World Conference on
Teaching, Learning, and Education

16 - 18 October 2026

Milan , Italy

From Language Learning to Clinical Performance: A Trilingual Simulated Patient Program in EMP

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Abstract

Effective doctor-patient communication in English has long been regarded as a core competency for medical students in international programs and has become increasingly emphasized in medical education in recent years. At the University of Pécs Medical School (UPMS), Pécs, Hungary, where students study medicine in a multilingual and multicultural environment, traditional language teaching has been complemented applying Simulated Patients (SP).

This presentation outlines the unique implementation of the Simulated Patient Program (SPP) integrated into English for Biomedical Purposes (EBP) courses for medical students and medical professionals at UPMS. Distinguished by its trilingual application - offered in Hungarian, English, and German - the program enhances practical language use in clinical contexts. To evaluate the effectiveness of this approach, semi-structured interviews have been conducted among students participating in Medical History Taking courses, focusing on their perspectives and learning experiences. The results demonstrated that these simulations provide students with opportunities to practice clinical communication strategies, empathy, patient interviewing techniques, and culturally sensitive interactions in realistic but safe scenarios. Moreover, it was revealed that this approach managed to shift the focus from traditional language learning/teaching such as lexico-grammatical acquisition to communication as a professional performance. The study concludes that SPP can serve as an alternative to the traditional classroom, which often turns out to be de-motivating, rather theoretical and costly, by providing a motivating, semi-authentic and communication-centred learning/teaching environment.

Keywords: Doctor-Patient Consultation; EMP Methodology; History Taking; Medical Communication; Simulated Patients