

Students' Self-Perceived English Communication Skills Before and After an International Internship Program in Taiwan

¹Dyita, ²Hasan, ³Ismail, ⁴Musdalifah, ⁵Sri Rosmiana

Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang, Indonesia

¹dyyta10@gmail.com, ²achank.hasan80@gmail.com, ³smileummaspul@gmail.com,

⁴musdalifah25okt@gmail.com, ⁵srirosmiana@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

International internship programs are widely promoted as a bridge between classroom English instruction and authentic workplace communication, yet few studies examine Indonesian interns using a design that captures the true direction of change in their communication skills. This study aimed to describe and examine whether Indonesian students' self-perceived English communication skills, namely speaking confidence and listening comprehension, differed significantly before and after undertaking an international internship program in Taiwan. A quantitative retrospective post-then-pre survey design was used, in which 40 Indonesian interns working in Taiwan's hospitality, restaurant, food processing, factory, and catering sectors, selected through purposive sampling, rated their perceived skills for both time points within a single 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire. Data were analyzed using the Shapiro-Wilk normality test on the difference scores and paired samples t-tests, with Cohen's d_z reported as the effect size. The four measurement sets showed high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.932 to 0.954). Results showed that students' self-perceived speaking confidence ($M = 33.68$ to 37.88), listening comprehension ($M = 33.93$ to 37.48), and overall communication skills ($M = 67.60$ to 75.35) all increased significantly after the internship ($p < .05$ for all three comparisons), moving from a neutral or moderate perception to a positive or high perception. However, the effect sizes were only medium ($d_z = 0.53$ to 0.60), indicating that although the improvement was statistically significant, it was moderate rather than dramatic in magnitude. These findings suggest that the international internship in Taiwan is associated with a real but modest improvement in students' self-perceived oral communication skills. Universities are recommended to pair internship placement with structured pre-departure speaking and listening training, and future research is encouraged to use objective language assessments and larger, more diverse samples to confirm these self-reported gains.

Keywords: Self-Perceived Communication Skills, Speaking Confidence, Listening Comprehension, International Internship, EFL

Corresponding Author: ¹Dyita - dyyta10@gmail.com

How to cite : Dyita, D., Hasan, H., Ismail, I., Musdalifah, M., & Rosmiana, S. (2026). Students' Self-Perceived English Communication Skills Before and After an International Internship Program in Taiwan. *Journal of Social and Scientific Education*, 3(2), 431-444. <https://doi.org/10.58230/josse.v3i2.828>

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, English communication skill functions as a critical baseline competency for university graduates who wish to compete in international working environments. Studies have consistently shown that English proficiency is a key determinant of employability, particularly in sectors such as hospitality and tourism where cross-cultural communication is routine (Chen et al., 2023). This demand pushes higher education institutions to implement experiential learning initiatives, such as international internship programs, to bridge the gap between classroom theory and workplace expectations. This gap is visible at the national level: Indonesia was placed in the low-proficiency band of the 2025 EF

English Proficiency Index, with speaking identified as the weakest skill among Indonesian test-takers (EF Education First, 2025). Traditional classrooms tend to focus on memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules, which frequently fails to build spontaneous speaking fluency, so that when students enter real professional settings they often encounter communication breakdowns and a loss of self-confidence. This pattern is echoed in the Indonesian EFL literature: students' self-perceived speaking skills have been found to be closely tied to their speaking anxiety levels (Daflizar, 2024), while supportive social interaction, such as peer support, has been shown to meaningfully strengthen students' self-perceived speaking ability (Ayu et al., 2026).

International internship programs offer a strategic pathway for students to practice language directly in authentic workplace communities, and a growing body of second-language-acquisition evidence supports the value of this kind of immersion-based exposure. In a multi-level meta-analysis of 42 study-abroad studies, Tseng et al. (2024) found that structured periods of living and working in a target-language environment produce a medium-to-large overall effect on second-language gains, with a longer stay associated with larger gains regardless of learners' age or prior training. Taiwan has become a prominent destination for this purpose. This trend is reflected among Indonesian universities: Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang sent eight students for an international internship in Taiwan in 2025 (UNIMEN, 2025), while similar cohorts were released by Universitas Bosowa (Universitas Bosowa, 2025) and Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh (Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh, 2025). However, no centralized data source publishes a consolidated figure for this internship pathway across sending countries, which underscores the need for focused empirical research on this specific and growing population of interns.

Although prior research generally highlights the benefits of studying or working abroad, a gap remains regarding the exact direction of change in students' communication skills before and after an internship. Methodologically, traditional pre-test and post-test survey designs are highly susceptible to response-shift bias, in which participants misjudge their initial baseline skills once they have gained more experience (Howard et al., 1979). The retrospective post-then-pre design has been validated specifically for language self-assessment contexts, as it allows participants to use a consistent internal frame of reference when evaluating their skills before and after an intervention (Brown et al., 2014). A retrospective post-then-pre design addresses the same problem by asking respondents to evaluate their baseline and current skills concurrently, under a single internal frame of reference (UW-Madison Division of Extension, 2021), which makes it particularly suitable for subjective, self-perceived constructs such as speaking confidence and listening comprehension.

A further complication is that self-perceived communication skills do not necessarily change uniformly across sub-skills, even within a single experience. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory holds that confidence in one's ability to perform a task strengthens through repeated mastery experiences, with mastery experiences identified as the most powerful source of self-efficacy beliefs (Schunk & Pajares, 2002), but recent evidence suggests that this process is task-dependent rather than automatic. In a study of online metacognitive listening practice, Pei et al. (2023) found that although learners' listening comprehension improved significantly through sustained practice, their listening self-efficacy improved only partially

and remained sensitive to the difficulty of the specific listening tasks encountered. This finding suggests that self-perceived gains in speaking and listening during an internship should not be assumed to move in lockstep, and that both indicators warrant separate empirical examination rather than being treated as interchangeable proxies for overall communicative confidence.

Previous studies related to internship-based English communication skills fall into three groups: research conducted in classroom or workplace-course settings (Chou & Pan, 2026; Su, 2021), research examining local interns within their own country (Ayudhaya et al., 2026), and research examining Taiwanese students undertaking internships abroad (Chen et al., 2023; Lin & Tseng, 2020). Beyond these categories, recent research has also examined the impact of international internships on specific populations, such as Japanese undergraduates, finding significant improvements in English achievement, as measured by TOEIC scores (Chang & Utsumi, 2024). Across these studies, students' speaking confidence, listening ability, and willingness to communicate are consistently found to be tied to the amount and authenticity of their communicative exposure, and most of them rely on self-report measures rather than objective testing, which supports the relevance of a self-perceived approach here. However, none of these studies specifically examines Indonesian students undertaking internships in Taiwan using a retrospective post-then-pre design, which is the gap this study addresses.

This underrepresentation is not unique to the Taiwan-Indonesia context. In a recent mixed-methods study of Vietnamese university students studying in the United Kingdom, Tra et al. (2025) observed that willingness-to-communicate research has disproportionately focused on learners in Western or West Asian settings, with comparatively little attention paid to Southeast Asian students studying or working abroad; their participants reported only moderate levels of second-language self-confidence and willingness to communicate even after a period of immersion. This pattern suggests that Southeast Asian sojourners' self-perceived communication gains abroad remain empirically under-documented across several destination countries and several types of overseas experience, not only in the specific case of Indonesian interns in Taiwan. The present study addresses this broader gap by focusing on a population, context, and measurement design that has not previously been examined together: Indonesian students, an international internship rather than an academic study-abroad or classroom setting, and a retrospective post-then-pre design capable of isolating the direction of self-perceived change.

Taken together, this study is grounded in three complementary theoretical strands. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory explains how authentic, repeated exposure to real communicative demands allows learners to build understanding through direct experience rather than passive instruction. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory explains how accumulated successful communicative experiences can strengthen learners' belief in their own capability to communicate. MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model of willingness to communicate further indicates that such self-perceived competence, alongside confidence and reduced anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994) and stronger listening self-regulation (Vandergrift, 2007), is one of the psychological antecedents that determines whether a learner actually engages in L2 communication when the opportunity arises. These three strands jointly predict that an international internship, as a sustained real-world communicative experience, should be associated with a measurable, though not necessarily uniform or complete, shift in students' self-perceived speaking confidence and listening

comprehension.

Based on this background, this study aims to (1) describe Indonesian students' self-perceived English communication skills, in terms of speaking confidence and listening comprehension, before and after participating in an international internship program in Taiwan, and (2) examine whether there is a statistically significant difference in these self-perceived skills before and after the internship.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study used a quantitative research design with a retrospective post-then-pre survey approach (Howard et al., 1979; UW-Madison Division of Extension, 2021; Wykowski & Starks, 2025), a variant of the one-group pretest-posttest logic. This design has been recommended for evaluating self-perceived language gains because it minimizes response-shift bias and provides a more accurate estimate of perceived change than traditional pre-post designs (Brown et al., 2014). This design was chosen because all participants were already undertaking the internship at the time of data collection and no comparison group without internship experience was available. Within a single questionnaire, each participant rated their self-perceived speaking confidence and listening comprehension twice: once recalling their condition before the internship, and once describing their current condition. This approach reduces the response-shift bias that a single-point survey cannot capture, and is considered appropriate for subjective, psychologically based constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling from Indonesian students undertaking an international internship program in Taiwan, in the hospitality, restaurant, food processing, factory, and catering sectors. The inclusion criteria were: (1) Indonesian students currently interning in Taiwan, (2) having interned for a minimum of three months at the time of data collection, (3) having used English, at least occasionally, in workplace communication, and (4) being willing to complete the questionnaire honestly. A total of 40 students met these criteria and completed the questionnaire online through Google Forms. The questionnaire link was distributed through two fixed internship-related WhatsApp groups and through direct personal outreach to individual interns via WhatsApp and Line, who were then asked to share the link with other interns in their own networks. Of the 40 valid responses obtained, 28 came from the two fixed groups, where the response rate could be determined precisely (13 of 13 members responded in the first group and 15 of 20 members responded in the second group, for a combined response rate of 84.8 percent in these groups). The remaining 12 responses came from direct outreach and further peer referral to interns outside these two groups, for whom the total number who received the questionnaire link could not be tracked; therefore, an overall response rate for the full sample of 40 could not be calculated. Prior to completing the questionnaire, all participants were informed of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses; submission of the completed questionnaire was taken as their consent to participate. This sample size exceeds the minimum requirement of 34 participants, which was determined through an a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007) based on a targeted medium effect size ($d_z = 0.5$), a significance level (α) of 0.05, and a statistical power of 0.80.

Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent content validation by an expert

validator, a lecturer in the English Language Education study program with relevant expertise in the constructs measured, who reviewed its clarity, relevance, and appropriateness and approved it for use.

Corresponding to the second research objective, this study tested the following hypotheses for each of the three self-perceived variables: H0, there is no significant difference in students' self-perceived English communication skills before and after the internship; H1, there is a significant difference in students' self-perceived English communication skills before and after the internship. Data were first screened for missing values and outliers; no missing or invalid responses were found among the 40 questionnaires. The internal consistency of each of the four measurement sets, speaking confidence before, listening comprehension before, speaking confidence after, and listening comprehension after, was tested using Cronbach's Alpha ([Cronbach, 1951](#)). Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were calculated for each variable and interpreted using the interval classification adapted from [Sugiyono \(2017\)](#), in which a mean score of 1.00 to 1.80 is categorized as very negative, 1.81 to 2.60 as negative, 2.61 to 3.40 as neutral, 3.41 to 4.20 as positive, and 4.21 to 5.00 as very positive. Because this classification is defined on a 1.00 to 5.00 per-item mean scale, each variable's summed score was divided by its number of items before being classified in this way. For example, a speaking confidence score of 33.68 across 10 items corresponds to a per-item mean of 3.37, which falls within the neutral range. Because the sample size was 40 ($N < 50$), normality was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test ([Shapiro & Wilk, 1965](#)) on each variable's difference score, consistent with standard practice for paired-samples designs. Since all difference scores were normally distributed, a paired samples t-test was used to examine whether the differences were statistically significant at $\alpha = 0.05$. Because overall communication skills is a composite of the speaking confidence and listening comprehension scores, the three paired-samples t-tests conducted in this study were not fully independent of one another. To check whether this affected the conclusions, a Bonferroni-corrected threshold of $\alpha = .05/3 = .0167$ was also applied alongside the conventional $\alpha = .05$ threshold, and the results under both thresholds are reported in Table 4. To evaluate the magnitude of the internship's impact, Cohen's d effect size was calculated and interpreted using [Cohen's \(1988\)](#) criteria, where values of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. All statistical computations were executed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 31.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of this research, it was discovered that Indonesian students' self-perceived English communication skills improved significantly after undertaking an international internship in Taiwan. These findings are presented in three parts: respondent characteristics, the reliability and normality of the measurement instrument, and the comparison of students' speaking confidence, listening comprehension, and overall communication skills before and after the internship. Each part is presented through a results table, followed by an interpretation that connects the findings to the relevant theories and previous studies discussed earlier.

The questionnaire was distributed to interns working in Taiwan and received 40 valid responses, meeting the minimum sample size of 34 established through the G*Power analysis.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 40)

Characteristic	Category	f	%
Gender	Female	30	75.0
	Male	10	25.0
Work field in Taiwan	Hospitality	19	47.5
	Restaurant	10	25.0
	Food processing	8	20.0
	Factory	2	5.0
	Catering	1	2.5
Frequency of English use	Often	21	52.5
	Sometimes	10	25.0
	Rarely	9	22.5
First work experience	Yes	25	62.5
	No	15	37.5

Note. f = frequency; % = percentage.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were female (75.0%) and worked in the hospitality sector (47.5%). More than half (52.5%) reported using English often at work, and for most participants (62.5%) the Taiwan internship was their first work experience, which suggests that the changes reported below largely reflect skills developed during the internship rather than prior work exposure.

Beyond first work experience, work sector and frequency of English use at work were also examined descriptively in relation to the overall communication skills change reported in Table 4, since interns in different sectors are likely to differ in their everyday exposure to English. Because the food processing, factory, and catering sectors had very few respondents individually (n = 8, n = 2, and n = 1, respectively), these three sectors were combined into a single lower-exposure group for this comparison. The hospitality and restaurant sectors, which involve more frequent direct interaction with English-speaking guests or customers, were combined into a higher-exposure group. Table 2 presents the mean overall communication skills score before and after the internship, and the mean change, for each of these three demographic groupings. Because some subgroups are small, these results are reported descriptively and should be interpreted as an exploratory pattern rather than a formally tested effect.

Table 2 Mean Overall Communication Skills by Demographic Grouping

Grouping Variable	Group	n	Before M	After M	Mean Change
Work sector exposure	Higher exposure (Hospitality, Restaurant)	29	72.48	78.00	5.52
Work sector exposure	Lower exposure (Food processing, Factory, Catering)	11	54.73	68.36	13.64
Frequency of English use	Rarely	9	61.56	72.89	11.33
Frequency of English use	Sometimes	10	59.60	69.70	10.10
Frequency of English use	Often	21	74.00	79.10	5.10
First work experience	Yes (first time)	25	65.04	74.72	9.68
First work experience	No (prior experience)	15	71.87	76.40	4.53

Note. M = mean overall communication skills score (composite of speaking confidence and listening comprehension, range 20-100); Mean Change = mean of the after-before difference score. Work sector exposure groups were combined due to small individual sector sizes; see Table 1 for the original sector breakdown. These comparisons are descriptive only and were not tested for statistical significance.

As shown in Table 2, the pattern across all three demographic groupings points in a consistent direction. Interns in the lower-exposure work sectors improved more, on average, than those in the higher-exposure sectors (mean change of 13.64 versus 5.52); interns who used English rarely or sometimes improved more than those who used it often (mean change of 11.33 and 10.10 versus 5.10); and interns for whom the internship was their first work experience improved more than those with prior work experience (mean change of 9.68 versus 4.53). In each comparison, the group that started from a lower before-internship score also showed the larger increase, which is consistent with a ceiling effect: interns who already had more English exposure, and therefore a higher starting score, had comparatively less room left to improve, while interns with less prior exposure had more room to grow. This pattern should be read as a descriptive, exploratory observation rather than a confirmed effect, since some subgroups were small and no inferential test was conducted to compare them directly.

The internal consistency of the four measurement sets was tested using Cronbach's Alpha prior to the main analysis. Table 3 presents the reliability statistics for each measurement set.

Table 3 Reliability Statistics for Speaking Confidence and Listening Comprehension

Measurement Set	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Speaking Confidence (Before)	10	0.954
Listening Comprehension (Before)	10	0.952
Speaking Confidence (After)	10	0.932
Listening Comprehension (After)	10	0.948

As shown in Table 3, all four sets showed high reliability, with coefficients ranging from 0.932 to 0.954, well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). Because the sample size was 40, a Shapiro-Wilk test was also applied to the difference scores of each variable; all three difference-score distributions were normally distributed (Speaking Confidence: $W = .964$, $p = .223$; Listening Comprehension: $W = .956$, $p = .125$; Overall: $W = .959$, $p = .159$), so a paired samples t-test was used for all three comparisons.

Table 4 Presents the Descriptive Statistics and Paired Samples T-Test Results for the Three Self-Perceived Variables.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics and Paired Samples T-Test Results

Variable	Before M (SD)	After M (SD)	Mean Diff.	95% CI	t	p	dz	p_adj
Speaking Conf	33.68 (9.21)	37.88 (6.82)	-4.20	[-6.43,- 1.97]	-3.81	< .001	0.60	< .003
Listening Comp	33.93 (8.75)	37.48 (7.45)	-3.55	[-5.69,- 1.41]	-3.36	.002	0.53	.006
Overall Comm	67.60 (17.34)	75.35 (13.91)	-7.75	[-11.93,- 3.57]	-3.75	< .001	0.59	< .003

Note. M = mean score on the underlying item scale (10-50 for Speaking Confidence and Listening Comprehension, 20-100 for Overall Communication Skills); Mean Diff. = mean of the after-before difference score; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval of the mean difference; t (df = 39) = paired samples t-test statistic; p = uncorrected p-value from the paired samples t-test; dz = Cohen's dz effect size; p_adj = Bonferroni-adjusted p-value, calculated by multiplying the uncorrected p-value by 3 to account for the three paired-samples t-tests conducted, compared against a corrected threshold of $\alpha = .0167$.

As shown in Table 4, before the internship, students' mean scores for speaking confidence ($M = 33.68$, $SD = 9.21$), listening comprehension ($M = 33.93$, $SD = 8.75$), and overall communication skills ($M = 67.60$, $SD = 17.34$) all fell into the neutral category, reflecting a moderate perception. After the internship, all three mean scores increased into the positive category, reflecting a high perception (speaking confidence: $M = 37.88$, $SD = 6.82$; listening comprehension: $M = 37.48$, $SD = 7.45$; overall: $M = 75.35$, $SD = 13.91$). The paired samples t-test confirmed that each of these increases was statistically significant: speaking confidence, $t(39) = -3.81$, $p < .001$, $dz = 0.60$; listening comprehension, $t(39) = -3.36$, $p = .002$, $dz = 0.53$; and overall communication skills, $t(39) = -3.75$, $p < .001$, $dz = 0.59$. Following Cohen's (1988) convention, all three effect sizes fall in the medium range. Since the p-values for all three comparisons were below $\alpha = .05$, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted for speaking confidence, listening comprehension, and overall communication skills alike. As shown in the last column of Table 4, all three comparisons also remained significant under the stricter Bonferroni-corrected threshold of $\alpha = .0167$, indicating that the conclusions are not an artifact of testing three related outcomes without correction.

Interpretation Through Experiential Learning and Self-Efficacy Theory

Taken together, these findings show that Indonesian students' self-perceived English communication skills improved significantly after undertaking an international internship in Taiwan, with the increase spread consistently across all three indicators examined: speaking confidence, listening comprehension, and overall communication skills. The upward shift from a neutral to a positive self-perception is consistent with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory, which explains that authentic, repeated exposure to real communicative demands, such as those encountered daily in a hospitality or restaurant workplace, allows learners to build understanding through direct experience rather than passive classroom instruction. This finding aligns with research by Chang & Utsumi (2024), who found that Japanese undergraduates participating in international internships showed significantly improved English achievement as measured by TOEIC scores. It is also consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory: as students accumulate successful communicative experiences at work,

their belief in their own capability to communicate in English gradually strengthens, which in turn is reflected in higher self-perceived speaking confidence and listening comprehension scores. Within [MacIntyre's et al. \(1998\)](#) willingness-to-communicate framework, this rise in self-perceived competence is one of the proximal psychological conditions that make L2 use more likely, which is consistent with the finding that most respondents in this sample (52.5%) already reported using English often at work by the time of data collection.

Why the Two Indicators Improved by Somewhat Different Margins

A closer look at Table 4 shows that the two indicators, while both improving significantly, did not improve by exactly the same margin: speaking confidence showed the larger effect ($dz = 0.60$) and listening comprehension the smaller one ($dz = 0.53$). This small but consistent difference is plausible in light of recent evidence that self-efficacy for listening develops unevenly and remains sensitive to task difficulty, even when actual listening exposure is substantial. [Pei et al. \(2023\)](#) found that Chinese EFL learners who received 14 weeks of structured listening practice showed a clear improvement in listening comprehension itself, but only a partial and less consistent improvement in listening self-efficacy, which they attributed to the fact that self-efficacy beliefs are tied to the difficulty of the specific listening tasks a learner encounters rather than to cumulative practice alone. This pattern is consistent with research by [Harris \(2022\)](#), who developed a communicative self-efficacy questionnaire and found that listening and speaking self-efficacy were only moderately correlated with actual proficiency, suggesting that self-perceived gains in these two skills may develop at different rates even when exposure is similar. A plausible parallel explanation applies here: the interns in this study likely had frequent opportunities to produce spoken English in relatively predictable, repeated workplace exchanges (taking orders, greeting guests, handling routine requests), which builds speaking confidence fairly directly, whereas the listening demands of a Taiwanese hospitality workplace, such as fast or accented speech from co-workers, customers, and supervisors, may have remained comparatively unpredictable and cognitively demanding throughout the internship. This explanation is offered cautiously, since the present data cannot isolate the specific listening or speaking situations respondents were reacting to when they completed the questionnaire; it is presented as one plausible account of the pattern observed in Table 4, not as a confirmed mechanism.

Magnitude of Change in the Broader Study-Abroad Literature

It is also important not to overstate these results. Although all three comparisons were statistically significant, the effect sizes were only medium ($dz = 0.53$ to 0.60), not large. In practical terms, this means the internship experience was associated with a real but moderate shift in students' self-perceived communication skills, rather than a dramatic transformation. Placed against the wider study-abroad literature, this moderate magnitude is broadly consistent with, if somewhat more modest than, what has been reported for structured study-abroad programs: [Tseng et al.'s \(2024\)](#) multi-level meta-analysis of 42 study-abroad studies reported a medium-to-large overall effect ($g = 0.87$) of study-abroad language programs on second-language gains, with larger gains associated with longer stays and with programs that combined immersion with formal, content-based language coursework. This comparison should be read with caution, since [Tseng et al.'s](#) effect size is a between-group, multi-outcome

meta-analytic average drawn mostly from academic study-abroad settings, whereas the d_z values reported here come from a single-group, self-report paired comparison in a workplace internship setting; the two are not statistically equivalent. Even so, the pattern is informative: an internship placement without an accompanying structured language-training component, such as the one examined here, appears to produce self-perceived gains toward the lower end of what immersion-based experiences can achieve, which is consistent with [Horwitz et al. \(1986\)](#) and [MacIntyre & Gardner \(1994\)](#), who explain that foreign language communication apprehension does not disappear simply because a learner is placed in a communicative environment. Workplace pressure, unfamiliar accents, and the demands of a fast-paced bilingual setting, as described by [Su \(2021\)](#) in the Taiwanese EFL context, can continue to limit how much confidence and comprehension actually improve, even when the improvement is genuine and statistically detectable.

Comparison with Prior Studies on Internship-Based English Communication

These results align with, and also extend, several previous studies. [Ayudhaya et al. \(2026\)](#) found that self-esteem was a consistent predictor of willingness to communicate among Thai interns; the present study's finding that speaking confidence rose alongside listening comprehension is compatible with that pattern, since higher self-perceived competence is one of the components that [MacIntyre et al. \(1998\)](#) identify as feeding directly into willingness to communicate. [Chou & Pan \(2026\)](#) found that listening self-efficacy mediated the relationship between listening strategy use and proficiency among Taiwanese workplace English learners; although the present study measured self-perceived listening comprehension rather than test-based proficiency, the significant increase found here is consistent with the idea that sustained exposure to workplace listening demands can strengthen learners' confidence in their own comprehension, even if, as discussed above, this strengthening may lag behind gains in speaking confidence. [Chen et al. \(2023\)](#) reported a perception gap in which student interns in Singapore tended to view their own language competency as already adequate; the present study cannot confirm or refute an employer-side perspective, since only students were surveyed, but the still-moderate post-internship scores ($M = 37.88$ and 37.48 out of a possible 50) suggest that students themselves did not perceive their skills as fully mastered even after the internship. [Lin & Tseng \(2020\)](#) found that Taiwanese interns abroad experienced a gap between the reading- and writing-focused training they received and the speaking and listening demands of their workplace; the present findings, obtained from international interns coming into Taiwan rather than Taiwanese interns going abroad, suggest that this same imbalance may also affect how much students' oral skills can improve during a single internship period. Finally, Tra et al.'s (2025) mixed-methods study of Vietnamese students studying in the United Kingdom offers a useful point of comparison from a different Southeast Asian sending country and a different destination: their participants likewise reported only moderate levels of second-language self-confidence and willingness to communicate even after a period of overseas immersion. Read alongside the present findings, this convergence across two different Southeast Asian cohorts, two different host countries, and two different types of overseas experience, an academic sojourn and a workplace internship, raises the possibility that this pattern is not unique to this sample, though confirming a broader Southeast Asian pattern would require comparison across more than two studies.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

For practice, these findings imply that international internships in Taiwan do function as a useful setting for developing Indonesian students' self-perceived oral English skills, but that internship exposure alone produces only a moderate gain, and the gain appears somewhat more consistent for speaking confidence than for listening comprehension. Universities that send students abroad, such as UNIMEN, may therefore benefit from pairing internship placement with structured pre-departure training that specifically targets speaking and listening under workplace conditions, and, in view of the discussion above, listening training that exposes students to varied accents and fast, unscripted speech may be particularly valuable, rather than relying on the internship experience by itself to close the gap identified in the introduction. Theoretically, these findings support extending [Kolb's \(1984\)](#) experiential learning theory and [Bandura's \(1997\)](#) self-efficacy theory to the specific context of international, workplace-based internships, while also indicating, in line with [Pei et al. \(2023\)](#), that experiential and self-efficacy gains should be examined separately for different communicative sub-skills rather than assumed to move together.

This study has several limitations. First, it used a one-group retrospective post-then-pre design without a comparison group, so the observed improvement cannot be attributed to the internship with the same certainty as a controlled experimental design would allow. Second, both the before and after internship ratings were self-reported and collected at a single point in time, which makes the data susceptible to memory and social-desirability bias, even though the retrospective design was specifically chosen to reduce response-shift bias. Related to this, because participants rated their before and after communication skills concurrently in the same sitting, the design may also be susceptible to a contrast or self-enhancement effect, in which baseline ratings are unconsciously lowered so that the perceived improvement appears larger. This is a systematic bias that is distinct from the memory-related imprecision noted above. Third, the sample was limited to 40 students recruited through purposive sampling from a small number of workplace sectors in Taiwan, which limits how far these findings can be generalized to interns in other countries, sectors, or with different lengths of internship. Fourth, this study measured students' self-perceived communication skills only, without an objective measure of actual English proficiency. Fifth, the questionnaire's content validity was established through review by a single expert validator using a qualitative approval process, rather than a quantitative content validity index, such as Aiken's V, involving multiple validators. This may limit the robustness of the validity evidence. Sixth, part of the sample was recruited through direct outreach and peer referral via WhatsApp and Line outside the two fixed WhatsApp groups described in the Methods section, so the total number of interns who received the questionnaire link could not be fully tracked, and an overall response rate for the full sample could not be calculated. This limitation should be considered when interpreting the generalizability of the findings.

Future research is recommended to replicate this study with a larger and more diverse sample across different countries and workplace sectors, and where possible to incorporate a comparison group or a longitudinal design with more than two measurement points. Combining self-perceived measures with objective language assessments, such as standardized listening or speaking tests, would also help determine how closely students' self-

perceptions track their actual language gains, and would allow the moderate effect sizes found in this study to be examined against independently verified outcomes.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to describe and examine whether Indonesian students' self-perceived speaking confidence and listening comprehension differed significantly before and after an international internship program in Taiwan. Using a retrospective post-then-pre survey of 40 interns, the study found that self-perceived speaking confidence, listening comprehension, and overall communication skills all increased significantly after the internship, shifting from a neutral to a positive perception, although the effect sizes were only medium ($dz = 0.53$ to 0.60), so the improvement, while real, was moderate rather than dramatic. This suggests that international internships can meaningfully support, but not by themselves fully resolve, the speaking and listening challenges Indonesian students face in international workplaces. The main limitations of this study are its one-group design without a comparison group, its reliance on a single-point, self-reported measure that may be subject to memory and contrast effects, its use of a single expert validator for content validity, its relatively small and purposively sampled group of 40 interns from a limited number of sectors in Taiwan, and the partly untraceable response rate resulting from peer referral recruitment, all of which restrict how far the findings can be generalized. Future research is recommended to use larger and more diverse samples, comparison or longitudinal designs, and objective language assessments alongside self-report measures, so that the direction and magnitude of change identified in this study can be verified and extended in other internship contexts.

REFERENCES

- Ayu, H. K., Thamrin, N. S., Dewi, A. K., & Kamaruddin, A. (2026). Peer support and confidence in English speaking proficiency among EFL students. *Journal of General Education and Humanities*, 5(1), 1233–1240. <https://doi.org/10.58421/gehu.v5i1.972>
- Ayudhaya, N. H. N., Oo, P. S., Kunchai, J., Em, S., Chatchaikulsiri, N., Iipinge, S. M., Rudzinska, I., & Khampirat, B. (2026). Impacts of self-esteem and social exposure on English willingness to communicate during internship. *Discover Psychology*, 6(1), Article 664. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44202-026-00664-0>
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.
- Brown, N. A., Dewey, D. P., & Cox, T. L. (2014). Assessing the validity of can-do statements in retrospective (then-now) self-assessment. *Foreign Language Annals*, 47(2), 261–285. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12082>
- Chang, C., & Utsumi, Y. (2024). The impact of international internships on Japanese undergraduates' English achievement: Perspectives on cultural capital theory. *Education + Training*, 66(7), 890–906. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ET-04-2023-0124>
- Chen, T.-L., Goodman, D., Morrison, A., & Wang, M.-J. (2023). International internships, language competency, and employability: Perceptions of and gaps between students and industry stakeholders. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research (AHTR)*, 11(3), 371–391. <https://doi.org/10.30519/ahtr.1133594>
- Chou, M. H., & Pan, W. C. (2026). Exploring English proficiency, listening strategies, and self-

- efficacy in a workplace English course: A moderated serial mediation approach. *Language Awareness*, 35(2), 468–488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.2025.2502429>
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. *Psychometrika*, 16(3), 297–334. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02310555>
- Daflizar, D. (2024). Out-of-class speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL students and its relationship with self-perceived speaking skills, vocabulary proficiency, and gender. *JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 12(1), 240–253. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v12i1.9342>
- EF Education First. (2025). *EF English Proficiency Index 2025: A ranking of 123 countries and regions by English skills*. <https://www.ef.com/epi/>
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A.-G., & Buchner, A. (2007). G*Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods*, 39(2), 175–191. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03193146>
- Harris, J. (2022). Measuring listening and speaking self-efficacy in EFL contexts: The development of the Communicative SE Questionnaire. *Language Teaching Research*, 29(3), 1210–1234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221091608>
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125–132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05256.x>
- Howard, G. S., Ralph, K. M., Gulanick, N. A., Maxwell, S. E., Nance, D. W., & Gerber, S. K. (1979). Internal invalidity in pretest-posttest self-report evaluations and a re-evaluation of retrospective pretests. *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 3(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014662167900300101>
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice-Hall.
- Lin, Y.-H., & Tseng, Y.-C. (2020). Learning English in tourism and hospitality internships overseas: Reflections from six Taiwanese college students. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 10(5), 180–191. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n5p180>
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1994). The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. *Language Learning*, 44(2), 283–305. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1994.tb01103.x>
- MacIntyre, P. D., Clément, R., Dörnyei, Z., & Noels, K. A. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a L2: A situational model of L2 confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(4), 545–562. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1998.tb05543.x>
- Pei, T., Suwanthep, J., & Lu, H. (2023). The effect of self-directed online metacognitive listening practice on Chinese EFL learners' listening ability, metacognition, and self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, Article 1285059. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1285059>

- Schunk, D. H., & Pajares, F. (2002). The development of academic self-efficacy. In A. Wigfield & J. S. Eccles (Eds.), *Development of achievement motivation* (pp. 15–31). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B987-012750053-9/50003-6>
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2020). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (8th ed.). Wiley.
- Shapiro, S. S., & Wilk, M. B. (1965). An analysis of variance test for normality (complete samples). *Biometrika*, 52(3/4), 591–611. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2333709>
- Su, Y.-C. (2021). College students' oral communication strategy use, self-perceived English proficiency and confidence, and communication anxiety in Taiwan's EFL learning. *Educational Studies*, 57(6), 650–669. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2021.1919677>
- Sugiyono. (2017). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Tra, N. N. T., Han, W., & Pill, S. (2025). Willingness to communicate, L2 self-confidence, and academic self-concept: A mixed-methods study of Vietnamese university students in the UK. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(9), Article 1176. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15091176>
- Tseng, W.-T., Liu, Y.-T., Hsu, Y.-T., & Chu, H.-C. (2024). Revisiting the effectiveness of study abroad language programs: A multi-level meta-analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 28(1), 156–200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820988423>
- UNIMEN. (2025, Januari 15). *Rektor UNIMEN lepas 8 mahasiswa magang internasional ke Taiwan*. <https://unimen.ac.id/rektor-unimen-lepas-8-mahasiswa-magang-internasional-ke-taiwan/>
- Universitas Bosowa. (2025, Mei 28). *Unibos dan Poltekbos kirim 79 mahasiswa magang ke Taiwan*. <https://news.unibos.ac.id/2025/05/28/unibos-dan-poltekbos-kirim-79-mahasiswa-magang-ke-taiwan/>
- Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh. (2025). *Rektor Unmuha lepas lima mahasiswa perhotelan untuk program magang internasional di Taiwan*. Kompasiana. <https://www.kompasiana.com/unmuha/6928515bc925c40f7d05b722/rektor-unmuha-lepas-lima-mahasiswa-perhotelan-untuk-program-magang-internasional-di-taiwan>
- UW-Madison Division of Extension, Program Development & Evaluation. (2021). *Using the retrospective post-then-pre questionnaire design*. <https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/programdevelopment/files/2021/12/RetrospectivePost-then-Pre.pdf>
- Vandergrift, L. (2007). Recent developments in second and foreign language listening comprehension research. *Language Teaching*, 40(3), 191–210. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004338>
- Wykowski, J. H., & Starks, H. (2025). What type of self-assessment is best for your educational activity? A review of pre-post, now-then, and post-only designs. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 40(5), 1010–1015. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-024-09176-w>