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**ARE SOFT SKILLS SOMETHING WE ARE BORN WITH OR CAN WE
LEARN THEM? A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ONGOING DISCUSSION
(Gyumri)**

Are soft skills inborn or developed? The truth is, both sides matter. While some people may have natural skills, many others cultivate them through practice and experience. This means that with the right support and opportunities, anyone can improve their soft skills. By focusing on both our strengths and areas for growth, we can create a more positive environment for learning and development.

Keywords: inborn vs. developed, soft skills, cultivated via practice, opportunities and support, improve, positive environment, learning and development.

In our fast-changing world skills like effective communication, empathy, teamwork and problem-solving are more crucial than ever. These soft skills assist us not just in succeeding in professional settings but also in our daily communication, interactions. A pressing question often arises: are these skills innate, or can we develop them through practice and learning?

From my own journey, I've seen firsthand that soft skills can, indeed, be developed. For instance, I used to find working in teams and articulating my ideas a challenge. Through various experiences and learning opportunities, I've noticeably improved.

This article investigates the fascinating debate of whether these skills are innate or if they can be developed over time. Instead of choosing one side, we'll conduct research on how both our natural qualities and our environment contribute to developing these essential abilities.

What makes this discussion particularly valuable is its practical application. If we understand how soft skills are developed, it might help educators and employers create more effective training programs. In a workplace, employees may not only excel in their technical roles, but they can also convey ideas clearly and easily and work collaboratively. By exploring how we can nurture these skills, we are not just preparing individuals for specific jobs but helping them thrive in all areas of life.

All in all, this article suggests a fresh perspective on how soft skills grow, filled with real-life examples and practical insights to support personal and professional development.

Are Soft Skills Inborn or Developed? A Simpler Look at the Debate

Some people believe that soft skills, like teamwork, communication and leadership, are things we're born with. This idea comes from research in genetics and psychology which says that parts of our personality are inherited.

For example, studies with twins have shown that character traits like being outgoing, staying calm under pressure and getting along with others are linked to our genes. This means that some people may naturally be better at things like leading a team or handling tough conversations. Even babies show different levels of how social, adaptable, or emotionally responsive they are, which might predict how good they'll be at working with others later in life. These early personality traits often stay with us as we grow shaping how we deal with people and form relationships.

Real -life example: In our IT classes we have noticed that some students naturally step up as leaders during group projects (they worked with an Italian group of architects in 2024). They are mostly good at organizing the team and clearly explaining ideas, good at interpretation. These students usually do well in roles like project managers or client-facing jobs. As teachers, we can help them by giving them tasks that play to their strengths, like leading team meetings or presenting updates to the class. This helps them practice their skills in real-world scenarios and builds on their natural talents.

The Nurture Perspective: Developed Soft Skills

While some people believe soft skills are something you're born with, others argue that you can develop them through education, training, and life experiences. Evidence from educational psychology and organizational behavior strongly supports this idea, demonstrating the adaptability and growth potential of soft skills. Many educational institutions and professional development programs now emphasize soft skills training, offering activities that target communication, leadership, empathy, and teamwork [1].

Empathy is something we would like to ponder upon, it is something our students should develop via their contact with peers, lecturers and surrounding environment. It is of paramount significance as not a single soft skill can exist without having compassion and empathy as its basis.

The idea of neuroplasticity supports the nurture argument; research shows that our brain can change and grow through learning and experience [2]. For example, social and emotional learning programs have been proved to enhance skills like empathy, conflict resolution, and teamwork [3]. This suggests that no matter an individual's starting point, soft skills can be developed and refined with intentional effort and practice.

As English teachers in an IT department (and not only in this department), we can incorporate exercises that develop soft skills. For instance, we can organize role-playing activities and we are more than sure that they can significantly boost students' ability to communicate technical ideas to non-technical audiences. Our students can simulate a technical support scenario where they need to explain complicated IT concepts in simple terms—this not only improves their communication skills but also fosters patience and empathy.

We can create group projects as well where students work in teams to solve some real IT problems. This, we think, teaches teamwork and leadership along with enhancing their problem-solving abilities. Peer feedback sessions are very valuable as they allow students to evaluate each other's contributions and communication strategies [4].

We are sure that a peer-to-peer teaching session could also be effective. Our students can explain a complex technical topic to their peers in a very simple language. It will build their understanding of the subject and sharpen their ability to communicate clearly, mindfully. Within a certain period of time these activities will reinforce the idea that soft skills, like any other skill, can be learned and improved through effort and practice.

Bridging the Gap: A Balanced Approach

People have often been debating whether our abilities come from nature (what we're born with) or nurture (how we are brought up, raised). But the truth is, it is a blend of both. When it refers to soft skills—like communication, teamwork, or leadership—we might have a natural start, but we really develop them through learning, experience, and practice.

A Practical Example:

Let's imagine that in our IT department (and not only in this department), we set up a mentorship program. We pair students with strong soft skills (like great communicators or leaders) with students who are still working on those skills. This helps both groups. The mentors get better at explaining things, leading, and working with others. The newer students learn by watching and practicing what they see.

For example, let's say a mentor is guiding a student on how to lead a group project. The mentor shows them how to listen to everyone's ideas, decide the next steps, and keep the group on track. Over time, both the mentor and the mentee improve their skills through this real-life practice.

We could also have students keep journals about their teamwork or communication experiences. Writing down what went well and what didn't - helps

them reflect and understand what to improve. This simple habit can make a big difference.

Famous psychologist Albert Bandura talked about "social learning theory," where people learn by watching others. In this case, mentees learn by observing their mentors. Bandura's theory suggests that seeing good behaviors helps people copy and learn them more effectively.

Another researcher, Daniel Goleman, emphasizes the importance of "emotional intelligence," which is key in soft skills. He says that people can improve their emotional intelligence through practice and reflection. So, when students write in their journals, they're actually developing this important skill which is essential for teamwork and leadership [5].

So, we see that the combination of watching, doing, and reflecting is powerful. As Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." With regular practice, anyone can improve their soft skills [6].

Practical Implications and Applications

We presume that the understanding of how both: natural abilities and life experiences influence soft skills is important for education, job training, and personal development.

We might design a course for IT professionals called "Effective Communication for IT Professionals." The aim of this course would be to teach students how to provide technical information in a simple, clear way. The course could include lessons on writing technical documents for easy understanding, presenting tech topics to people who don't have a technical background and using email effectively in professional settings. The tasks could involve writing a user manual for a software program, giving a presentation about a technical project to a group of non-technical judges and peer-reviewing each other's communication skills to see what works and what needs improvement. Another useful activity could be to have students' partner with local businesses to solve real IT problems. This would give them practical experience and show them why soft skills, like communication and teamwork, are essential in the workplace.

Professional training programs can also be adapted to focus on specific soft skills that improve employee performance and make the whole company more effective. Employers want more than just technical skills. They also value employees who can work well with others, take charge of projects and adapt when things change. So, when we teach students soft skills alongside technical skills, we prepare them for a successful career.

We can also cooperate with local tech companies to offer workshops and internships that teach soft skills. We can focus on topics like "Leadership in Tech," "Resolving Conflicts in Teams," and "Adapting to New Technology." During internships students could be asked to work on challenging projects with a diverse team providing them with a chance of practicing communication skills and teamwork in a real-world setting. Besides that, students could get feedback from professionals in the industry that would help them understand what they're doing correctly and where they can improve in terms of soft skills.

We are sure that lifelong learning and the development of soft skills can help build a more adaptable and resilient workforce.

One way to do this is elaborating policies which help tech workers keep improving their skills: technical and soft skills. These policies could include offering affordable courses, certifications and workshops on things like leadership, communication, and emotional intelligence. By collaborating with the government and private companies we can fund these programs and make sure that the workers will stay competitive and ready for new challenges. Creating a certification for soft skills that will be recognized by big companies would be a great idea motivating professionals to keep building their skills in areas like communication and leadership.

Hereby we also suggest something practical a) for students: a communication class could ask students to write a guide for using a software program helping them get better at technical writing... b) for professionals: workshops could include role-playing where people practice solving team conflicts that would improve their communication and emotional skills... c) for employers: a company might create a training program to teach soft skills like problem-solving, flexibility, and leadership which are important for working well with others.

Conclusion. The debate over whether soft skills are inborn or developed is not a simple one. On the one hand, there exists some evidence that genetics play a part in traits like empathy, communication, and adaptability. For example, research suggests that certain personality traits linked to soft skills have a genetic component [7]. On the other hand, our environment, i.e., how we're raised, the experiences we go through, shapes how we develop and use these skills. Social learning theory emphasizes that we can pick up new behaviors, like communication and teamwork through observation and practice [8].

Some people might naturally be good at certain soft skills, but everyone can get better at them with learning and practice. Both natural ability and personal development are important for understanding how soft skills are learned. This mix of nature and nurture is especially useful in areas like education and career

growth where teaching can focus on both recognizing talents and helping people develop these skills further.

This view is important for educators and not only. Whether a student's strengths in leadership or problem-solving come naturally or are learned, teachers can influence their future success. By offering focused training, real-life experiences, and regular feedback, educators can help students develop the soft skills needed for careers in IT and other fields. For example, a study by Robles (2012) showed that skills like communication and teamwork are crucial for success, especially in fast-paced industries like IT [1].

To crown it all, acknowledging that soft skills can be both natural and learned, acquired, helps us create better strategies for personal and professional growth. It's not just about recognizing, finding talent; it's about helping people accomplish their full potential with the right blend of feedback, practice, and support. With the change of workplace, those who focus on developing these skills, will have a higher chance of succeeding, implementing their desires.

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Ա.Ս. ՍԱՐՈՒԻԱՆՅԱՆ**

**«ՓԱՓՈՒԿ» ՄԻՋԱՆՁՆԱՅԻՆ ՀՄՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ ԲՆԱԾԻՒՆ ԵՆ, ԹԵ՞
ՁԵՌՔԲԵՐՈՎԻ. ՄԱՆՐԱԿՐԿԻՏ ՀԱՅԱՑՔ ՈՒՍՈՒՄՆԱՍԻՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԻ**

Արդյոք «փափուկ» հմտությունները բնածի՞ն են, թե՞ ձեռքբերովի: Իրականում երկուսն էլ կարևոր են: Թեև որոշ մարդիկ կարող են ունենալ որոշակի բնական հմտություններ, սակայն կարող են ձեռք բերել նաև կենսափորձի միջոցով: Սա նշանակում է, որ ճիշտ աջակցության և հնարավորությունների դեպքում յուրաքանչյուրը կարող է բարելավել իր «փափուկ» հմտությունները: Կենտրոնանալով և՛ մեր ուժեղ կողմերի, և՛ աճի ոլորտների վրա՝ կարող ենք ավելի նպաստավոր միջավայր ստեղծել սովորելու և զարգացման համար:

Առանցքային բաներ. բնածին կամ ձեռքբերովի, պրակտիկայի միջոցով զարգացած «փափուկ» հմտություններ, հնարավորություններ և աջակցություն, բարելավում, դրական միջավայր, վերապատրաստում և զարգացում:

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**ЯВЛЯЮТСЯ ЛИ “МЯГКИЕ НАВЫКИ” ВРОЖДЕННЫМИ ИЛИ
ПРИБРЕТЕННЫМИ? ПРИСТАЛЬНЫЙ ВЗГЛЯД НА ТЕКУЩУЮ
ДИСКУССИЮ**

Являются ли "мягкие навыки" врожденными или приобретенными? На самом деле важны обе стороны. Хотя некоторые люди могут обладать природными способностями к определенным навыкам, многие из них можно развить с помощью практики и опыта. Это означает, что при надлежащей поддержке и возможностях каждый может улучшить свои "мягкие навыки". Сосредоточившись как на наших сильных сторонах, так и на областях для роста, можем создать более благоприятную среду для обучения и развития.

Ключевые слова: врожденные или приобретенные навыки, мягкие навыки, развиваемые на практике, возможности и поддержка, улучшение, позитивная среда, обучение и развитие.