



## THE ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE GRADUATION INTERNSHIPS: VOICES FROM THE STAKEHOLDERS

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### Abstract:

Internships play a vital role in bridging the gap between academic training and professional practice for English Linguistics major students. They are great opportunities for students to apply the knowledge in real-world settings, enhance professional competencies, and develop essential soft skills for future careers. The research aims to examine and explore the effectiveness of the internship of English Linguistics and Literature major students from the perspectives of stakeholders. Data were collected through surveys of students participating in internships, internship guidance reports from advisors, and interviews with representatives of internship institutions. The findings revealed that most interns experienced a dynamic and professional working environment that fostered their growth in linguistic competence and interpersonal skills. High satisfaction scores were recorded in areas such as workplace integration, equipment and facilities, mentorship support, and task relevance. Nonetheless, the study also explored several challenges, including initial adaptation difficulties, inconsistent work schedules, limited exposure to specialized tasks, and a lack of real-world experience. Based on these insights, the study offered significant recommendations for improving the internship programs and supporting students' academic and career development.

**Keywords:** graduation internships, English linguistics, experiential learning, stakeholder perspectives, professional communication

### 1. Introduction

Internships are widely considered valuable opportunities beyond classroom learning that benefit students' academic and career success (Bertha & Wu, 2025). They serve as a transformative bridge between theoretical academic training and professional practice, particularly for English Linguistics and Literature major students. By engaging in

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relevant workplace activities, internships provide the first orientation for students to apply academic knowledge to real-world challenges (To & Lung, 2020). In the highly volatile and competitive 21st-century global job market, employers increasingly expect higher education institutions to produce work-ready graduates equipped with the requisite professional skills to transition seamlessly into the workplace. Traditional theory-based teaching is often proven inadequate on its own; therefore, higher education institutions offer internship programs to provide hands-on practical experience, thereby increasing employability upon graduation. Evidence from interdisciplinary literature underscores that participating in internships has profound positive impacts on various facets of a student's development. These include increased success in job interviews, higher rates of remaining employed after graduation, enhanced academic achievement, and significantly bolstered career self-confidence (Bertha & Wu, 2025).

In the context of Vietnam, English Linguistics majors often intern in dynamic and professional environments involving multi-disciplinary fields such as tourism, office administration, translation, and event design. These settings allow students to improve their language proficiency, communication reflexes, and specialized skills. Despite these opportunities, interns frequently face significant challenges, including initial adaptation difficulties, high-intensity workloads that demand physical and mental strength, and a lack of real-world experience.

For English Linguistics and Literature majors, these opportunities are crucial for building professional networks and transitioning from students to young professionals. This study aims to investigate the attainments and challenges of these interns and propose practical measures for improvement.

This study aims to address the aforementioned research gap by exploring the effectiveness of graduation internships for English Linguistics and Literature majors from the collective perspectives of stakeholders, including the students themselves, academic advisors, and internship host institutions.

Specifically, the research seeks to investigate:

- 1) How do interns perceive their attainments regarding linguistic competence and interpersonal growth?
- 2) What are the challenges interns face in a real-world professional setting?
- 3) What are practical measures to improve the design and implementation of internship programs to better support students' career development?

By integrating academic learning with practical experience, this research provides a framework for enhancing student readiness for the competitive job market and strengthening the vital connection between academia and the business community.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Graduation Internship**

Internships are fundamentally defined as a transformative bridge between the theoretical confines of the classroom and the practical realities of the professional world. According

to Yang, Cheung, and Song (2016), an internship is a teaching activity characterized by direct experience, providing the necessary conditions for learner growth through learning by doing. It is a mechanism that allows students to interact with a real living environment, fostering exploration and critical reflection through professional activities. Gbadamosi *et al.* (2015) further refined this definition, viewing internships as a cooperative arrangement between universities and businesses designed to cultivate a student's professional practical abilities after they have completed a significant portion of their academic coursework. In the context of social integration, internships serve as a vital link connecting academic institutions with the broader society, fostering interpersonal interaction and social workplace competence. It is viewed as a cooperative arrangement between universities and industry partners designed to cultivate a student's professional and practical abilities after they have completed their core academic coursework.

The graduation internship also stands as a foundational capstone phase within modern higher education, structurally situated at the intersection of experiential learning paradigms and Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) frameworks. Fundamentally, a graduation internship is defined as a structured, supervised, and credit-bearing professional placement where students apply their accumulated academic and theoretical knowledge within authentic, real-world workplace environments (Andersson *et al.*, 2020). Rather than treating academic study and vocational practice as isolated domains, modern WIL frameworks prioritize cognitive integration, prompting students to transition from passive classroom learners to reflective, active industry practitioners (Andersson *et al.*, 2020).

For students majoring in English linguistics, this operational definition takes on a highly specialized context. Unlike purely technical or vocational disciplines, an English linguistics curriculum develops broad, foundational competencies in language structures, discourse analysis, sociolinguistic dynamics, and intercultural communication (Li, 2018). Consequently, graduation internships for these majors serve as a critical translational platform, bridging abstract linguistic theories—such as syntax, pragmatics, and pedagogical grammar—with diversified professional pathways including language education, corporate communication, public relations, technical translation, and localization (Li, 2018).

## **2.2 The Strategic Importance of Internships for English Linguistics and Literature Majors**

The importance of internships in the 21st century is underscored by shifting hiring priorities. Reports from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE, 2023) indicate a dramatic decrease in the use of GPA as a primary screening tool, dropping from nearly 75% of employers in 2019 to only 37% in 2023, with a corresponding increase in the value placed on hands-on practical experience. This shift emphasizes that academic excellence alone is no longer sufficient for securing entry-level

employment; students must demonstrate work-readiness through experiential learning (Baert *et al.*, 2021; Banker, 2025).

The integration of mandatory graduation internships is increasingly vital for addressing the historical curriculum-employability gap that frequently impacts humanities and liberal arts degrees. While traditional academic coursework effectively builds comprehensive language proficiency and critical analysis, it often fails to contextualize how these competencies function within volatile, globalized market environments (Chen & Gan, 2021). Empirical evidence demonstrates that intentional job training and field-based experiential frameworks significantly boost students' specialized linguistic competence, practical communication abilities, and subsequent market value (Loyalka *et al.*, 2024). According to the principles of situated learning, internships allow English linguistics students to undergo a critical professional evolution, moving from the periphery of a professional community toward its center as they co-construct their identities (Anjum, 2020).

Furthermore, empirical literature indicates that graduation internships cultivate essential non-cognitive attributes and soft skills that are highly attractive to contemporary employers. Rather than viewing these traits as peripheral benefits, recent work-integrated learning scholarship frames them as core competencies that directly determine a graduate's marketability (Anjum, 2020).

While classroom environments provide a theoretical understanding of sociolinguistics and pragmatic principles, they cannot replicate the fluid, high-stakes communication found in professional ecosystems. Work by Loyalka *et al.* (2024) underscores that intentional field-based training forces language majors to translate abstract linguistic mastery into nuanced, real-world corporate or diplomatic settings. In these settings, students must actively navigate varying communication registers, interpret institutional jargon, and deploy politeness strategies across diverse teams. Consequently, the internship serves as an applied laboratory where structural linguistic awareness matures into adaptive intercultural communication, allowing students to decode subtle workplace dynamics and align their discourse with corporate expectations (Li, 2018).

The transition from controlled academic exercises to unpredictable workplace environments fosters advanced problem-solving capabilities. Within a traditional curriculum, linguistic or translation challenges are typically well-structured and have definitive solutions; however, actual workplace bottlenecks require students to adapt textbook linguistic theories to dynamic organizational constraints (Li, 2018). Previous studies demonstrate that when interns are tasked with content localization, public relations writing, or client communication, they must balance linguistic precision with commercial urgency, shifting project scopes, and resource limitations (Chen & Gan, 2021). This intersection of language application and business logistics compels students to think critically, cultivating an agile mindset that views language as an operational tool rather than a static academic subject.

Crucially, empirical research highlights the psychological evolution that occurs during this experiential phase, particularly regarding professional self-efficacy. Andersson *et al.* (2020) demonstrate that testing academic knowledge against operational challenges measurably raises a student's psychological readiness and vocational self-concept for post-graduation employment. When English linguistics majors realize that their deep understanding of discourse analysis, syntax, or semantics can directly resolve corporate communication gaps, their perceived capability increases. This boost in self-efficacy mitigates the transitional anxiety common among humanities graduates, shifting their professional identity from passive academic consumers to active, practicing language experts (Andersson *et al.*, 2020; Chen & Gan, 2021). Previous research across various global contexts has validated the efficacy of these programs. In Australia, Alpert, Heaney, and Kuhn (2009) found that internships are instrumental for career clarification and building professional networks. Similarly, studies in Hong Kong by Wen (2010) and Du-Babcock (2016) highlighted that intern readiness, comprising self-initiative and academic preparedness, is the primary driver of success when bridging students from classroom-based learning to the professional sphere.

Furthermore, research in Taiwan by Hou (2018) identified a significant perception gap between student expectations and their actual workplace experiences, noting that unsuccessful internships can actively deter students from their chosen career paths. In China, Wang and Lee (2019) provided empirical evidence that corporate internships significantly improve work value, specifically intrinsic interest and self-fulfillment, which in turn has a remarkably positive effect on overall employability. However, in the context of Vietnam, recent case studies have highlighted that while internships are valuable, they are often fraught with systemic challenges such as task irrelevance and a lack of professional supervision. These diverse findings underscore the necessity of a well-managed "win-win-win" triangular partnership between the institution, the student, and the industry.

In general, graduation internships function as a transformative pedagogical mechanism rather than a mere administrative milestone for degree completion. By synthesizing non-cognitive development with applied linguistics, these placements systematically bridge the theory-practice gap, elevating the overall quality of higher education and securing the sustainable career development of linguistics graduates within a volatile global market (Chen & Gan, 2021).

### **2.3 Attainments and Challenges of Graduation Internships**

The attainments of internship programs are multifaceted, ranging from enhanced linguistic competence to increased self-efficacy. On one hand, the primary attainments center around rapid professional socialization and the validation of career pathways. For English linguistics majors, who often enter the job market with broad communicative capabilities rather than specialized corporate training, the internship functions as a critical mechanism for career clarification and validation (Johnson, 2019). Empirical research by Tran and Trang (2020) demonstrates that student interns experience a

profound shift in their professional identity, gaining the ability to accurately evaluate job values and confirm long-term career aspirations. This experiential phase transforms abstract linguistic competencies into tangible professional capital. Within traditional university settings, linguistics majors often analyze discourse, phonetics, and syntax in a vacuum. During an internship, this knowledge is repurposed for industry-specific needs. Research indicates that field-based placements allow language students to transform generalist competencies into specialized market assets, such as digital content localization, natural language processing data curation, and professional copy editing. This application of language structures directly mitigates what O'Mahony and Bechky (2006) frame as the career progression paradox, the cycle where graduates cannot secure employment due to a lack of experience, yet cannot gain experience without a job. During this process, interns bridge the gap between academic theory and practice by applying structural language proficiency directly to public relations, content localization, and organizational discourse (To & Lung, 2020). This professional exposure also helps students expand their social capital by connecting them with industry professionals, establishing valuable mentorship networks that enhance long-term employability (Bilsland *et al.*, 2015).

On the other hand, student interns frequently encounter structural challenges that can compromise the pedagogical value of the experience. These friction points highlight the difficulties of transitioning from a structured university ecosystem to a volatile corporate environment. A prominent hurdle is the competency-performance gap, where many English language majors face initial difficulties performing specialized duties due to a lack of professional industry knowledge and localized corporate soft skills (Tran & Trang, 2020). This difficulty is often compounded by programmatic and timeline constraints, as strict administrative deadlines and compressed module timelines often truncate the learning curve required for deep reflection (Aldabbus, 2020). Furthermore, shortcomings in institutional support create significant obstacles, particularly the lack of coherent communication channels between universities and partner organizations, leaving students to resolve professional and psychological conflicts on their own without academic intervention. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bilsland & Nagy, 2015).

Overall, balancing these attainments against the systemic challenges is essential for maximizing the impact of the curriculum, ensuring that graduation internships function as a transformative pedagogical mechanism necessary for securing the sustainable career development of linguistics graduates (Johnson, 2019; Chen & Gan, 2021).

### **3. Material and Methods**

#### **3.1 Mix Method**

The methodology of this research is structured around a multi-instrument approach to evaluate the effectiveness of graduation internships for English Linguistics and Literature majors (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary data collection tool utilized was a

questionnaire, in which participants were asked to provide feedback using a five-point Likert scale. This scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), was employed to measure specific quantitative parameters, including the level of student integration into the workplace, the quality of working conditions and equipment, and the degree of supportive spirit shown by employees toward the interns.

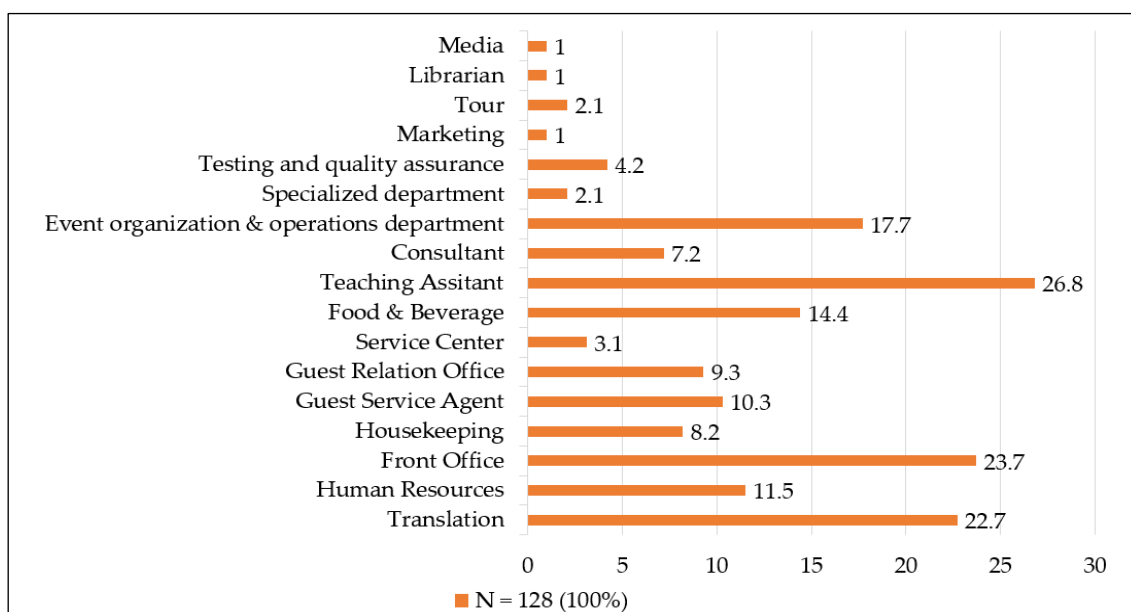
In addition to survey data, the research incorporated a formal assessment of student performance through internship reports. The evaluation process for these reports followed a weighted scoring system where the process score accounted for 60% of the total grade, and the report score constituted the remaining 40%. Analysis of these scores revealed high levels of achievement, with a mean process score of 9.7 and a mean report score of 8.4, resulting in a comprehensive total mean of 9.1. These methodological components allowed the study to investigate critical dimensions such as the suitability of assigned tasks relative to professional competence and the extent to which academic knowledge provided appropriate support in a real-world working environment.

**Table 1: Internship Reports**

| Content                | Min. | Max. | Mean |
|------------------------|------|------|------|
| Process score<br>(60%) | 9.1  | 10.0 | 9.7  |
| Report score<br>(40%)  | 7.6  | 9.3  | 8.4  |
| <b>Total</b>           | 8.5  | 9.6  | 9.1  |

### 3.2 Participants

The study employed a convenience sampling method (Johnson & Christensen, 2014) to recruit the participants who were final-year English majors at a public university in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, hereafter referred to as Mekong University (pseudonym).



**Figure 1: Internship Position for English Linguistics and Literature Students**

The total number of participants was 128 English as a foreign language (EFL) juniors from the Department of English Linguistics, Translation and Interpretation, the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Mekong University. All of them experience the graduation internship with a variety of positions at the workplace. Besides, the semi-structure interviews were conducted with the volunteering participants who are representatives of internship institutions.

### **3.3 Research Instruments**

This research used two questionnaires to collect data after graduation internship experiences. The participants were asked to show their answers on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire was delivered in Vietnamese to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding of the content. The questionnaire consisted of four parts developed based on key aspects related to (1) students' information, including gender, age and educational background; how they perceived (2) the attainments and (3) challenges, as well as (4) recommendations for the effective internship.

The data from the questionnaire responses were subjected to the Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. Before beginning the analyses, the scale test was run to test the reliability of the questionnaire. The results of the scale test showed that the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire satisfied the statistical reliability ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Therefore, the questionnaire was reliable for data analysis.

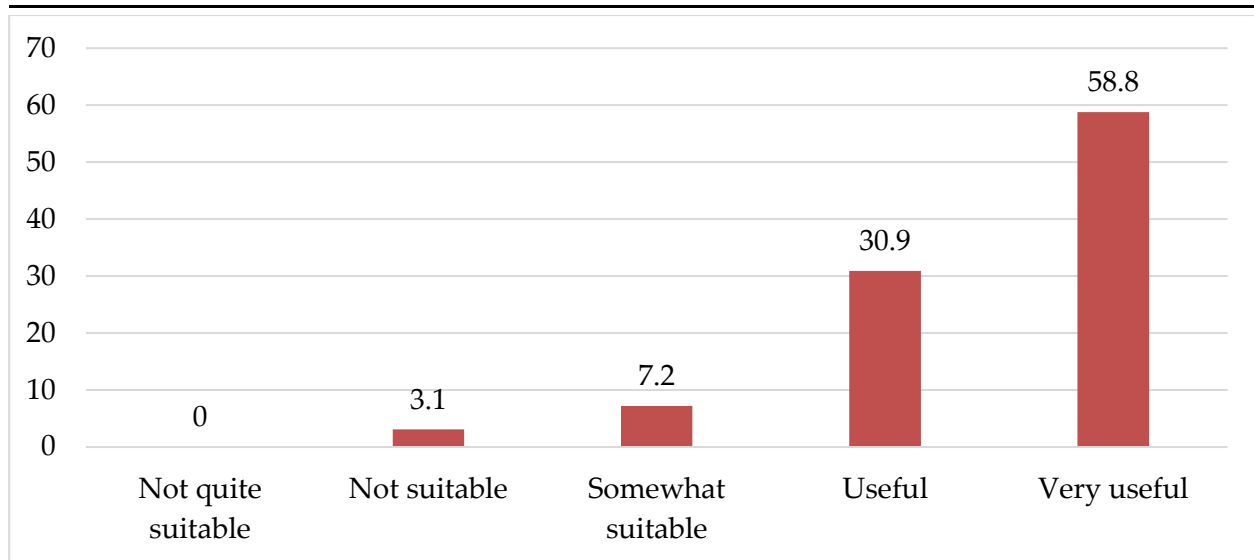
Additionally, the document analysis and qualitative analysis were conducted through the collection of internship reports, journals and interviews with representatives of internship institutions.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 The Attainments and Challenges of Graduation Internships**

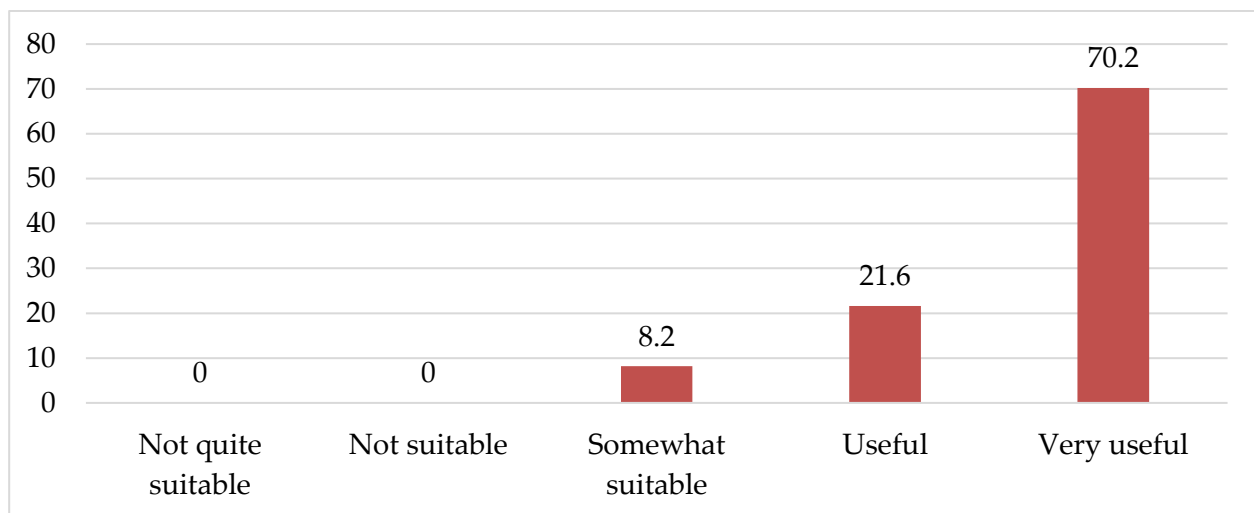
The research findings regarding the level of integration into the environment at the internship site reveal a high mean score of 4.45, indicating that students successfully adapted to their professional settings. Based on a five-point Likert scale, this mean represented an 89% positive response rate in terms of integration success.

Several qualitative factors contributed to this high integration score. Most students perceived their internship environment as professional, friendly, and dynamic, which fostered comfort and eased the transition into the workforce. A critical factor was that many interns felt they were treated and assigned tasks as official employees, which bolstered their sense of responsibility, proactivity, and self-motivation. The development of strong relationships with colleagues and instructors allowed students to learn comfortably, engage in effective teamwork, and adapt to the organizational culture at a faster pace.



**Figure 2:** Level of Integration into the Environment at the Internship Site (M = 4.45)

Despite these attainments, the data also identifies persistent barriers during the integration process. In the initial stages, some interns faced psychological difficulties, such as anxiety and hesitation in communication, primarily due to a lack of social skills or unfamiliarity with specific office cultures. These findings suggest that while the majority of students integrate effectively, additional support during the early “settling-in” phase could further enhance the internship experience.



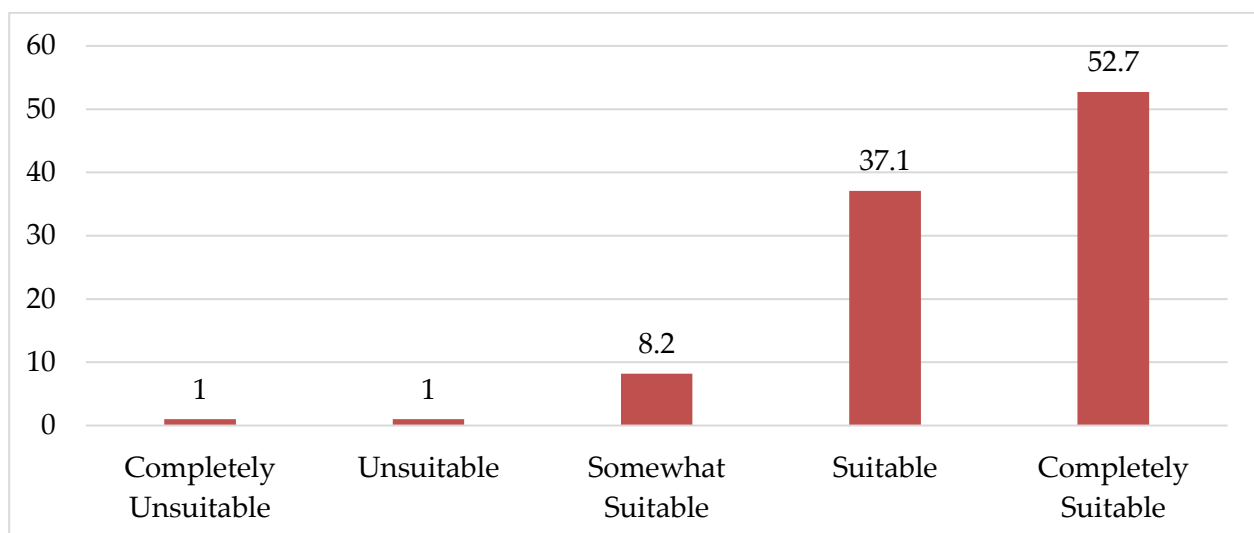
**Figure 3:** Working Conditions at the Internship Site (Work Equipment, Office Furniture) (M = 4.62)

The evaluation of working conditions at the internship site, specifically regarding work equipment and office furniture, yielded a high mean score of 4.62. This score, derived from a five-point Likert scale where 5 represents “strongly agree,” indicates that interns generally found the physical work environment to be highly supportive of their

professional tasks. This mean represented an 92.8% positive response rate in terms of working conditions.

Several factors contributed significantly to this positive assessment, primarily revolving around the operational and social conditions of the workplace. First, the professional environment played a crucial role, as a majority of the students perceived their assigned workplaces as highly professional, friendly, and dynamic. This welcoming and active atmosphere created a supportive ecosystem that allowed interns to work comfortably and adapt quickly to corporate expectations. Second, seamless access to institutional facilities further enhanced the internship experience. The high statistical mean in this category suggests that host organizations generally provided the necessary infrastructure, tools, and resources required by the interns. Having direct access to these workplaces helped students gain a deeper understanding of real-world work processes, while also allowing them to accumulate meaningful practical experience throughout their studies.

However, the findings also highlighted specific infrastructure challenges that temporarily impacted some participants during their placement. First, technical barriers emerged as a prominent issue, as several interns reported difficulties when attempting to use specialized technical equipment or site-specific software provided by the host organizations. Second, facility limitations further exacerbated these operational struggles in certain locations, where interns faced the dual burden of frequent power outages and a notable lack of essential support equipment. Despite these localized difficulties, the impressive overall mean rating of 4.62 confirms that the vast majority of interns remained highly satisfied with both the professional setting and the physical tools made available to them during their practicum.

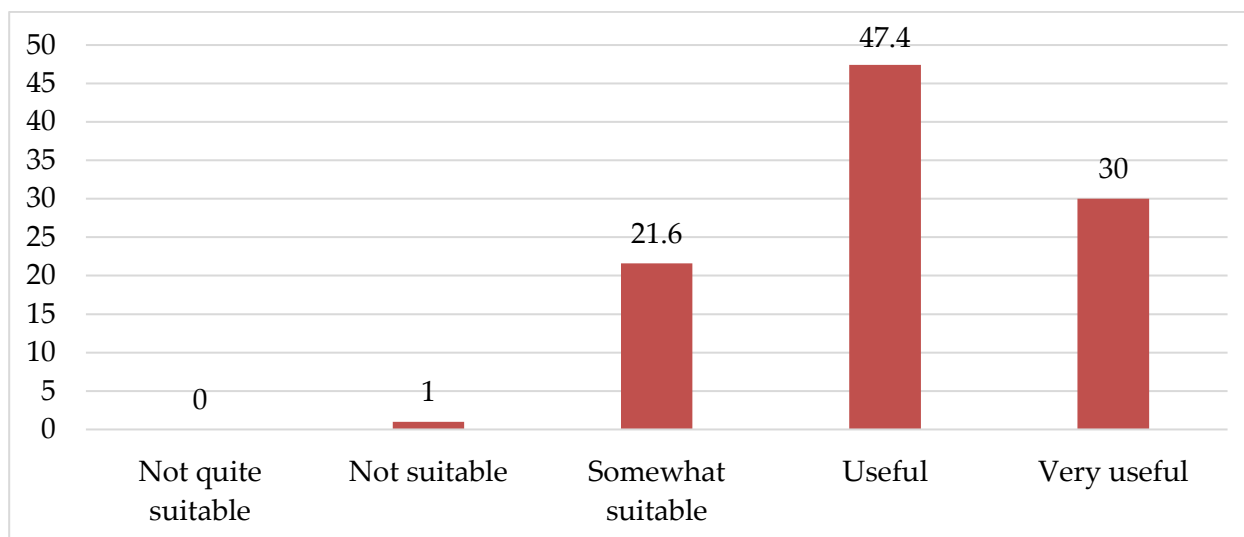


**Figure 4:** The level of Suitability of the Assigned Work with Professional Competence (M = 4.39)

The assessment of the level of suitability of the assigned work with professional competence achieved a high mean score of 4.39, indicating that a majority of interns

found their tasks well-aligned with their abilities and academic background. There were 52.7% of the participants perceived it was Completely suitable and 37.1% of the think it at the level of Suitable This positive result was largely supported by what stakeholders described as a reasonable division of work, where both the volume and content of assignments were appropriate to student capacity, thereby avoiding excessive pressure. When students were assigned practical work that matched their skills, they reported feeling valued and treated as an official employee, which significantly enhanced their sense of responsibility, proactivity, and self-motivation.

However, the data also reveals a notable discrepancy for some participants who faced challenges related to task irrelevance. Some interns reported being not assigned the right expertise, instead being relegated to simple, administrative tasks such as photocopying or data entry. These represented a lack of opportunities to practice in their actual field of study, preventing students from fully applying the specialized knowledge they acquired at the university.



**Figure 5:** The Knowledge Acquired at the University Provides Appropriate Support in Work (M = 4.06)

The assessment of the extent to which knowledge acquired at the university provides appropriate support in work achieved a mean score of 4.06 on a five-point Likert scale, indicating that while students generally find their academic foundation helpful, there is room for improvement in aligning university curricula with professional demands, with the rate at 47.4% for Useful and 30% for Very useful. The research highlights that internships serve as a critical platform for students to reinforce and apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, allowing them to gain a correct perception of the profession and accumulate practical experience.

However, several distinct challenges identify areas where academic support could be strengthened to better prepare students for the workplace. First, significant skill gaps emerged as interns reported that their office computer skills, particularly in platforms like Google Docs, Sheets, and Excel, were often weak, and they simultaneously lacked

the English communication reflexes specifically required for real-life, high-pressure environments. Second, practical unfamiliarity caused many students to face severe initial pressure because they were entirely unfamiliar with standard work processes or professional operations, highlighting a persistent disconnect between theoretical study and professional application. Finally, technical barriers further complicated the transition, as students encountered consistent difficulties with specialized translation styles, service-specific domain knowledge, and the operational use of certain equipment at their internship sites.

#### **4.2 Recommendations**

Based on comprehensive stakeholder feedback, several strategic improvements are proposed to optimize the graduation internship framework and maximize student development. Regarding the structural timing and duration of the program, it is highly recommended that internships be systematically scheduled during the summer term or exclusively following the completion of all formal academic coursework. This adjustment effectively eliminates the cognitive burden of concurrent academic deadlines, while an intentional extension of the absolute internship duration will provide students with the necessary temporal runway for deeper professional immersion and iterative skill development. To bridge identified performance gaps, curriculum alignment must become a core institutional focus. The Faculty should deliberately expand practical skills coursework, integrating targeted modules that emphasize workplace communication reflexes, contextual problem-solving, and advanced office computer competencies in standard corporate software.

Concurrently, enhancing professional orientation prior to field placement is vital for mitigating the transitional friction and initial anxiety frequently reported by interns. Academic departments must implement mandatory pre-internship orientation frameworks that include rigorous training on corporate office culture, professional demeanor, and organizational ethics. To further fortify institutional support, the university should establish a dedicated career counseling room staffed by active alumni and experienced faculty members. This specialized entity will serve as a guiding mechanism, helping undergraduates select internship sites that align precisely with their long-term career aspirations and specialized linguistic tracks. Finally, evaluation enhancements are required to ensure objective and standardized grading metrics across diverse host organizations. The standardized internship evaluation instrument should be upgraded to include a comprehensive operational appendix containing specific, explicit instructions for host supervisors, thereby guaranteeing a fair, consistent, and transparent assessment process.

By simplifying administrative procedures and establishing structured, ongoing feedback and monitoring cycles throughout the internship process, both academic and industry stakeholders can ensure a more balanced and mutually beneficial educational partnership.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the graduate internship program for English Linguistics students serves as an effective and highly transformative bridge between academic theory and professional practice, a finding clearly demonstrated by strong overall average performance scores. Empirical evidence in this study shows that students perceive significant career achievements through internships, most notably the consolidation of linguistic knowledge acquired at university, the cultivation of accurate career awareness, and strategic opportunities to build a professional network crucial for long-term career advancement. Quantitative indicators reflect the exceptionally high level of stakeholder satisfaction with the work environment of the host organizations, particularly employee support and overall quality of working conditions. Furthermore, qualitative and descriptive indicators reveal a strong correlation between job responsibility and career identity transformation. When interns are integrated into the operation as full-time employees, they report a significant increase in job confidence, workplace initiative, and professional responsibility.

However, the transition from the academic environment to the professional workforce reveals unique institutional barriers that warrant serious study. Research indicates significant differences in performance between the practical work phase and the final academic report generation, suggesting a mismatch in the way practical experience is translated into academic output. Furthermore, while integration into the workplace is generally successful, interns often face difficulties during the initial adaptation phase, characterized by high levels of transition anxiety and underdeveloped organizational social skills. Serious technical and practical barriers also emerge during internships, particularly limited proficiency in basic office computer skills and a lack of immediate English communication fluency in a high-pressure, real-world professional environment. Because the assessment of the relevance of knowledge gained from university to immediate application in the workplace received the lowest statistical ranking, the findings highlight the persistent disconnect between traditional pedagogical design and the practical operational professional requirements.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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