

**INTERNSHIPS ABROAD: A STUDY OF THE CASE OF MODERN
LANGUAGE STUDENTS**

MARÍA CAMILA OTÁLORA LÓPEZ

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FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES Y CIENCIAS SOCIALES

LENGUAS MODERNAS

BOGOTÁ D.C.

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MARÍA CAMILA OTÁLORA LÓPEZ

MONOGRAFÍA

TUTORA: SANDRA BIBIANA CLAVIJO OLMOS

PhD (c) en Estudios de Traducción e Interpretación

UNIVERSIDAD EAN

FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES Y CIENCIAS SOCIALES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Based on different research studies that were developed in the University and shortly referenced in the state of the art of this paper, it is possible to determine an evident unawareness with regard to the Professional in Modern Languages' profile on the part of most of the surveyed companies and the Colombian labor market in general, in spite of the fact that a wide range of skills and abilities and different possible fields of action was established to develop his professional background and apply his academic knowledge, apart from translation.

On the basis of this conclusion, a main question is formulated: Is this unawareness also a fact in other countries, like the ones from which the students learn its language? This question becomes especially relevant, given the fact that the Modern Languages Program of Universidad EAN has an international background, which encourages the students to live international experiences, applying several skills, intercultural competences and the knowledge of certain languages. Hence, it would be pertinent at this point to evaluate which kinds of opportunities a Modern Language student could have abroad and in which professional areas.

In order to answer to this question, the author will analyze two different scenarios in connection with it. The first will be concerning the development of the Internship program of Universidad EAN. Every student is required to make an internship in order to finish his/her studies, and the University offers the chance to do it abroad through different programs and agreements with other institutions and organizations. Taking this into account, it will be possible to evaluate those experiences abroad from the students' perspective, getting to know not only in which areas and companies they performed and applied their knowledge, but also

if the Internship Program is truly fulfilling the student's expectations and objectives, aspect that can be very relevant for the development of the University and the Program, in order to work on the basis of the conclusions and build up better offers to the students in the process of beginning their professional life, which is the main aim of this program.

The second stage is connected to one of the organization that provides international internship opportunities to the students at Universidad EAN: AIESEC. Through the evaluation of its international platform, it will be possible to observe the different types of internships that the organization offers, specifically to the Modern Language students, to make an analysis of the opportunities that they might have abroad, taking into account the languages that are taught in the Modern Languages Program. This point is important since it will give another perspective with regard to the different areas (in connection with their skills and knowledge) where the professionals in Modern Languages can work.

Finally, the author expects to provide a helpful tool for other future investigations in connection with this research, and to be taken into account as a supportive instrument in the development and approach of a more competitive Modern Languages Program.

2. RATIONALE

Through this research it is expected to analyze not only what kind of opportunities the Modern Languages students have abroad and which internships match and are consistent with their skills and background, but also to evaluate how the process experienced by the students during their internships abroad contributes to their development as professionals and in the transition from the stage of being students to the beginning of the working life. These issues have a great relevance for the Modern Languages Program for several reasons:

- To evaluate the opinion of the students that got their internships abroad, with the objective of obtaining a comparative and evaluative perspective of their experiences. This point has special relevance for the University, mainly for the Internship Office and the Internationalization Office, since it will be possible to generate new strategies in that way to improve the conditions of the internship process, as well as its significance for the continuous development of the Internationalization Policy of the University.
- To give a new perspective with regard to the areas where a Professional in Modern Languages can apply his academic knowledge and perform as a professional. This is especially important, given the unawareness that sometimes is present in the students concerning their professional future and the different working possibilities that they have.
- To be more aware of the different opportunities that the students might have abroad, and concerning the different types of internships they can be part of.

3. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

Taking as a starting point the afore-mentioned unawareness with regard to the Professional in Modern Languages' profile, the author now expects to explore opportunities and abilities of the Modern Language professional in an international context, as it is a degree with a globalized focus and a high content of cultural and international matters, and would be of great importance to state several fields where the Professional in Modern Languages can apply his skills, being a key agent in other countries as well. The main objective of this research project will be to identify the international market needs in terms of Modern Languages, and to analyze if the existing skills and competences of the Professional in Modern Languages of Universidad EAN match and cover those needs.

In view of the fact that it would be really difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the needs of the whole international market, the author will analyze such needs through observing the development of the Modern Languages students' professional internship, specifically of those students that took their internships abroad, to examine what kind of traineeships they joined in and what type of students, knowledge and skills are required by the companies. The author expects also to determine how such aforementioned skills and competences from the other authors and studies are reflected during the development of the professional internship and how they contribute to the beginning of his professional life.

4. OBJECTIVES

4.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To analyze and identify the international market demand for Modern Languages students from Universidad EAN, specifically based on the development of their Internship Program abroad, in order to evaluate the opportunities they have abroad and how their competitiveness in the international market can improve.

4.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To identify the skills and competences developed by the Modern Languages student from the Universidad EAN in order to recognize the different fields of action where he can apply his knowledge in the Colombian labor market (State of the Art).
- To evaluate what kind of internships (in the abroad category) students of the Modern Language Program have taken, to establish a pattern about how the curriculum they are taking matches and if it is consistent with the skills and academic background they require.
- To explore the variety of opportunities that the Professional in Modern Languages might have in an international context, based on international internships, in order to state several fields where he could apply his skills and knowledge in other countries.
- To determine how the skills and competences described in the curriculum and stated by other authors and studies presented in the Universidad EAN are reflected during the development of the international internship and how they contribute to the beginning of the Modern Languages student's professional life.

- To recognize what type of students, knowledge and skills are required by international companies (AIESEC partners and Internship options offered by the University), and if such requirements and competences coincide with the curriculum of the Modern Language Program.

5. REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

5.1. STATE OF THE ART

This numeral makes a review of several final research papers that were written in Universidad EAN by several Modern Language students and professors in different years, to use them as a reference point for this investigation, especially in determining the skills and competences of the Modern Language students and giving a clearer perspective of the Program's profile, as well as in the different areas where the students can develop their professional careers and apply their academic knowledge, all relevant points to structure the main basis of the problem and the issues that must be taken into account.

The papers are shown in chronological order to evaluate how the results can possibly change throughout the years. The objective is to establish the aspects that they have in common based on each hypothesis, methodology and conclusions.

The first case of study is titled “**The Professional Translator and His Work Field in Multinational Enterprises**”¹, by the students Claudia Marcela Guevara Espitia and Yady Marcela Uscategui Cortés, defended in 2004. The main objective of this study is to determine the real need of translators in multinational enterprises, as it was a little-known work field for the Professional in Modern Languages at that time. It is a study based on the observation of the environment and the carrying out of different interviews to different multinational enterprises managers and several professional translators placed in Bogotá.

The results of such study show that as the globalization has gained so much importance, more and more translators are needed to work in multinational enterprises to act as linguistic agents and communication and comprehension bridges between the involved

¹ Translated title. Original title in Spanish: “El traductor profesional y su campo de acción laboral en empresas multinacionales”.

parties. But in spite of this conclusion, the study also shows that usually they are hired only for short periods of time, so the stability that a multinational enterprise offers to a translator is not very much, at least at that time.

During the study the authors were also able to determine which competences are considered fundamental for a translator. The most important ones are the cultural and linguistic skills when translating, the disciplinary competence (terminology and vocabulary), the research competence, the transfer skill (means to maintain the text's original meaning when translating) and the interaction with the clients.

The second case of study is titled "**The Professional Translator's Relevance as a Bridge of Multilingual Communication in the Business Field**"², by the students Juliana de Castro Patiño and Ana Patricia Rave Alvarado, defended in 2004. The aim of this research is to establish the different competences required by a professional translator who acts as a link of multilingual communication inside a company.

It is a briefer study based most of all on the observation and analysis and it is 100% focused on the translation as a professional practice, but it was really helpful to determine several skills that become part of the Professional in Modern Languages' profile and all the aspects that involve the process of translation, like the cultural influence.

In short, the study presents a group of different skills and attitudes that a translator needs during the process of translation, like the linguistic and cultural skills, the sensitivity with regard to the social and cultural differences of the language, assessment of the pluralism, good attitude and mood, perspective, knowledge and deepening of the subject and a constant updating of terms and definitions.

² Translated title. Original title in Spanish: "La relevancia del traductor profesional como puente de comunicación multilingüe en el ámbito organizacional"

The third case of study is titled “**The Professional in Modern Languages’ Profile with an Emphasis on Business and Technical Translation, Who Will Perform in an International Freight Agency in Bogotá**”³, by the students Gina Botache Pérez, Eliana Gómez Cárdenas, Carolina Martínez López, Diana Moreno Páez and Ibeth Moscoso Cagua, defended in 2004. In this study the authors aim to identify the Professional in Modern Languages’ profile and his role in the context of globalization. As well as the above-mentioned studies, it is mainly focused on the emphasis of business translation, although they mention other abilities of the Professional in Modern Languages, as the organizational communication, the management skills and the business approach, and they try to contrast their performance with other professions related to foreign trade.

The authors developed an exploratory study, carrying out 60 surveys to different translation companies in Bogotá. Their aim was to define the Professional in Modern Languages’ profile and give guidelines to make it more competitive with respect to what companies look for. The results show the great importance of having a complementary study in subjects like foreign trade or management, since the Program doesn’t offer a specific specialization in only one matter, but in many general subjects, and the authors recommend, based on the study, to implement a deeper approach to the English language and other important subjects like international business, customs regulations, finance and foreign trade, as well as a deeper emphasis on organizational communication.

To conclude the study and based on the research, the authors raise and propose a profile for the Professional in Modern Languages, with a group of competences that respond

³ Translated title. Original title in Spanish: “El perfil del profesional de lenguas modernas con énfasis en traducción de textos técnicos y comerciales que se desempeñará en una agencia de carga internacional domiciliada en la ciudad de Bogotá”.

to the observed business needs⁴, like the suitability when managing information, the ability to adapt to different linguistic and cultural situations, the effective and appropriate communication, the business approach and the knowledge of different areas in addition to languages, like the above-mentioned ones.

The fourth case of study is titled “**The Communication Skills in the Information Systems Applied to the Organizations**”⁵, by the students Carolina del Pilar Pineda Medina and Paola Catalina Pineda Medina, defended in 2006. This research is focused on the analysis of the role that a Professional in Modern Languages has as an organizational communication consultant in the age of information, with the ability to implement, manage and interpret information systems and to improve the communicative processes in a company.

It is an important study to take into account since the authors make a complete research about the importance of the information and communication in the current globalized world, and how the Professional in Modern Languages can be a key agent on this matter in any organization. The results show that although the Professional in Modern Languages has the capacity to act as a knowledge manager that applies the communication and business skills to improve the internal processes of a company, the reality is that the organizations only hire Systems Engineers for this type of positions that are related to the information systems management.

It also concludes that in spite of all the competences and abilities that a Professional in Modern Languages has, the labor market is still very unaware of his profile and how it can fit well inside a company. There is no complete clarity about his professional role, yet and this truly affects his performance in the work field.

⁴ Original table: “El perfil del profesional de lenguas modernas con énfasis en traducción de textos técnicos y comerciales que se desempeñará en una agencia de carga internacional domiciliada en la ciudad de Bogotá”. Page 48.

⁵ Translated title. Original title in Spanish: “Las competencias comunicativas en los sistemas de información aplicados a las organizaciones”

The fifth case of study is titled “**Analysis on the Contents and the Professional Perspective for the Modern Languages within the Colombian Business Context with a View to the Incorporation to the International Market**”⁶, by the professors Alejandra Cerón Rincón, Gina Franco and Rocío Prieto, finished in 2007. This research is a deeper conscientious diagnosis of the great importance of the languages in the globalized context, how they generate a significant added value in the communication management, and the role of the Professional in Modern Languages within this challenge as a competitive professional.

The authors set out to identify companies from different economic sectors that deal or manage several processes in other languages with foreign companies, focusing on the most studied languages in the University: German, French and Italian, and aimed for the identification of the needs that the companies have at present with regard to the hiring of Professional in Modern Languages with knowledge in these languages. On the basis of the results, the authors also pretend to go through the languages’ academic profile and compare it with the identified market needs.

With this objective, 63 companies were surveyed, and the results conclude, as most of the other referenced studies, that the Professional in Modern Languages’ profile is almost unknown in the business environment, and most of the companies prefer to hire professionals with knowledge in these languages but with studies in other areas besides communication. This unawareness causes a very difficult labor positioning for the Professional in Modern Languages in employments in keeping with his academic background; so it is necessary to show the Program in the media and in other contexts and to give it a deeper emphasis on business from the language perspective.

⁶ Translated title. Original title in Spanish: “Análisis de los contenidos y la perspectiva profesional para las Lenguas Modernas dentro del contexto empresarial colombiano con miras a la integración con el mercado internacional”

The sixth case of study is titled “**The EAN University’s Professional in Modern Languages and its Positioning in the Business Field on the Basis of its Academic Studies**”⁷, by the students Julie Andrea Díaz Castro, Claudia Mariela Fonseca Carrasco and Andri Yised Ortiz Vargas, defended in 2007. This study establishes the working status of the Modern Languages graduated students since year 2004, and how satisfactory it is based on the education that they received in the University. It also identifies and compares both the skills they developed during the Program and the skills they apply in their work environment.

The first aspect that the authors state is the lack of knowledge that the Professional in Modern Languages has when identifying his work field, and as a consequence, many of them are being “underutilized”⁸, performing duties that don’t fit with their education, and this situation gets worst since most of the Colombian companies don’t know or don’t recognize the specific competences that a Professional in Modern Languages has, as it is a quite new degree in Colombia, and as a result, they get positions that don’t cover the wide range of skills that a Professional in Modern Languages can apply, but positions that focus only on certain areas, like translation.

The methodology used by the authors consists of 93 applied surveys to 61 graduated students and 32 students of the last semester. The results show that although the Professional in Modern Languages can work in several fields and carry out different functions, for example in NGOs or airlines, there is a wide percentage of them that work as teachers or academic coordinators, assistants or secretaries, or customer service employees, which don’t fit with their profile. It also shows that the main duties are related to the usage of languages in communication, wording and correction of multilingual documents, consultancy in internal

⁷ Translated title. Original title in Spanish: “El profesional de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad EAN y su posicionamiento en el campo empresarial a partir de su formación académica”

⁸ Definition: To utilize less than fully or below the potential use.

and external communication, business translation, among others, and the main languages they use are English, Portuguese and French. This is another aspect that caught the attention of the authors: The few use of German and Italian; they are languages that are not being completely learned by the graduated students in their work fields.

In spite of some of these results, most of those that were surveyed declared that almost everything they learnt during their education is applied and continually developed, and the skills they find more useful are the communication skills in the business environment, the multilingual, multicultural and intercultural skills, as well as the enterprising attitude, the translation skills, and the knowledge of Information and Communication Technologies. They stated how necessary it is to complement the undergraduate degree with other studies, like international business or foreign trade, Management, organizational communication, marketing and sales, political sciences or human resources, or pedagogy, as the degree course offers a wide range of competences and subjects, but not specific knowledge in a particular area.

The seventh and last case of study is titled “**Specific Skills that the Professional in Modern Languages Must Achieve in order to Satisfy the Labor Demand of Companies from Bogotá**”⁹, by the students Mónica Quintero Arguello, Diana Carolina Sánchez González and Yuri Maribel Pedraza Cruz, defended in 2008. The methodology used by the authors during their research consisted of comparing the competences that were already established in the Program and the ones that were obtained after the investigation (surveys to graduates and last-semester students), to determine which are the most applied ones in the work field and which aspects have deficiencies, in order to state how much the Program fulfills according to what is offered to the students.

⁹ Translated title. Original title in Spanish: “Competencias específicas que el profesional de Lenguas Modernas debe adquirir para satisfacer la demanda laboral en empresas bogotanas”.

The results show different aspects and elements, like that although the Professional in Modern Languages has the ability to structure multilingual information contents, it has only developed these skills completely in English and Spanish and not in the other languages; it has the capacity to develop and apply the business translation skills and to structure technological information, but it doesn't have enough academic knowledge to perform the role of a linguistic consultant. As there are a wide range of competences developed during the academic life, there is a great amount of skills that are acquired throughout the professional practice.

The authors conclude presenting an aspect that became evident after the research: The role of the Professional in Modern Languages in the labor market has not been clearly defined yet and it is not a well-known degree in Colombia; as a result, it is usually necessary for the graduates to complement the Undergraduate Program with other studies, so that they can obtain a better and clearer orientation and approach to the role that they can assume in the work environment.

In short, after a large analysis of previous research studies, it is possible to observe that the different analyzed studies have several things in common, in spite of the fact that they were presented in different years. One of the most notable aspects is the unawareness of the companies in relation with the Professional in Modern Languages' profile, which prevents the graduated students from obtaining fair and satisfactory positions in the labor market; most of the studies conclude about the real need of making a wider spreading of the Program, since it is relatively new in Colombia and it is usually mistaken for a pedagogy degree or a translation degree. As a consequence, the obtained and developed skills of the Professional in Modern Languages are underestimated and underrated.

Another aspect that is notoriously emphasized in most of the studies is the great range of skills and competences that the Professional in Modern Languages has, to explore and develop in many different work areas, like Communication, Translation, Information Technologies, Consultancy, Edition and Correction of documents, International Culture, etc. There are many fields where he can perform and apply his academic knowledge.

Unexpectedly, in spite of the above, the results of several studies reveal how necessary is to complement the Program with other specialized studies, for diverse reasons: Mainly because of the existing unawareness of the profile, and also because many of the surveyed graduated students feel that the acquired knowledge offered by the current Program is not enough to compete with other professionals of different areas, and as consequence, they are usually replaced or underutilized in the companies. Some of the suggestions for complementary studies are related to Business Management, Foreign Trade, International Business, Finance or Human Resources.

As it is possible to evaluate, the Modern Languages Program offered by the University has had several improvements in its academic background throughout the years, and as a result, currently the Professional in Modern Languages is more recognized and appreciated by the Colombian labor market than some time ago, although it still has to progress a lot to become more competitive. From this point it will be possible to determine how all these skills that compound the Modern Languages' profile are developed according to the requirements of the international labor market, and which elements are needed to transform the Modern Languages Program into a truly high-competitive Degree internationally.

5.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It is consider relevant to conceptualize the different elements connected with this research in the theoretical and institutional framework, defining some terms and explaining the background of the involved organizations and institutions, in order to give a clearer abstract and perspective to the context and importance of the investigation.

• **INTERNSHIP:** According to the Cambridge Dictionary:

- A period of time spent receiving or completing training at a job as a part of becoming qualified to do it.

- A period of time during which a student works for a company or organization in order to get experience of a particular type of work.

• **AIESEC:** “Present in over 113 countries and territories and with over 86,000 members, AIESEC is the world's largest youth-run organization. Focused on providing a platform for youth leadership development, AIESEC offers young people the opportunity to participate in international internships, experience leadership and participate in a global learning environment”.

Currently AIESEC offers two different Internship Programs to the students:

1. The **Global Community Development Program**, which is based on social projects and promotion of social responsibility, cultural understanding, volunteer work and entrepreneurship. This program has duration between 6 weeks and 6 months, and has four different areas of performance:
 - Health: Social projects in connection to generate awareness in matters like HIV/AIDS, sexual education, etc.

- Management: Social projects related to the areas of management, marketing, human resources and events.
- Cultural: Social projects connected to language and culture
- Multiply the Impact: Longer social projects related to health and culture, and management

This program is usually not accepted by the University as a valid internship for the students, since they have a high social content, and the internship program is supposed to be strictly connected to the academic curriculum.

2. The Global Internship Program, which has the aim of contributing to the professional development of the students according to their academic knowledge. The normal length of duration is between 4 and 12 months, and has three different areas of performance:

- Management: Offers opportunities in the areas of international marketing, entrepreneurship, project management, human resources and finance.
- Technical: Offers internships in connection to the Information Technologies, in the areas of programming, web design and information systems.
- Languages: Offers opportunities in the areas of pedagogy and teaching of languages (mainly English).

This is the program that the students of Universidad EAN must join if they want to do a valid internship abroad through AIESEC and the one the author will use as a reference for this research. In the case of the Modern Language students, it is not valid to take an internship in the areas of teaching and pedagogy, as it is not the main core of the Program. The

internship must be connected to other areas like Communication, Translation, Business, ICT,
etc.

5.3. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

5.3.1. MODERN LANGUAGES PROGRAM

• **PROFILE OF THE MODERN LANGUAGES PROGRAM:** According to EAN Website, The main objective of the Program is to bring up upright professionals, who will generate an added value in the companies through managing communication, translation and ICTs in mother tongue and in foreign languages. The background of the Professional in Modern Languages allows him/her to work in international NGOs, Embassies, universities, national and international public entities, import and export companies, marketing and advertising agencies, touristic agencies, and publishing companies.

• **COMPETENCES THAT ARE DEVELOPED DURING THE PROGRAM:** According to the website of the Universidad EAN¹⁰, the Modern Languages student acquires the necessary competences to:

- Communicate in foreign languages (English, German, Italian, French, or Portuguese) in a business environment.
- Manage efficiently the communication in native and foreign languages in the organizations.
- Adapt organizational documents, business and strategic plans in foreign languages through business, financial and legal translation, in order to support the internationalization process of the company.
- Manage information systems in different languages, using technological instruments to improve the communication with customers.
- Communicate effectively in multicultural and multidisciplinary environments.

¹⁰ Source of information: Website Universidad EAN: www.ean.edu.co

- Act ethically and socially responsible with regard to different social, cultural, economic and political realities.
- Develop sustainable business opportunities and lead projects with an economic and social value.

5.3.2. INTERNSHIP OFFICE

• **INTERNSHIP REGULATIONS OF THE UNIVERSIDAD EAN:** The Universidad EAN establishes the professional internship as “the process whereby an undergraduate student (who has obtained certain required competences and the authorization of the Internship Committee of the University), carries out a project directly related to the curriculum, in an organizational environment and under the guidance and supervision of an Academic Advisor. As part of the curriculum of the Modern Languages Program it is a subject organized in 7th semester, and the main objective of the internship program is to strengthen the process developed in the educational environment, applying theories, diagnosing, evaluating the current situation of the organizations, and generating spaces to validate and apply the competences acquired during the studies, in order to develop a suitable performance in the professional field.

• **MANUAL OF THE INTERNSHIP PROCESS:** It is a document of Universidad EAN that establishes the terms and conditions with regard to the internship process in complete, determining the rights and duties of the students, the requirements and specifications to make an internship, the different internship modalities that are available in the University, and the process of registration, pre-selection, selection, allocation and formalization, as well as the

process of initiation, development and evaluation of the internship. This manual was adopted by Resolution 001 of January 29th 2007, and modified the last time on September 9th 2010¹¹.

• **CURRENT INTERNSHIP MODALITIES**¹²: According to the above mentioned Manual of the Internship program of Universidad EAN, there are several modalities from where a student can choose to develop his/her internship, which are the following:

- Business Modality: The student develops his/her internship in a public or private company.
- Social Modality: The student takes part in social projects developed by public or private entities, NGOs and international cooperation organizations in the country.
- Inner-Business Modality: The student develops a project in the company where he/she works, different from his/her duties and generating an added value for the organization, looking for innovation, ongoing improvement and entrepreneurship in the solution of real problems and needs.
- Research Modality: The student takes part as assistant in the research projects developed by the Investigation Coordination of Universidad EAN.
- Own company Modality: It is possible in the case where the student owns or is partner of a legally incorporated company. This modality is carried out in the Entrepreneur Program of the University, where the student develops a business plan for his/her company.

• **ABROAD MODALITY IN UNIVERSIDAD EAN**: This is also a modality of internship in Universidad EAN and is the main focus of investigation for this project; in this category, the

¹¹ For more information concerning the Manual of the internship process of Universidad EAN (in Spanish), please check the link in the references of this investigation; page 53.

¹² Source of information:
http://www.ean.edu.co/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=925&Itemid=137

student develops his/her internship in other country, whether in foreign companies or in Colombian companies those have headquarters abroad.

• **INTERNATIONALIZATION POLICY IN UNIVERSIDAD EAN:** According to the Institutional Education Project (in original Spanish PEI – Proyecto Educativo Institucional) 2011-2015¹³, one of the main objectives is to improve the internationalization in the University. The main goals to achieve until 2015 are the following:

- Multilingualism and multiculturalism (English, French and Portuguese)
- International student in the University: Yearly, 20% of the students will be foreigners.
- Students' mobility in the University: 20% of the students (from the on -site undergraduate programs) will have an international experience.
- International professors in the University: 25% of the staff will be international.
- Professors' mobility: Yearly, 25% of the professors will have an international teaching experience.
- Innovative curriculums with regard to the development of global competences.
- Double majors.

¹³ For more information concerning the PEI of Universidad EAN (in Spanish), please check the references of this investigation; page 53.

6. METHODOLOGY

6.1. FOCUS

This research project will have an exploratory focus, as it will be mainly based on the observation analysis of the development of the Modern Language students' internship, specifically of those students that take their internships abroad, to examine what kind of traineeships they join in and what type of students, knowledge and skills are required by the companies, in order to identify the needs of the international market and the several fields of action of the Professional in Modern Languages.

6.2. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

According to the information obtained in an interview with the Internship Office of Universidad EAN (see appendix #1: Interview to the Internship Coordinator), twelve Modern Language students have made their internship abroad between 2007 and 2012, as shown below in table 1: students who made their internship abroad from 2007 to 2012. This will be the sample in which the author will base the research to evaluate the performance of the Internship Program in complete:

Table 1: students who made their internship abroad from 2007 to 2012

Name	Country (Internship)	Year
Claudia Patricia Sanchez Bedoya	Spain	2007
Anibal Ospina Benitez Arco	Peru	2010
Gina Marcela González Leal	United States	2011

Nathaly Núñez Suárez	Mexico	2011
Luisa Fernanda Peralta Peña	United States	2011
Kendry Johana Olivares Flórez	United States	2012
Bibiana Carolina Rueda Ojeda	Spain	2012
Lorena Rodríguez Ortiz	Brazil	2012
Laura Natalia Ortiz Toledo	United States	2012
María Camila Torres Mendoza	United States	2012
María Camila Otálora López	Germany	2012
Maia Alejandra Gómez Mendoza	United States	2012

Source: Based on information given by the Internship Office.

6.3. INSTRUMENTS TO COLLECT INFORMATION

This observation and investigation will be carried out in different ways and stages. Hence, it will be divided into several methods to collect the necessary information, all of them applying a quantitative focus to analyze the acquired data.

Such stages are the following:

- 1.** To examine the relevant reports required to firstly identify how many Modern Language students have taken their internship abroad and in what kind of organizations and positions. As it is a quite new Degree, it is possible to make the revision not only delimiting a few years, but the whole Program since its origin.
- 2.** Through the application of surveys and interviews to those students that participated in an international internship, either with AIESEC or other organization, it is also possible to evaluate and determine if the skills, knowledge and competences that they develop in their

studies are applied and improved during their professional internship and if they truly contribute to a successful beginning of the Modern Language student's professional life.

*** Required steps to achieve the first two stages:**

- A. To visit the Internship Office, and to interview main Coordinator in order to ask her for cooperation when looking for the contact details of the students that chose an internship abroad¹⁴.
- B. To delimit the population sample.
- C. To design the appropriate collection instrument that will analyze the experience of each student and how they qualify it. This instrument will have a quantitative focus, and it will first observe and understand the context and the situation and then it will collect and examine statistically the data¹⁵.
- D. To contact each student of the sample by e-mail, phone or mobile to carry out the survey.
- E. To observe and analyze the obtained data in order to generate conclusions and recommendations with regard to the results.

3. Since the University signed an agreement with AIESEC in 2010, the students have the possibility of taking their professional internship abroad through this student organization. It will be possible to analyze the international platform of AIESEC to list not only the students that chose this platform to take their internship, but also what kind of traineeships this organization offers that are consistent with the Modern Languages Program and its academic background.

*** Required steps to achieve this stage:**

¹⁴ For more information with regard to this interview: Appendix 1, page 55

¹⁵ Survey sample: Appendix 2, pages 56

- A. To acquire a permission from the President of AIESEC EAN to be able to use the necessary information of the Organization's platform for academic purposes.
- B. To collect the required information to determine the types of internship opportunities that a Modern Language student might have through this organization. The author will classify the information according to the countries where the internships are offered, the required languages for the internship, and the skills and background that the companies require in an Intern. This process only requires the observation of the organization's platform.
- C. To analyze the information. This stage will be based mainly in the examination of the obtained data, but the author will use a quantitative instrument to classify the data of the different types of offered internships.
- D. Based on the analyzed information, to generate conclusions and recommendations with regard to the obtained data.

6.4. DATA PROCESSING

The interview with the Internship Office has the aim of obtaining the necessary information to have access to the students that made their internship abroad, in order to apply the survey that will evaluate their opinion with regard to the experience that they had in each country respectively. They will be asked several questions, each of which has a specific relevance for this investigation:

- Year in which the internship was taken: To evaluate the development of the International Internship Program of the University throughout the years.
- Country: To delimitate and analyze where the students are having their internship.
- The duration of the internship: To observe if the students are living long-term or short-term experiences abroad.
- The obtaining of the Degree as Professional in Modern Languages: In order to analyze the number of students that already made the transition between the student status and the professional stage.
- The areas where the students developed their internship: The objective is determining if the areas were in connection to the Modern Language's profile of the University, and which are the most common fields where the students perform and apply their skills.
- An evaluation of the usage of the different competences that belong to the Modern Language Program: The students will qualify how relevant were the skills that they developed during their studies, this with the objective of establishing a pattern between the most essential ones, and the ones that were not frequently applied.
- A summary of each student's internship: To get more information concerning the activities and duties that every student had.
- Missing points the students consider important to mention with regard to their internship process and the support from the University: This point is especially relevant for the University, as it works like a feedback in order to improve the Program, the services offered to the students and the Internship process.
- Qualification of the contribution that the International Internship Program had for every student in the process of becoming a Professional in Modern Languages: This in

order to get to know how relevant the students consider this process, and how it contributed to their professional development.

7. RESULTS

7.1. ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY

The results of the survey are presented question by question, and according to its type. The answer is shown as a statistical table, or summing up the opinions and answers of the surveyed students. Only seven out of twelve students answered to the survey.

1. In which year did you make your internship?

Graphic 1: Question 1

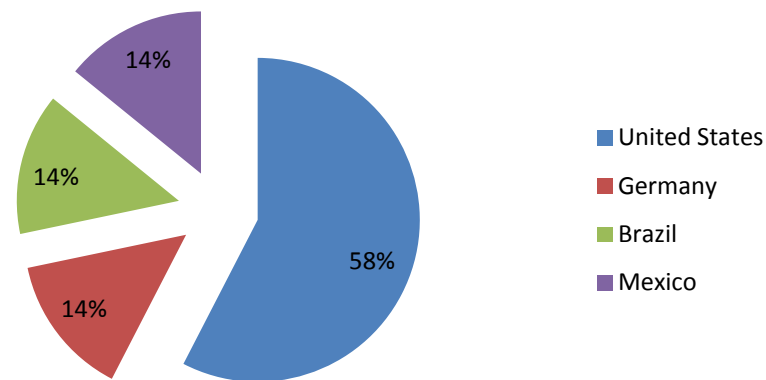
YEAR	NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO ANSWERED THE SURVEY	EQUIVALENT IN PERCENTAGE
2007	0	0%
2008	0	0%
2009	0	0%
2010	0	0%
2011	1	14%
2012	6	86%

Source: made by the author.

As observed above in Graphic 1: Question 1, 86% of the surveyed students finished or are currently developing their internships in 2012. The other 14% developed it in 2011. The author tried to establish contact (via e-mail) with the students that made their internship in the previous years, without receiving any answer from them.

2. In which country and company?

Graphic 2: Question 2.

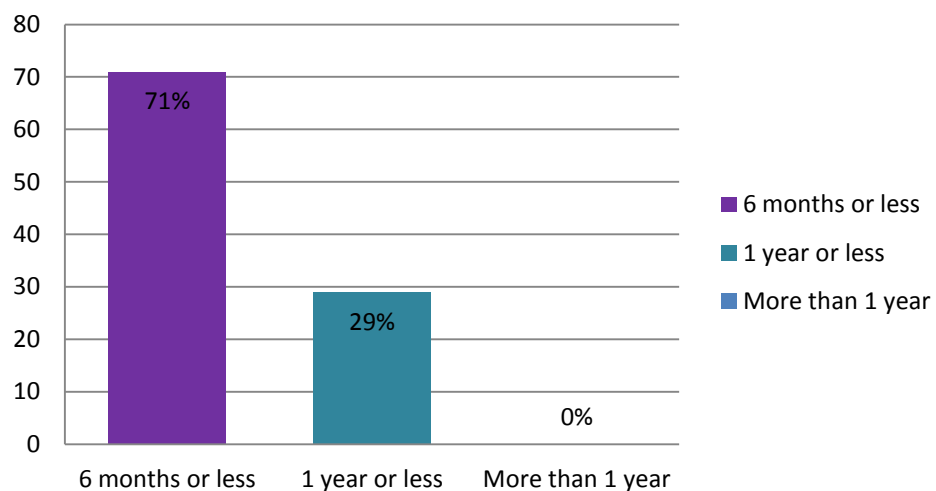


Source: made by the author.

57% of the students worked in American companies and organizations like IMS Gear, the General Consulate of Colombia in Los Angeles and Orlando Big Savers Inc.; 14% joined the multinational company PWC in Mexico; other 14% worked in Brazil, in the Federal Center for Technological Education of Minas Gerais, and the last 14% developed an internship in a German Non-Governmental Organization called “Deutsche Seemannsmission e.V.”

3. The duration of your internship was:

Graphic 3: Question 3.



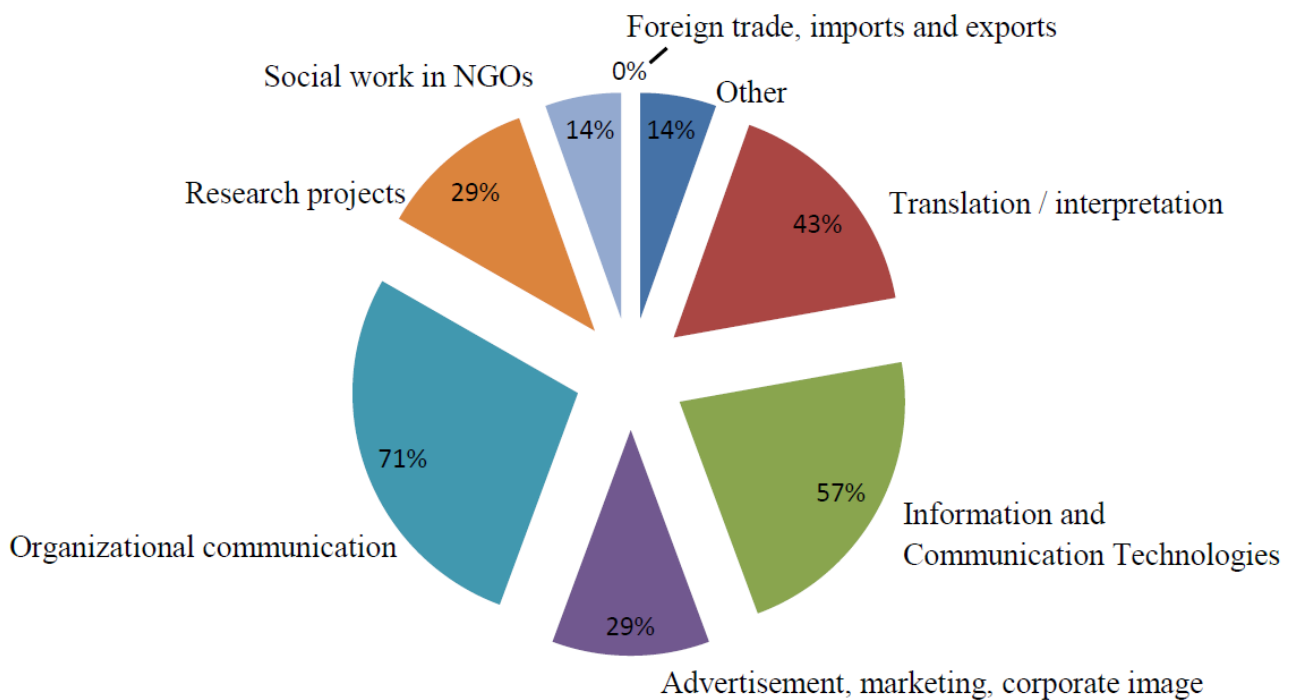
Source: made by the author.

Only 29% of the students joined an internship for one year or less, and 71% did it for less than 6 months. Not any student has done it for more than one year.

4. Your internship was related to which of the following areas:

Graphic 4: Question 5.

NOTE for Graphic 5: People may have selected more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.



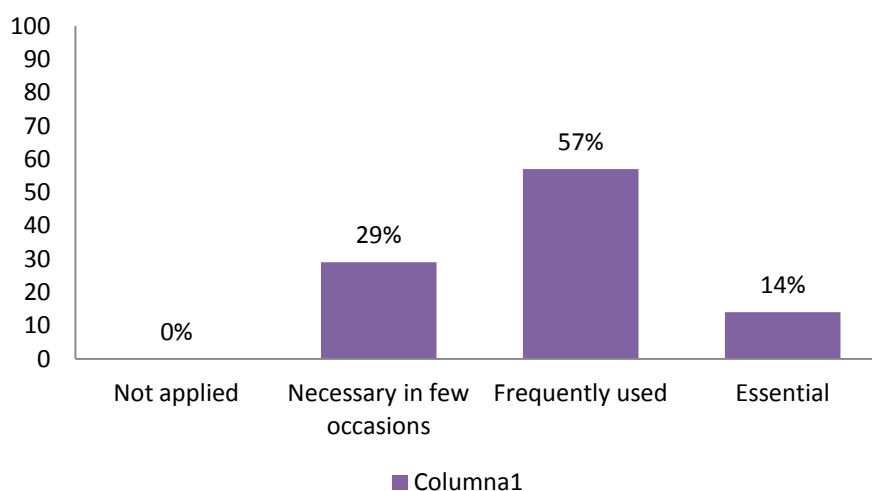
Source: made by the author.

Most of the students (71%) had job descriptions connected to the areas of organizational communication, as well as Information and Communication Technologies (57%), followed by translation and/or interpretation (43%), research projects (29%), advertisement, marketing and corporate image (29%), also doing social work in Non-Governmental Organizations (14%) and others (14%). None of the internships was connected to the areas of foreign trade, imports and exports.

5. The following is a list of competences that belong to the Modern Languages student's profile. Please mark them according to their importance and usage during your internship's development:

- **Translation skills:**

Graphic 6: Translation skills.

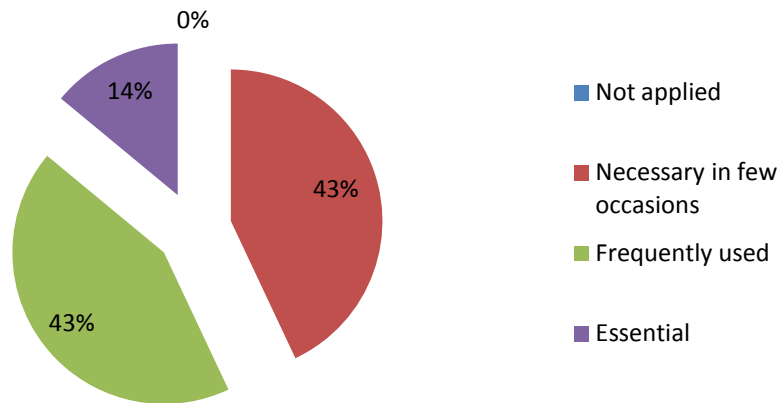


Source: made by the author.

57% of the students used frequently the translation skills acquired during their studies in the University. 29% considered them necessary in few occasions, and 14% believe they were essential during the internship. There was not any case where the students consider that these skills were not applied.

- **Information management in different languages:**

Graphic 7: Information management in different languages.

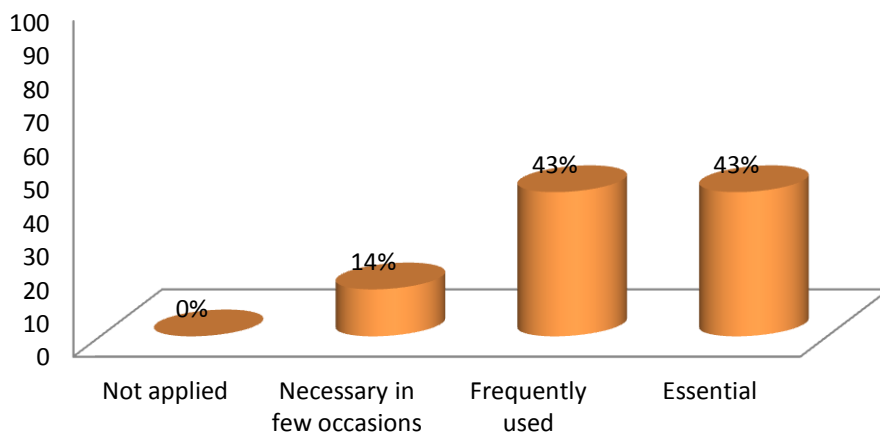


Source: made by the author.

These competences were frequently used by 43% of the surveyed students. Other 43% of them think they were necessary in few occasions, and the remaining 14% consider them essential. There is not any case where the students consider that these skills were not applied.

- **Multicultural and multidisciplinary skills:**

Graphic 7: Multicultural and multidisciplinary skills.

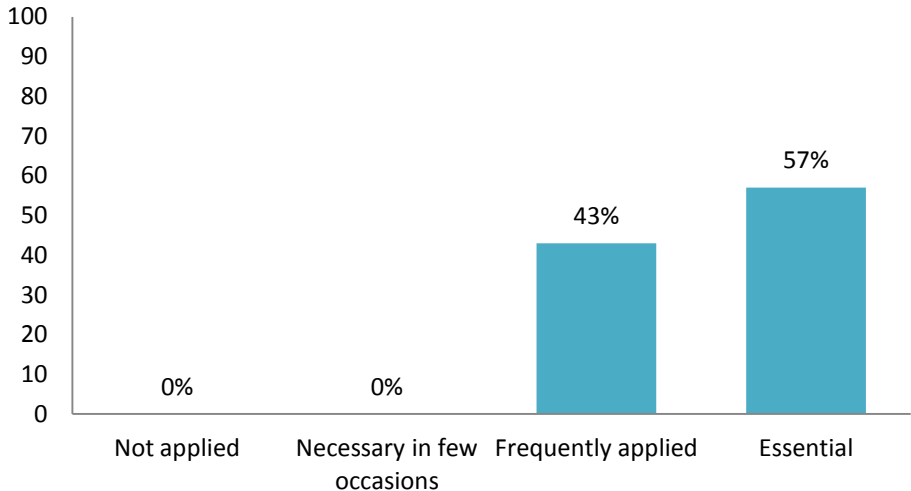


Source: made by the author.

43% of the students consider these skills essential during the development of their internship. Other 43% frequently used these skills, and the remaining 13% needed them only in few occasions.

- **Communication and linguistics skills:**

Graphic 8: Communication and linguistics skills.

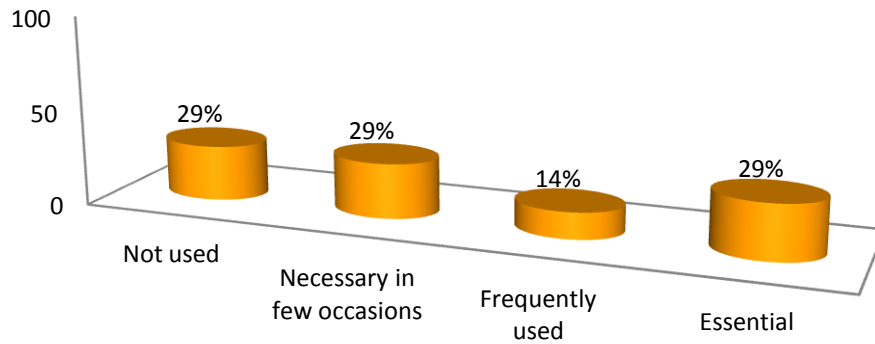


Source: made by the author.

These skills were considered essential by 57% of the students, and the other 43% of them applied them frequently during the internship. There is not any case where the students consider that these skills were not applied or that they were necessary only in few occasions.

- **Research skills:**

Graphic 9: Research skills.

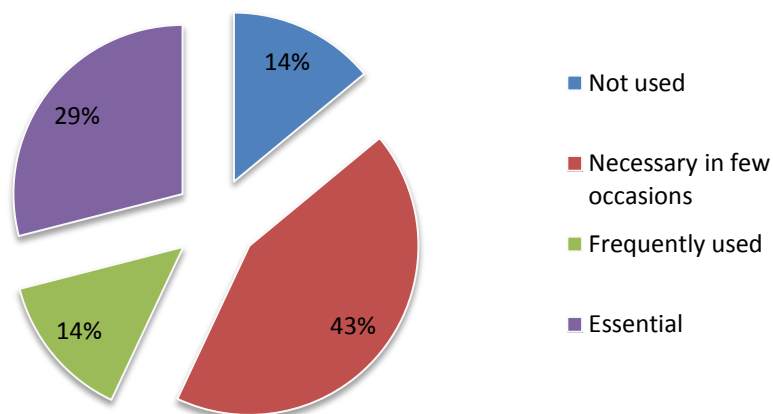


Source: made by the author.

In this case the opinion was quite varied, since 29% of the students did not use these skills during their internship; other 29% needed them in few occasions, 14% used them frequently, and only 29% of them considered them essential.

- **Entrepreneurship and business approach:**

Graphic 10: Entrepreneurship and business approach.



Source: made by the author.

43% of the students consider these skills occasionally necessary, while 14% did not use them and 14% applied them frequently. A remaining 29% consider them essential.

6. Sum up shortly your internship's job description:

Among the different duties that the students performed during their internship are the following: organizational communication activities (71%), medical interpretation (14%), web support and customer service (42%), research projects for the media (14%), data base management (28%), consular translation and interpretation and support in visa procedures (14%), training and development of other employees (14%), social network management (28%), logistics (14%), and research projects in the line of customer service for cruise ships (28%).

7. Do you consider there are missing points or aspects that should be changed or improved from the whole internship process? Which ones?¹⁶

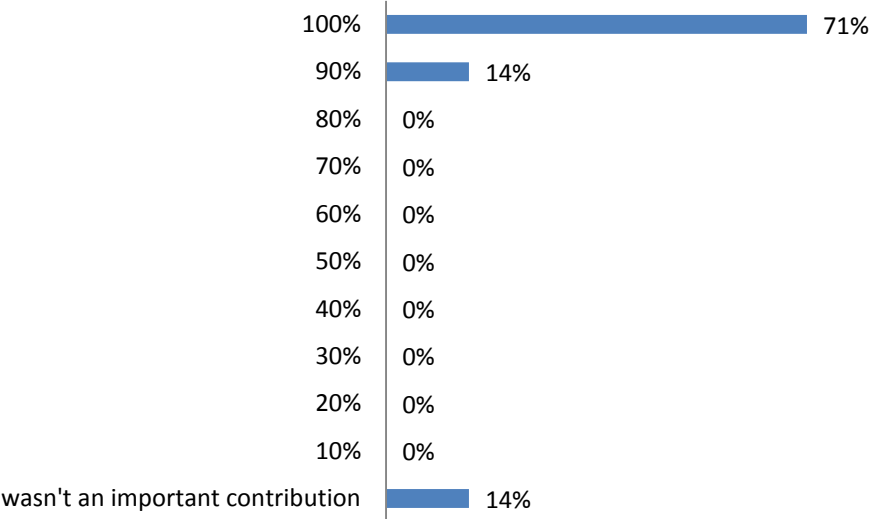
The general opinion of the students is that the general process of the Internship Program of the University has worked very well, although there are still some issues where the internship process might be failing, like the main support that they receive from the Internship Coordination (lack of organization, for example) and during the tutorial process (situations of miscommunication) . There are also some suggestions about entering into more agreements to

¹⁶ Not only taking into account the performance of the internship itself, but also the participation of the University in the whole process (guidance and support from the Coordination, tutorials, etc.)

make internships abroad, as this could bring more and new opportunities for students that want to live an experience in other country.

8. In which percentage do you consider that your internship contributed to your professional development and as a support to begin your working life?

Graphic 11: Question 9.



Source: made by the author.

71% of the students considered the internship as a really important contribution in the transition from the student life to the professional life. 14% considered it almost essential (90% in the scale), while for the remaining 14% it was not an important contribution.

7.2. ANALYSIS OF AIESEC PLATFORM

The second part of the research consisted of making an analysis of the Platform of AIESEC to evaluate a different aspect that could be relevant to determine the different

opportunities that a Modern Language student might have abroad through this organization.

Two different filters were settled in order to reduce the information obtained:

* According to the country: By looking for different opportunities in countries where the language also plays an important role for the Modern Language student (countries where he/she will also be able to apply the language skills), like English speaking countries (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand and the United States), German Speaking Countries (Austria, Germany and Switzerland), French Speaking Countries (Belgium, France), Portuguese Speaking Countries (Brazil, Portugal) and Italian Speaking Countries (Italy). These countries are considered relevant, because although the student may have the chance of training the language skills in other countries, the curriculum of the Program establishes the importance of integrating the language with the culture, integration that can be fully achieved when the student has an experience in a native country.

* According to the filter made by AIESEC EAN Office¹⁷: This is a filter created by the Board of AIESEC EAN in 2012 as a guide for those Modern Language students that will begin the process of applying to internships through AIESEC and need a searching tool and filter in the platform. This report establishes the followings areas where students can perform their internship:

- Advertising and Public Relations
- Event Management
- Web Development and Management (In activities such as Community Management)
- Organizational behavior
- Product Planning, Development & Control
- Introduction to Management / Business Administration
- Introduction to communications

¹⁷ For more information regarding this report, please contact the author of this investigation (motalora_3@correo.ean.edu.co)

- Customer Relations Management
- Social and Ethical Editing + Reporting
- Brand & Trademark Management
- Crisis Management

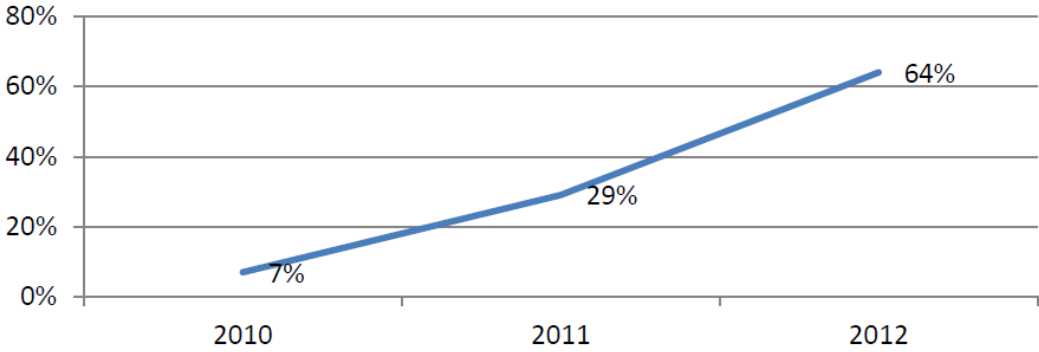
The results showed approximately 300 different opportunities with these characteristics, where a Modern Language student could perform duties as project manager, consultant in training and development, as well as in organizational communication, marketing, as data base and network manager, research and evaluation assistant and in the area of Information and Communication Technologies. There is also a wide offer in other areas, where, according to the referenced studies, a Professional in Modern Languages could work, such as tourism, market research & evaluation, business translation, bilingual and cross-cultural communication and linguistics.

Along with the results, it was evidenced that in most of the cases the companies also require specific knowledge in other areas of study, like finance, engineering, business administration, accounting, business intelligence, economy, CRM and marketing, all areas and subjects that the students may learn during the course of the Program, but that in most of the cases are not deeply studied. In addition, in the case of translation, companies usually require a wider experience in the field of translation, as well as a greater level of the language, aspects that the students might find difficult to fulfill.

As a second part of the research in the Platform of AIESEC, it was also possible to evaluate the number of Modern Languages students who have made their internship through this organization, in order to evaluate the progress concerning its contribution to the development of the internationalization goals of the University, specifically among the students mobility. The graphic below shows the increase given throughout the last three years

concerning the number of Modern Language student that decided to live an international experience through AIESEC:

Graphic 12:
Modern Language students that have made an internship through AIESEC comparing the last three years



Source: made by the author.

It was found that 14 Modern Languages students have joined the internship program of AIESEC since 2010, although not all of them made it as part of the Internship Program of Universidad EAN, which is required to finish their studies. The comparison is shown in the following graphic:

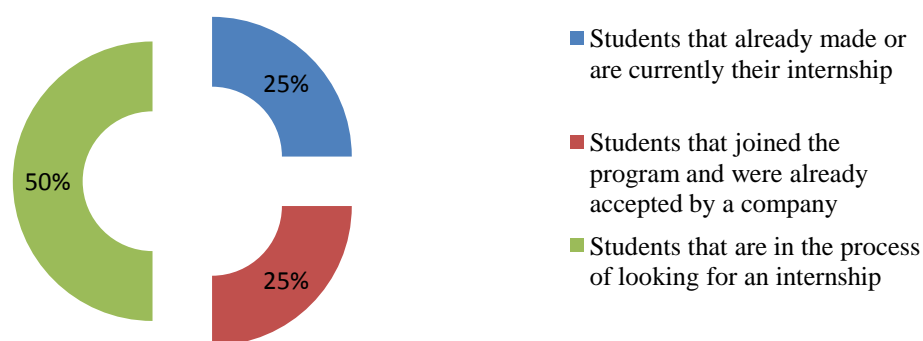
Graphics 13 and 14: Comparison of AIESEC internships as part of the program of Universidad EAN



Source: made by the author.

A total of 8 students have joined the AIESEC Internship Program as part of the Program of the University as well, showing an important increase in the number of applicants who want to have an international experience, while other 6 students joined it for other several reasons that are not related to this investigation. Although it is relevant to set out the fact, that in 83% of these cases the students joined an educational internship (in countries like Brazil, Russia, India and Poland) in the areas of pedagogy and teaching of languages, areas that are not connected to the Modern Language's profile.

**Graphic 16:
Evaluation of the current status of the student's
internship**



Source: made by the author.

It was also possible to determine that currently 25% of the Modern Language students are developing (or already developed) the mandatory internship of the University, while 25% of them were already accepted by a company (in Germany and China respectively) but have not started yet, and a last 50% is in the searching process, with the objective of doing the internship during the next academic semester, which represents a notable increase in the number of Modern Language students that will have an experience abroad.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- After evaluating the results, it can be stated that there is an evident improvement in the international mobility of the Modern Language students of Universidad EAN, an aspect that clearly contributes in a positive way to achieve the internationalization goals of the University, which were settled in the Institutional Education Project 2011 – 2015. This also shows a progress in the process of getting better offers and opportunities for the students, in order to encourage them to live an international experience which will benefit them both personally and professionally.
- In a high percentage the students consider the International Internship Program of the University as a relevant experience, necessary to achieve successfully the transition between being a student and becoming a professional. This is a relevant aspect, since it demonstrates that relation between the academic preparation and the professional training of the University are working successfully.
- Almost all the skills and competences developed throughout de Modern Languages Program are useful and frequently necessary in the performance of the internship, especially the communication and linguistic skills and the multicultural and multidisciplinary skills, which were considered the most important and applied ones, followed by the translation skills and the information management in different languages, and remaining the entrepreneurship and business approach and the research skills as the less frequently used by the students. This is also consistent with the results shown by the other studies referenced in the State of the Art, which show the organizational communication, linguistic and cultural awareness skills as the most crucial competences of the Modern Language Program.

- Although a great percentage of students made short-term internships (less than 6 months), all the areas where they performed were consistent with the Modern Languages' profile, which allowed them to apply and develop their academic knowledge and professional competences in a deeper way. In spite of this, none of the internships were in the area of foreign trade, imports and exports, aspect that is relevant to mention since in most of the previous studies included in the reference framework, foreign trade was a highly recommended subject to be developed and added to the Modern Languages Program.
- Despite the fact that there is an evident improvement in the percentage of international internships in the University, it is also patent that only twelve Modern Language students have made part of it¹⁸, even when one of the main cores of the Program is precisely the international culture and the use of languages in the globalization, which generates the question “why?”, an aspect that could be relevant to investigate: Why such a reduced number of students, among the hundreds that have taken part of the Program, have joined an internship abroad? In this sense, the author recommends to make a future study on this topic.
- Making an analysis of the countries where the students made their internships, it is also manifest that none of the internships has been developed in certain native-speaking countries like Italy or France, and only a small percentage in other countries like Germany and Brazil, countries that, as it was previously mentioned, could be considered relevant, not only because they give the possibility of practicing a language with native speakers, but also because they allow the students to get involved with the culture, which is part of the multicultural focus of the Program. In this case, it would be pertinent for the University to have more partnerships and

¹⁸ Plus the other six students that will develop it in the upcoming semester.

agreements in countries with such relevance, since it is known that currently there are a lot of academic exchange possibilities, although there are not so many in connection to the development of the Internship Program, and this would widely benefit the students.

- During the research in the Platform of AIESEC, it was clearly seen that there is a great number of opportunities for the students abroad, although it also became evident that a wide knowledge and competitiveness is required also due to the big amount of applicants. In most of the cases companies require studies in specific areas and subjects, an aspect that can affect a Modern Language student's "effectiveness" at certain point, when applying, since there is not a deep level of specialization in many of them. This aspect was also widely mentioned in the referenced studies of this investigation, where it was concluded that usually the unawareness with regard to the Modern Language's profile and its competences resulted in Professionals who decided to perform other jobs out of their field of work. This can also be perceived with those students that joined the Exchange Program of AIESEC, and at the end participated in pedagogic internships, working as language teachers, which is not the final objective of the Modern Languages Program. In this case, and also taking into account the conclusions of the referenced studies, the author considers highly important and recommends to integrate a wider emphasis or specialization in specific areas of study to the Program, as this fact will allow the students to be more innovative and competitive in the labor market, not only in Colombia but also abroad.
- To conclude, it can be stated that, indeed, there is a wide international demand for Professionals with the characteristics and skills of the Modern Languages Program, and hundreds of opportunities for the students that want to make their internship abroad and live a global experience, and after analyzing it extensively, it is possible to

say as well that the students have the necessary background and knowledge to be considered competitive in the international market, but the unawareness of the market with regard to the Modern Language's profile reduces the chances of being accepted by a company, as it is commonly misunderstood as a teaching degree (or other). For this reason, it is important to consider the generation of new strategies and approaches to improve the reach of the Program, so that the students can also have access to more opportunities in a global environment, not only academically, but also professionally.

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