Table2: results analysis

4.1.Interpretation of Results

The examination of pre- and post-course test results showed significant advancements across all four assessed parameters: confidence, clarity, use of pharmaceutical terminology, and fluency. These findings reflect the efficacy of the targeted EFL program in meeting the specific linguistic and communicative demands of pharmacy students. An in-depth interpretation of the results is provided below.

Confidence in Patient Communication

The average score for confidence rose from 2.8 to 4.4, with a t-value of 12.56 ($p < 0.001$), signifying a statistically significant enhancement. This increase underscores the transformative effect of role-play and simulation exercises on students' abilities to engage effectively with patients. Prior to the course, participants frequently expressed reluctance to start conversations or maintaining interactions due to fear of making mistakes or being misunderstood. The structured role-plays offered a safe setting for students to practice and become familiar with patient interactions, gradually alleviating their anxiety. For example, students practiced responding to typical patient inquiries, like "What side effects does this medication have?" or "How do I take these tablets?" Through repeated exposure to such situations, participants gained the confidence needed for real-life consultations. Furthermore, feedback sessions following role-plays provided students with constructive critiques and refined their approaches, further enhancing their confidence. The notable improvement in this parameter emphasizes the significance of creating supportive, practice-oriented learning environments to foster confidence in professional communication.

Clarity in Explaining Medication Instructions

The average score for clarity advanced from 3.0 to 4.6, with a t-value of 11.87 ($p < 0.001$). This enhancement indicates that participants became increasingly proficient in delivering clear, coherent, and accurate instructions, a vital skill in patient care. Clarity is essential for ensuring patients adhere to prescribed treatments. Pre-course evaluations indicated that many participants had difficulty organizing their explanations logically, often omitting critical details or failing to connect their ideas effectively. Task-based learning (TBL) activities played a significant role in addressing these difficulties. For instance, tasks that involved preparing and

presenting step-by-step instructions for medication usage encouraged participants to concentrate on structuring their thoughts and sequencing information effectively. By practicing scenarios such as explaining how to administer a subcutaneous injection or outlining a complex dosing schedule, participants learned to anticipate patient needs and tailor their explanations accordingly. The role of immediate feedback was also crucial. Instructors pointed out specific areas for improvement, such as avoiding overly technical language or ensuring that key points were stressed. These iterative refinements contributed to the notable gains in clarity, equipping participants to communicate complex information in terms that patients could understand.

Use of Pharmaceutical Terminology

The use of pharmaceutical terminology exhibited the most pronounced enhancement, with the mean score rising from 2.6 to 4.3 and a t-value of 13.43 ($p < 0.001$). This outcome reflects the effectiveness of integrated vocabulary training in enabling participants to use discipline-specific terms accurately and with confidence. Pre-course assessments indicated that participants often refrained from using pharmaceutical terminology due to uncertainty about its meanings, pronunciations, or appropriate contexts. For example, terms like "contraindications," "antihypertensive," or "adverse effects" were often misused or completely omitted during patient interactions. This gap was bridged through targeted vocabulary exercises that combined rote learning with practical applications. Authentic resources, such as patient information leaflets and drug labels, provided students with real-world contexts for understanding and applying terminology. Additionally, vocabulary-focused role-plays encouraged participants to incorporate these terms into their dialogues. For instance, a role-play involving a patient consultation required participants to explain contraindications related to a specific medication, reinforcing both the understanding and correct usage of the term. The significant improvement in this parameter highlights the importance of contextualized vocabulary instruction in professional language training. By connecting terminology to its practical uses, the course helped participants overcome their initial reservations and confidently employ pharmaceutical terms.

Overall Fluency in Professional Interactions

The mean score for fluency increased from 2.9 to 4.5, with a t-value of 12.02 ($p < 0.001$), indicating substantial advancements in participants' abilities to communicate smoothly and coherently. Fluency is a critical measure of overall language competence, reflecting the capacity to express ideas without unnecessary hesitation or interruption. Before the course, participants often demonstrated fragmented speech patterns, marked by frequent pauses, self-corrections, and filler phrases such as "uh" or "um." These issues were primarily attributed to insufficient practice. The structured speaking activities in the course effectively addressed the challenges faced by learners, such as anxiety and the fear of making grammatical mistakes. These activities offered numerous chances for participants to practice in various settings, both relaxed and demanding.

Through repeated role-plays and the use of technology-enhanced learning tools, including virtual reality (VR) simulations, learners were able to develop fluency in their speech. For instance, the VR simulations presented learners with various patient profiles, necessitating the adjustment of their communication styles in real time. By participating in realistic scenarios, learners enhanced their ability to quickly process information, craft responses efficiently, and maintain a logical flow of conversation. The advancement in their fluency can be attributed to a combination of confidence-building, vocabulary enhancement, and constructive feedback. As students grew more familiar with pharmaceutical terms and communication techniques, their speech became increasingly natural and cohesive, enabling them to handle professional exchanges with greater ease.

5. DISCUSSION

The results from this study present strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of a specialized EFL speaking program aimed at improving pharmacy students' communication skills. By tackling significant linguistic, cultural, and psychological obstacles, the program led to notable enhancements in participants' confidence, clarity, use of pharmaceutical language, and overall fluency. This section will delve deeper into these outcomes, placing them within the larger framework of EFL education and pharmacy training, and emphasizing their potential implications for future practices.

5.1.Confidence in Patient Communication

The substantial rise in participants' confidence (from a mean of 2.8 to 4.4) highlights the transformative nature of structured role-play and simulation exercises. Prior to the course, learners frequently hesitated to start or maintain interactions with patients due to concerns about making errors or being misinterpreted. This reluctance stemmed from language anxiety and a lack of experience with practical communication situations.

Role-plays and simulations created a supportive setting for learners to practice and enhance their communication abilities, gradually alleviating their fears. These activities allowed participants to experiment with their language, receive valuable feedback, and become familiar with common patient interactions. For example, rehearsing responses to inquiries about medication side effects made learners more at ease in handling such conversations in real life. This observation aligns with Dornyei's (2001) insight that controlled practice, which lowers performance pressure, can significantly boost learners' confidence. It also reinforces the necessity of establishing safe practice environments in EFL instruction, especially in professional fields like pharmacy, where communication stakes are high.

5.2.Clarity in Explaining Medication Instructions

The significant improvement in clarity (average increase from 3.0 to 4.6) underscores the effectiveness of task-based learning (TBL) in helping learners articulate precise and coherent instructions. Before the intervention, participants struggled with logically structuring their explanations, often neglecting critical details or failing to connect ideas smoothly. This problem was particularly evident in situations requiring step-by-step guidance, such as explaining a complicated dosage regimen. The integration of simulation-based learning, TBLT, and blended learning approaches has demonstrated significant improvements in EFL speaking skills among pharmacy students. Simulation-based education, as highlighted by Foucault-Fruchard et al. (2024), provides a practical platform for students to develop and refine their communication skills in a controlled environment, thereby enhancing their confidence and competence in real-world interactions.

TBL activities, which included preparing presentations or simulating patient counselling sessions, directly addressed these challenges by emphasizing the significance of effective information organization. Participants learned to prioritize essential points, logically sequence their explanations, and anticipate patient inquiries. For instance, tasks requiring learners to detail the administration process for an insulin injection reinforced the necessity of clarity and accuracy, ensuring patients comprehended each step. The effectiveness of TBLT in improving speaking skills, particularly through role-play activities, aligns with the findings of Dimastoro and Bharati (2022), who reported that such strategies cater to different learning styles and significantly enhance students' speaking abilities.

The importance of feedback in improving clarity cannot be overstated. By identifying specific improvement areas, such as avoiding technical jargon or highlighting key details, instructors supported learners in refining their communication techniques. These ongoing enhancements not only improved clarity but also contributed to overall gains in confidence and fluency. This finding supports Richards' (2006) claim that clarity is a vital aspect of communicative competence, especially in professional settings where miscommunication can have serious repercussions. Furthermore, it highlights the effectiveness of TBL as a teaching approach that connects classroom learning with real-world applications.

5.3.Use of Pharmaceutical Terminology

The notable enhancement in the use of pharmaceutical terminology (mean rise from 2.6 to 4.3) demonstrates the success of the program's integrated vocabulary training. Initial reluctance among participants to utilize technical terms stemmed from uncertainty regarding their meanings, pronunciation, and context-appropriate usage. This hesitation often resulted in oversimplifications or omissions that compromised the accuracy of their explanations.

By weaving vocabulary training into genuine tasks, such as evaluating patient information leaflets or conducting mock consultations, the program enabled participants to internalize and effectively apply domain-specific language. For example, exercises that involved explaining medication contraindications not only reinforced the meaning of the term but also instructed learners on how to tailor their language for various audiences.

The improvement in this area emphasizes the value of contextualized vocabulary instruction in professional EFL programs. Unlike rote memorization, which often leads to superficial knowledge, contextualized training encourages active vocabulary usage in relevant situations. This finding aligns with Nation's (2001) assertion that the retention and practical application of vocabulary are improved when learners engage with terms in meaningful contexts. Moreover, the advancements in terminology usage illustrate the interconnectedness of linguistic components. As participants became more confident with pharmaceutical vocabulary, their clarity, fluency, and overall confidence also saw improvements, highlighting the comprehensive impact of targeted vocabulary instruction.

5.4.Fluency in Professional Interactions

The enhancement in fluency (average increase from 2.9 to 4.5) illustrates participants' increasing ability to communicate smoothly and coherently during professional interactions. Prior to the course, learners frequently demonstrated pauses, self-corrections, and fragmented speech, primarily due to performance anxiety and insufficient practice. These issues not only disrupted the flow of their communication but also negatively impacted their perceived competence.

The structured speaking activities within the program, including role-plays and VR simulations, offered ample opportunities for learners to cultivate automaticity in their speech. By engaging in repetitive practice, participants learned to process information more swiftly, articulate responses effectively, and maintain a coherent flow of ideas. For instance, VR simulations that replicated real-world scenarios, such as advising a patient with limited English proficiency, compelled learners to adapt swiftly to unanticipated questions or challenges. The enhancement in fluency is also reflective of the cumulative advantages of the program's integrated approach. As participants gained confidence and mastered pharmaceutical language, their speech became increasingly natural and cohesive, allowing them to concentrate on the content of their communication rather than the mechanics of language. This observation

corroborates Dornyei's (2001) assertion that reducing cognitive load through consistent practice promotes fluency in second-language learners.

5.5. Implications for EFL Teaching in Pharmacy

The results of this study carry significant implications for EFL education in professional settings, particularly within pharmacy training. They stress the necessity of embracing a holistic and integrated method that simultaneously addresses linguistic, cultural, and psychological barriers.

1. Authentic Learning Experiences: The effectiveness of role-plays, TBL, and VR simulations underscores the importance of crafting realistic learning environments that reflect professional practice demands. These approaches not only enhance linguistic proficiency but also equip learners for the complexities of real-world interactions.

2. Contextualized Vocabulary Instruction: The advancements in pharmaceutical terminology usage highlight the significance of embedding vocabulary training within practical tasks. This strategy ensures learners acquire both the knowledge and the confidence required to utilize specialized terms effectively.

3. Feedback and Reflection: The cyclical process of receiving feedback and engaging in reflective practice was crucial to participants' advancements. These techniques should form a central component of EFL instruction, as they foster continual improvement and self-awareness.

4. Holistic Skill Development: The interconnected nature of the assessed parameters—confidence, clarity, terminology, and fluency—emphasizes the necessity for comprehensive programs that address all facets of communicative competence.

5.6. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Although the outcomes are promising, several limitations should be considered. The study's focus on a single group of male participants restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future studies should investigate the program's efficacy across diverse populations, including female learners and students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, longitudinal research is necessary to evaluate the long-term retention of skills and their impact on professional performance.

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