

Xu, M. (2019) On internship reports of Masters of Translation and Interpreting in China—A mixed-methods study. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 6, 29-74.

## **ON INTERNSHIP REPORTS OF MASTERS OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING IN CHINA—A MIXED-METHODS APPROACH**

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### **Abstract**

Internship reports, which are based on Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) students' translation or interpreting internships, can reveal, to some extent, the effectiveness of internships, a compulsory component of MTI education in China. However, scholars or MTI students have not paid much attention to internship reports. For this reason, this paper tries to present an overall picture of MTI internship reports in China with a mixed-methods approach, including bibliometric analyses and semi-structured interviews with 10 MTI graduates. It is

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found that the numbers of internship reports, internship institutions and MTI institutions involved are all small but

the internship experiences turn out to be positively received by MTI students. It is hoped that this study can draw more scholarly and professional attention to MTI internships and internship reports in China and beyond so as to improve the quality of translator and interpreter training.

Keywords: MTI education, internship reports, bibliometric approach, mixed-methods approach

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In China, professional translator and interpreter education formally started when the Bachelor of Translation and Interpreting (BTI) program was approved in 2006 and Master of Translation and Interpreting (MTI) in 2007. As of 2019, universities and colleges offering BTI and MTI programs (for convenience's sake, hereinafter they will be referred to as "BTI/MTI institutions") have amounted to 281 and 253 respectively, with a total enrollment of about 65,000 students and over 40,000 graduates.

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As a professional degree, MTI is practice-oriented, emphasizing students' professional competences as translators and/or interpreters rather than their research competence. Therefore, the teaching objectives, training modes, syllabi, teaching contents, practicums and internships are all different from the Master of Arts in Translation Studies.

To highlight its professional and practical nature, MTI education makes establishment of professional internship bases and student internships compulsory. *The Guiding Plan for the Master of Translation and Interpreting Program* (China National Committee for MTI Education, 2011) stipulates that professional internship is a compulsory component of MTI education and should last no shorter than one semester. MTI institutions should, according to their training objectives, organize their students to have internships in qualified governmental departments, enterprises and public institutions, designate supervisors, and guarantee that students acquire standard and effective training and practice and improve their translation and/or interpreting skills and professionalism; upon

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completion of their internship, students should present the appraisal reports by the internship institutions to the school authorities; and internships cannot be replaced by other credit courses. *The Assessment Criteria for MTI Institutions* also lays down specific requirements concerning internship bases and students' internships, namely, internship bases 1) should have been legally registered or established, have been engaged in translation, interpreting and related businesses for 5 years or more and enjoy good social reputation; 2) should have no fewer than 30 fulltime translators and a fixed office area of no less than 200m<sup>2</sup>; 3) should have no fewer than 15 fulltime translators of intermediate or above professional rank; 4) can provide interns with necessary working conditions which include computers, reference books and Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) software; 5) each MTI institution should have at least one internship base that can provide students with relatively stable translation practice opportunities; 6) each student should work in internship bases for at least one semester; 7) internship bases should provide interns with experienced professionals with intermediate or above

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professional rank as professional mentors and have assessment systems for interns; and 8) upon completion of internship, the internship bases should present internship certificates and appraisal reports to the MTI institutions concerned (unpublished assessment criteria).

Because of the importance of internships and internship bases in MTI education, this paper tries to delve deep into this specific field by looking at the internship reports of MTI students and by interviewing 10 MTI graduates. The remaining parts of this paper are arranged as follows: Part Two is literature review; Part Three; methodology; Part Four, results; Part Five, discussions, and Part Six, conclusion.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Definitions of intern and internship**

It is essential to clarify “intern” and “internship” before going into more detailed discussions of the topic. Intern can serve as a noun and a verb and can be used specifically to refer to medical students or other types of students. This paper

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only focuses on definitions related to the ongoing topics.

Intern: “someone, especially a student, who works for a short time in a particular job in order to gain experience” (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* online); “a student, or someone who has recently finished their studies, who works for a company or organization for a short time, sometimes without being paid, in order to get experience of a particular type of work” (*Cambridge Dictionary* online).

Internship: “a job that lasts for a short time, especially a student, does in order to gain experience” (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* online); “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” (*Cambridge Dictionary* online).

Ren defines MTI interpreting internship as: a training phase after students have basically completed the study of related theoretical and practical courses, a phase during which students

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demonstrate, apply and testify related interpreting knowledge and skills in real or highly simulated interpreting work environment to train and improve their working ability, enhance their interpreting (translation) professional awareness, cultivate their professional habits and raise their employability (2012, p.47).

From the above definitions, intern in this paper refers to any MTI student who works for a certain period of time in a company or organization before graduation with the main purpose of training and gaining experience; internship refers to the period or the state when MTI students serve as interns.

## **2.2 Practical components of MTI education**

Apart from on-campus classroom instructions, internships and graduation theses writing are two important components of MTI education, both of which emphasize students' practical experience and understanding of the language service market.

Internship is considered indispensable to MTI

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education because it is believed that internship allows students to put what they have learned in classroom instructions into practice, to learn the whole process of translation and interpreting projects, to acquire language service provision competence and the various skills and knowledge needed in the translation and interpreting process, for example, teamwork spirit, interpersonal skills, the use of various Machine Translation (MT) and CAT software, the ability to work under pressure, and the ability of marketing and advertising (Ren, 2012).

Another practical component of MTI education is graduation thesis writing. MTI students can choose different forms of graduation theses apart from academic papers, for example, translation or interpreting practice reports, internship reports, survey reports, or experiment reports (Huang, 2012; Mu, 2011, Mu & Zou, 2011; Mu et al., 2012; Ping, 2018). Among the five different forms, practice report is the most popular, with nearly 10,000 in total over the years. By comparison, the other three practice-oriented reports are less popular, each with fewer than 100 papers from the CNKI Database of Postgraduate

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## Graduation Theses.

Though scholars have emphasized the importance of MTI graduation theses (for example, Mu, 2011; Ping, 2018), few have analyzed MTI students' graduation theses, much less internship reports. Compared with other types of reports, internship reports are more closely related to the translation and language service industry in that students actually work in real world environment for a certain period of time and deal with authentic translation/interpreting projects and clients. What they have encountered during their internships will have direct impacts on their future careers and have wash-back effects on MTI education.

### **2.3 Importance of translation and interpreting internships**

Internships or work placements in general have multifaceted benefits, which include gaining practical experience (Szambowski et al., 2002); integrating on-campus and off-campus learning (Flanagan et al., 2000); improving their profession-specific skills (Scholz et al., 2014); strengthening their communication, interpersonal

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and networking skills (Busby, 2003; Clark, 2003; Scholz et al., 2004; Thiel & Hartley, 1997); developing their attitudes towards lifelong and autonomous learning (Chapman & Howkins, 2003); better preparing them for future careers (Gordon, 1996; Sharma, 2006) or easing the transition from graduates to employees (Billet, 2009); earning job satisfaction unobtainable at school (Shoenfelt et al., 2013); and enhancing their employability (Salas-Velesco, 2007). If the internship takes place in a foreign country, interns can also acquire cultural competence as well (He & Qin, 2017; Wu, 2017).

In the same vein, translation and interpreting internship has distinctive benefits to translation and interpreting students. As a form of situated learning, it can help students achieve the best learning effects (Kiraly, 2016; Prieto-Velasco & Feuentes-Luque, 2016). “Just as the best way to learn swimming is to swim, so the best way to learn all the ramifications of the translation process is to work on a translation project” (Lin, 2005, p. 181). More specifically, scholars have elaborated on the following.

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First, internship provides students the opportunity to test and hone skills acquired in classroom instructions, for example, autonomous learning, ability to work under pressure, teamwork spirit, confidence, and freedom from anxiety (Johnston, 2007; Lesch, 2011; Valero-Garcés, 2010, 2011) and to offset the drawbacks of classroom instructions (Li, 2015).

Second, internship enables students to engage with the language service profession, which requires them to have knowledge of translation project management, technical writing, proofreading, brand globalization and localization, and multilingual communication, all of which cannot be acquired or acquired in full in classroom instructions (Hu, 2018, p.213). It makes students know what skills they need to be equipped with to fit in the translation and language service market (Aly, 2015). Internship also enables students to acquire more practical and extensive experience about the translation workflow and improve their strategic and technological competence accordingly (Zhu, 2018).

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Third, internship is an experimental field of professional translation teaching and research. It is the most direct feedback source of the translation industry and the pivot of integration of production, learning and research (Liu, 2017; Yang, et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2011). Moreover, internship enables students to accumulate large quantities of authentic translation materials and rich fruits for reflection, which serve as excellent data for students' graduation thesis writing (Li, 2012). It also offers teachers justifications to modify the curricula (Li, 2018).

Fourth, internship eases the transition from graduates to employees by familiarizing the interns with the work procedures, and by enhancing their various professional competences required by the market (Johnston, 2007; Valero Garcés, 2010, 2011) and thus increasing their employability after graduation.

In short, the importance and benefits of internship to translation and interpreting students are apparent as it enables them to learn in real world situations in which students can learn to construct their own knowledge. However,

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internship is still under-studied in translation studies (Liu, 2017, p.581).

## **2.4 Translation and interpreting internship reports**

Only a handful of Chinese scholars have discussed translation and interpreting internship reports in the past decade or so. Mu (2011), Mu and Zou (2011), and Mu et al. (2012) suggest changing the original three forms of MTI theses, namely, translation project, experiment report and research paper suggested in the Guiding Plan of MTI Education into five forms, namely, important post internship report, translation or interpreting practice report, translation or interpreting experiment report, and translation survey report. Liu and Wen (2016) analyze the topics and writing features of 831 MTI theses from 12 MTI institutions and find that most of these papers are plagued with problems, for example, monotonous thesis types, similar content and inappropriate selection of source texts. Liu and Wen reveal that except one university which skews toward research papers, all the others are practice-oriented with

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translation practice reports taking up 78.94% of the surveyed sample while the other forms, namely, internship reports, experiment reports and survey reports are negligible. In terms of internship reports, Liu and Wen offer the following suggestions: to include related content of internship in translation or interpreting industry, for example, descriptive analysis of the translation process; to describe the whole process of a translation or interpreting project from the initiator, commissioner, source text producer, target text producer, target text users to target text receivers and further analyze related experience and setbacks; in addition, to analyze certain links in detail, for example, the revision process, or even the translator's self-revision; and furthermore, to carry out descriptive analysis of problems in the translation management and the application of translation tools in the translation process (Liu & Wen, 2016, p.111).

Ping, in his discussion of the design and writing of MTI theses, suggests that MTI students take part in translation internships under the guidance of their academic supervisors, paying special attention to internships as project translators,

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project revisers and project managers in language service industry and write internship reports of no fewer than 15,000 foreign language words (including case analyses). The project translator internship report can include background introduction to the translation task, needs analyses, time management, tool use, and translation quality control, with special focus on problems encountered in the translation process, measures taken and experience acquired. Project reviser internship report can include quality standards of the project, time management, tool use, quality control, and quality assessment. Project manager internship report can include project introduction, project plan, project implementation evaluation, technology application summary, teamwork assessment, and user feedback. Internship reports are required to have accurate and fluent expressions, solid theoretical foundations, and in-depth case analyses; and offer effective suggestions to solve problems popping up during the internship (Ping, 2018, p.46).

Of course, not all scholars hold positive opinions on internship report as a valid form of MTI theses.

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For example, Wu (2013) argues that since internship is part of the curricula, internship report should be regarded as part of the internship rather than a form of graduation theses. Zhu (2019) argues that students' internships usually take place off-campus and it is inconvenient for academic supervisors to get involved. In addition, as internship is part of the MTI curricula, appraisal by internship institutions can only serve as scores of the internship rather than as assessment of graduation theses. Moreover, the 15,000 words internship report just describes the process of the internship, namely, recording the procedures and links during the internship so it is hard to find out the writers' mastery of theories and systematic knowledge or their competence to undertake translation and interpreting tasks independently (Zhu, 2019, p.84). Zhu's comments reveal some problems with the internships and internship reports, which require deeper and more comprehensive studies of them and further reforms of the contents of the internship reports.

The brief review of related literature reveals that despite the importance of internships and

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internship reports, **they** are still under-researched and largely neglected, hence, the need for the current study.

## **2.5 Research questions**

This paper tries to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What is the status quo of MTI internships and internship reports?
- (2) What are the possible reasons for the status quo?
- (3) What are the merits and demerits of MTI internships and internship reports?
- (4) What suggestions can be offered to improve the effectiveness of internships and internship reports?

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, involving both bibliometric analyses and semi-structured interviews of 10 MTI students from 9 different MTI universities so as to verify and triangulate results obtained from bibliometric analyses.

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### **3.1 Bibliometric analyses**

In China, all Master's and Doctoral dissertations should be submitted to Postgraduate Dissertation Database on China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the biggest, and the most comprehensive and authoritative database.

The author adopts the following steps. First, select Postgraduate Dissertation Database on CNKI. Second, use different combinations to locate the papers for analysis. Different combinations of search items come up with different numbers of returns, so close reading is needed. Third, go through the titles and abstracts of the selected papers to tease out repeated or irrelevant ones. A total of 99 papers are identified as internship reports (accessed July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019). Fourth, go through each paper carefully to get information about the university concerned, language pair, type of internship institutions, students' roles during internships, topics discussed, and their comments on internships.

**Table 1 Different Boolean searches used**

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Search items	Theme +theme	Theme +title	Title +theme	Title +title
实习+翻译(internship + translation)	141	69	106	55
实习+笔译(internship + written translation)	18	7	10	7
实习+口译(internship + interpreting)	68	44	55	41
实习报告+翻译(internship report + translation)	80	36	75	33
实习报告+笔译(internship report + written translation)	9	6	7	6
实习报告+口译(internship report + interpreting)	50	38	45	36

(Note: as the searches were conducted in Chinese, their English translations are provided in parentheses for reference.)

### 3.2 Semi-structured interviews

**Table 2 Profile of 10 MTI Graduates**

Name	G	Type of uni.	Type of internship institution	Duration	Duties	G
						C

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1	Cai	F	Foreign languages	Municipal FAO	3m	OW &TP	P
2	Chen	F	Foreign languages	Uni. translation company	1y	T & QC	P
3	Dai	F	Teacher training	Publishing house	3m	T & R	P
4	Fan	F	agriculture	Agriculture bureau	1m	T & I	P
5	Ge	M	technology	SOE	2m	LI	P
6	Hao	M	Comprehensive	New energy company	2m	I	P
7	Jin	F	Comprehensive	Travel agency	1m	T & I	P
8	Kang	F	TCM	Research institute	3m	T	P
9	Lin	M	Petro-chemical	Translation company	1m	T	N G
10	Ma	F	finance	News agency	2m	T	N T

(Note: symbols used in Table 2: FAO: foreign affairs office; G: gender; GCs: general comments; I: interpreting; LI: liaison interpreting; NG: negative; NT: neutral; OW: office work; P: positive; R: revision; QC: quality control; SOE: state-owned enterprise; T: translation; TP: translation projects)

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To testify the findings from the bibliometric analyses, the author has also interviewed 10 MTI graduates from 9 MTI universities who were interviewed on a voluntary basis. The profile of the interviewees is shown in Table 2. Pseudonyms are used to protect their privacy.

The interviewees were asked to provide the type of their university, the type of internship institution, length of their internship, major responsibilities involved, their general comments on internship, and reasons for being positive, neutral or negative. They were also asked to offer their understanding of internship reports.

#### **4. RESULTS**

This part first presents the quantitative results of the 99 internship reports, including distribution of papers by MTI institution, by year and by language pair; types of internship institutions, major responsibilities undertaken by students and major topics discussed. Then it tries to offer the opinions of the interviewees.

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#### 4.1 Distribution of internship reports

The 99 internship reports come from 25 MTI institutions, but the numbers of papers vary greatly from university to university. On top of the list is Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, one of the earliest and best MTI institutions in China, with 21 papers (21.2%), followed by Shanghai International Studies University, with 12 papers (12.1%). All the other 23 universities have just one-digit number of internship papers, among which 11 universities have just one respectively (See Table 3 for details).

The number of internship reports fluctuates from year to year. In 2011 when the first batch of MTI students graduated, there were only 3 such reports, then the number rose to 6 in 2012 and 18 in 2013, but dropped to 9 in 2014 and 2015 respectively before rising again to 11 in 2016, 22 in 2017, and 21 in 2018 (See Figure 1).

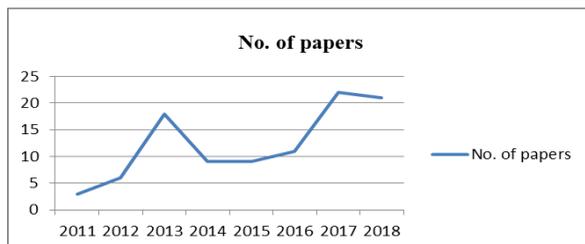
**Table 3 Distribution of internship papers by MTI universities**

University	total	%
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1	Guangdong University of Foreign Studies	21	21.2
2	Shanghai International Studies University	12	12.1
3	Ningxia University	7	7.1
4	Sichuan International Studies University	7	7.1
5	Hebei Normal University	6	6.1
6	North China Electric Power University	6	6.1
7	Inner Mongolia Normal University	5	5.1
8	Yantai University	5	5.1
9	Beijing Foreign Studies University	5	5.1
10	Jilin University	3	3.0
11	Guangxi University	3	3.0
12	Jilin International Studies University	3	3.0
13	Shaanxi Normal University	3	3.0
14	Guangxi University for Nationalities	2	2..2
15-	Central South University ; China Foreign	1 each	11.1
25	Affairs University ; Dalian University of Technology; Dalian Maritime University; Heilongjiang University; Henan Normal University; Inner Mongolia University; Liaoning University; Qingdao University of Science and Technology; University of Science and Technology of China; Yunnan Minzu University	11 in total	
Total		99	100

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**Figure 1** Distribution of internship reports by year

Though MTI programs are offered in nine languages, including English, German, French, Russian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Thai, and Arabian, the majority of internship reports concern the language pair of Chinese and English (see Table 4 for details).

**Table 4: Distribution of internship reports by language pair**

C-E	C-J	C-R	C-G	C-F	total
87	4	4	3	1	99

(Note: C: Chinese; E: English; J: Japanese; R: Russian; G: German; F: French)

## 4.2 Types of internship institutions

LSCs and governmental institutions account for about 20% of the internship institutions respectively. LSCs whose main businesses are

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still traditional translation and interpreting (Translators Association of China, 2018) are the most relevant internship institutions for MTI students. In LSCs, most interns report being involved in translation and/or interpreting projects. The governmental institutions mentioned are of various types, including foreign affairs offices, governmental departments and bureaus and research institutes.

**Table 5 Types of internship institutions**

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>No</b>
Language service companies (LSCs)	20	News agencies/ media websites	5
Governmental institutions	20	Foreign aid agencies	5
Various enterprises	18	Foreign enterprises	4
Universities	12	Publishing houses	2
The United Nations	11	Not mentioned	3
Total:100 (one student interning in two institutions)			

Some universities also offer internship opportunities for their own students, for example, university-run museums, academic journals, research centers, and student translation companies. Students from some prestigious

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foreign languages universities, for example, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Shanghai International Studies University and Guangdong University of Foreign Studies even have the chances of working in the UN, e.g., the Verbatim Reporting Services, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the UPR of Human Rights Council, the Department of Public Information, the Chinese Translation Service and the Headquarters in Geneva.

A small number of students also work in other types of institutions, for example, news agencies, online media, foreign aid agencies, foreign enterprises, and publishing houses. Three reports bear no information about the name or nature of the internship institutions.

### **4.3 Interns' responsibilities**

The interns' job responsibilities mainly include translation, interpreting or both and involve a wide range of fields and businesses. Fifty-eight students reported doing translation tasks, thirty-eight interpreting, and three both translation and interpreting. They also work in

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various fields and businesses, for example, foreign affairs, foreign trade, legal affairs of international or national organizations or governmental departments, company prospectuses, art design competitions, social sciences, airport construction, manufacturing, coal-fired power plants, tourism, news, technology foreign aid, investment, museums, sport technology assistance, and new energy.

#### 4.4 Foci of internship reports

According to whether any specific issues are discussed, the internship reports can be roughly classified into two types, those with special focus and those without. Sixty-eight (68.7%) internship reports just describe the process of internship without any special focus, while the remaining 31 have focused on diverse issues (see Table 6).

**Table 6 Foci of internship reports**

<b>foci</b>	<b>No</b>
None	68
Quality control	5
Terminology management	3

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UN document related issues	3
CAT related issues	3
Translation Memory related issues	3
Characteristics and translation of social sciences texts	1
Interpretation and E-C translation of contractual legal texts	1
E-C Translation methods of product introductions	1
Professional adaptability of MTI talents	1
Importance of pre-task preparation for simultaneous interpreting	1
Misunderstanding and its avoidance in interpreting	1
Flowchart of interpreting project management	1
Influences of external factors on interpreting effects	1
Importance of teamwork	1
Interpreter role in foreign-related military interpreting	1
Difficulties in liaison interpreting and solutions	1
Situational adaptation	1
Use of internet resources	1
Application of PMI (Project Management Institute) Methodology in translation project	1
total	99

#### **4.5 Interviewees' voices on internships and internship reports**

On the whole, the majority of the 10 interviewed

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MTI graduates have positive views on their internship experiences. They maintain that working in real world environment offered them a brand new experience. First of all, the translation tasks are so different from those assigned by their teachers. More importantly, they had to handle so many different things apart from the translation and/or interpreting per se. During the process, they learned how to work under time pressure, communicate with clients, cooperate with colleagues, follow instructions, manage resources, and even cope with office politics. Though tiring, the experience is well worth it.

Cai, who once worked as an intern in a municipal foreign affairs office was grateful that she had the precious chance to work with professional translators and interpreters.

*I was quite nervous on the first day of my internship, because I knew that the work at foreign affairs office is quite demanding and I was afraid of making mistakes and being criticized. But the people there were all very nice to me and*

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*willing to help me. During my one-year stay there, I learned a lot, not just how to translate or interpret, but how to work with colleagues, how to work under pressure and how to meet deadlines. I am grateful for my internship experience.*

The other seven interviewees who were positive to their internship experience expressed similar ideas as Cai's. However, Ma, who worked as an intern in a news agency for 2 months and was mainly engaged in financial news translation, had mixed feelings of her internship.

*It is true that internship can put what you have learned at school into practice and my two months internship at the news agency was more helpful to me than one-year on-campus training because I had a lot chances to translate financial news reports. But frankly speaking, I don't like working at news agencies, because I often had to work at irregular hours, especially when there was some important news to translate. It was really stressful to me but that seemed to be the*

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*routine.*

Another interviewee, Lin, clearly stated his disappointments at his internship experience in a translation company.

*That experience made me decide not to become a fulltime professional translator after graduation. The company just treated its employees as money-making machines. Everyone was so busy with their translation tasks that there was little chance of communicating with or learning from the professional translators or other colleagues. As it was a relatively small company, there were few large-scale translation projects. I don't think I gained much from the internship. It was because of my internship experience, I decided not to be a professional translator.*

All of the 10 interviewees acknowledge that the internship experience made them have better understanding of themselves and realize what jobs were more suitable to them.

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When asked why so few MTI students had chosen internship reports as their theses, the interviewees informed that few of their fellow students had full-length internships required by the relevant regulations or the chances to engage in translation or interpreting projects. It was usually those top students who got recommended to work in internship bases established by their respective universities and the majority of students had to find their own internship opportunities.

## **5. DISCUSSIONS**

As discussed in 2.3 above, internship, as a form of experiential or situated learning, is one of the best ways for translation and interpreting students to acquire their professional competences (Kiraly, 2016; Prieto-Velasco & Feuentes-Luque, 2016) because they had the chances to work in real situations, handle real translation and/or interpreting tasks and projects and work with different people which cannot be provided by classroom instructions. However, the small number of internship reports has revealed, to some extent, that internships have not yet played

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their expected roles in MTI education in China and greater efforts are needed to improve their effectiveness. Based on the interviews, and scholarly literature, the following discussions focus on reasons for the status quo of internship reports, merits and demerits of internships and internship reports, and suggestions for improving them.

### **5.1 Reasons for the status quo of internship reports**

Internship reports remain a minority among the different forms of MTI theses. Though there are over 30,000 MTI graduates, only about 100 have chosen internship reports as their graduation theses. There are some possible reasons behind this phenomenon.

First, the small number and limited absorptive capacity of internship bases of each MTI institution cannot satisfy the internship demand of all MTI students. Though most MTI institutions claim to have some or even dozens of internship bases, only a small number of students can have authentic and full-length internships and

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the situation is much worse in economically less advanced regions. Instead of having authentic internships, some students can only make do with simulated practices.

Second, despite the importance of internships to MTI students, not all translation/interpreting-related institutions are willing to take interns in that they will have to spare extra human resources to train the students, and worse still, few interns actually become their fulltime employees after graduation. That means they have to waste their time and energy for something meaningless to them, or even if they take interns, some institutions will not entrust them with important tasks. That's why some of the interviewees complained about not being able to learn the whole processes of translation projects.

Third, some academic supervisors still have strong bias against practice-based reports as forms of theses in that they consider them not academic enough. As one interviewee Dai says, "I know that MTI is a practice-oriented program and practice-based reports are more pertinent, but

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my supervisor insisted that I write an academic paper. I had no choice but to follow his instructions.”

In short, the small number of internship reports results from the relative few internship opportunities offered and from the negative opinions of the academic supervisors.

## **5.2 Merits and demerits of internships and internship reports**

Despite the small proportion of internship reports among all MTI theses, the analyses above still enable us to have a glimpse of some merits and demerits of internships and internship reports. On the one hand, the vast fields and businesses of internships reveal that MTI institutions are working hard to train advanced, practical and professional translators and interpreters for specific industries so that their students can not only translate or interpret for general purposes but also for more specialized, technical and demanding tasks, for example, the UN documents, legal documents, power plants, new energy and information technology. Apart from

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translation and interpreting per se, the interns also have chances for project management, quality control and translation software development. In addition, the internship reports help policy makers, MTI authorities and teachers to know better what is expected of their students and how they can modify their curricula accordingly so as to achieve the best teaching effects (Li, 2018).

On the other hand, the internship reports have also exposed some problems with MTI education, including, insufficient number of internship bases to satisfy students' demands; lack of importance attached to internships and internship bases by MTI institutions, LSCs and other institutions concerned; and the lack of foci of internship reports as nearly 70% of them just record the internship process with little or no focus at all.

### **5.3 Suggestions for improving internships and internship reports**

In order to enable internships and internship reports to play more constructive roles in MTI education, the following suggestions are offered:

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First, governmental and educational authorities should encourage institutions with absorptive capacity to take more interns to enable more students to have situated learning and to better prepare themselves professionally. At the same time, the authorities concerned should provide internship institutions with some incentives, for example, tax reduction, government subsidies, further training opportunities for their employees, or even some honorary titles. One such measure is the new apprenticeship system practiced in China since 2018, namely, institutions which take interns get subsidies from the government.

Second, MTI institutions should seek to establish more extensive and substantial cooperation relationships with relevant institutions and businesses on the basis of reciprocity and complementarity. In other words, MTI institutions should offer the internship bases something in return, for example, training, translation, interpreting, other services, or even money for their contributions in MTI education. The cooperation between Fujian Normal University and YGYM Translation Service Co.

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Ltd. is a good example (Yue et al., 2018).

Third, MTI institutions can establish LSCs that have authentic or simulated corporate operations so that more students can have internship opportunities to better prepare themselves professionally. Some MTI institutions, for example, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Shanghai International Studies University, have set successful examples for fellow institutions in this respect.

Fourth, closer cooperation between academic and professional supervisors is needed so that students can be given more guidance in their internships and the subsequent writing process to achieve better professional and academic performance. Internship as an important form to improve students' employability should be further advocated to gain more support from both types of supervisors. In addition, academic supervisors should shoulder more responsibilities concerning the writing of internship reports. In order for such reports to inform and reform teaching, more specific requirements should be laid down for the specific format and contents.

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Apart from describing the process of internships, student writers should also identify translation/interpreting issues, discuss how to solve them with relevant translation/interpreting theories, and offer concrete suggestions for solving them. Such requirements can add more research and academic endeavor to the internship reports so that they are not just informational, as criticized by Zhu (2019).

## **6. CONCLUSION**

With a mixed-methods approach involving bibliometric analyses and semi-structured interviews, this study tries to present an overall picture of MTI internship reports, one of the major forms of MTI theses in China. On top of that, it analyzes the possible reasons for the status quo, the advantages and problems of internships and internship bases, and offers suggestions for improving their effectiveness in MTI education. The combined search items and close reading of all reports have allowed little possibility of misrepresentation, so the findings can serve as reference for future decision-making, teaching reform and renewal by education authorities,

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MTI institutions and teachers concerned.

This study is mainly bibliometric supplemented with semi-structured interviews. The sample size of the interviewees is small compared with the large student body, so some more implicit opinions concerning the internship and internship reports cannot be fully manifested. In order to have a more comprehensive view of internships and internship reports, large-scale questionnaire surveys of and more extensive interviews with MTI students, academic and professional supervisors, authorities of internship bases and MTI institutions as well as other stakeholders are necessary in the future.

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