



**What and in which way do BA students of
Translation Studies report on their
mandatory internship abroad?**

An empirical analysis of students' reports

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1/4 Institutional framework



- Mandatory within the **BA-programme Transcultural Communication**
 - studying abroad or
 - completing a work placement abroad (100 hours worked)
- practical experience **report** (5 to 10 pages, 4 ECTS), guidelines with 3 topics to choose
 1. Time and Space ⇒ mealtime, punctuality, proxemics
 2. Society ⇒ social hierarchy, sense of belonging, social role attributions
 3. Communication ⇒ establishing contacts, non-verbal communication, conversational routines

2/4 Research interest: **Why?** Part I/II



- **Which** intercultural and language-related, professional experiences do students report on after returning from abroad?
- In which **ways** do they do so?
- Which **conclusions** do they draw from their experience?
- Which **strategies** did they develop when dealing with intercultural irritations?

2/4 Research interest: **Why?** Part II/II



- Do they develop an observing-explorative **attitude**, not taking on a hasty, judging and pejorative attitude?
- To what degree can the ability to **reflect** be found in their texts?
- Do they reflect their own **cultural bonds** when dealing with persons with other cultural backgrounds?

3/4 Findings: What?

- a small scale study analyzing 32 practical abroad training reports from 2008 to 2014
- **sample** group: 28 female, 4 male students
- internships in 17 different countries and in 8 different languages
 - Italian 8x
 - English and French each 6x
 - Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and Spanish each 3x
 - Arabic, German, Russian each 2x

3a/4 Findings: What? Students' perspective (positive)



Kind of internship	Company: 10x	Public / private institution: 6x
Target language country	Bosnia-Herzegovina, Great Britain (2x), Guatemala, Canada, Croatia, Austria, Russia, Spain, United Arab Emirates	Burkina Faso, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Russia, Slovenia
Exercised activities	General office and secretarial duties, simple translations, structured archiving, e-mail correspondence and phone calls; reception, preparation of advertising and information material	Office, teaching, translation and interpreting activities, processing of applications, provision of information, website localization for the German-speaking area

3a/4 Findings: What? Students' perspective (negative)



Kind of internship	Au-pair: 12x	Hotel: 4x
Target language country	Egypt, France, Great Britain, Italy (6x), Canada, Austria, French-speaking Switzerland	France, Italy, Serbia, Spain
Exercised activities	Child care, domestic work, educational and organizational tasks	Reception desk, hotel services, simple translations (guest book entries, hotel reviews), hotel descriptions online and in print

3a/4 Findings: What? Students' perspective Part I/II



- **Enthusiasm** and a strong sense of **encouragement** for a career
 - as a culturally sensitive mediator and expert in cross-cultural communication
 - as a translator / interpreter
- Some want to **change** their course of study ⇒ because of the loneliness experienced when creating translations
- painful when they **unintentionally** appear **impolite**, too direct or even **aggressive** ⇒ because of a lack of intercultural communicative competence

3a/4 Findings: What? Students' perspective Part II/II



- greater **independence** from teacher's feedback on their language and cultural competence
- instead of good **grades** at university ⇒ positive **feedback** from interaction partners ⇒ recognition of enhanced cultural communication skills
- **improvements**
 - listening and reading skills
 - active vocabulary and pronunciation
 - higher intrinsic motivation
 - consistency and appropriateness of language register and style

3b/4 Findings: What? Teachers' perspective Part I/II

- significant **differences** between the students' reports
 - different levels of willingness and
 - ability to **reflect**
 - highly differentiated **literacy** skills
- almost **no negative description** of the study-related stay abroad
 - ⇒ could be interpreted as a personal failure
- culturally sensitive descriptions prevail ⇒ but also recounts with cultural **stereotypes** and clichés revealing an unreflective attitude

3b/4 Findings: What? Teachers' perspective Part II/II



- no complaints about **not** being **paid**, only 2 of 32 students were paid
- unpaid work seen as a normal condition or reluctance to mention this **delicate** issue
- best way to gain a realistic **impression** of future **job requirements**
 - ⇒ company or public/private institution
- **strategies** for autonomous and self-regulated language learning applied
 - reading as much as possible
 - talking without fear of making mistakes
 - carrying a notebook to take notes of new words and phrases
 - listening to the radio and watching TV focusing on new words

4/4 Didactical implications: So what?



- internships enhance personal and intellectual **growth**, having a positive impact on self-esteem and intrinsic motivation
 - ⇒ having managed the challenge of living and working in a foreign environment
- most of the expressly reflective statements from interns in companies or public / private institutions
 - ⇒ greatest potential for **cultural sensitization** with respect to foreign and one`s own culture
- **Discuss** learning strategies in class, appreciate the increased confidence level and show genuine **interest** in their experience abroad

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**Thank you for
your attention!**

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