

Graduate Program Interpreting Practicum: Introduction of Portable SI Equipment and Collaboration with Undergraduates

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1. Introduction

This study reports an attempt to incorporate new perspectives within simultaneous interpreting (SI) practicums at the graduate program by introducing four case studies conducted in the Japanese–English interpreting and translation program at the Graduate School of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS). This study explores practicums from the planning, execution, and administration perspectives and presents findings from the viewpoints of supervisor and students. TUFS offers a two-year Japanese–English interpreting and translation master’s program, wherein students take consecutive interpreting classes in the first year and SI classes and practicum in the second year. The program was launched in 2004, and the practicum’s main structure was to invite guest speakers to have students experience SI in an SI booth (Naito 2009; Tsuruta & Naito 2010, 2011; Tsuruta 2015). In 2019, the author assumed the role of freshly designing, instructing, and supervising the practicum from scratch. The research question was how to make the practicum as practical as possible considering the actual needs of the interpreting market in Japan. Simultaneously, it was also necessary to consider feasibility in terms of budget, timing, and the level of the practicum.

In the academic year of 2019, four practicums were designed and conducted, namely, (1) SI on the campus tour; (2) SI in collaborative class with undergraduate students; (3) subtitle translation and SI for an internal event; and (4) SI for an open-to-the-public lecture event featuring a guest speaker. The freshly designed practicums incorporated new perspectives that were added to the conventional practicum, namely, introducing portable SI equipment in the practicum in addition to the SI booth settings and conducting collaborative classes with undergraduate students who are taking the interpretation-related class. Consequently, making the SI practicum as practical as possible was realized mainly by introducing the use of portable SI equipment. It is because portable SI equipment have been widely used in the interpreting market, and graduate students are more likely to use it if they work as interpreters after graduation. A confirmed benefit of the new endeavors was an increase in variation of interpreting styles, which enabled us to have more available options in practicums and create win–win situations for stakeholders by utilizing internal resources. It is also confirmed that appropriate frequency and

execution timing of practicums continue to be issues because the program requirement for graduation includes not only an interpreting practicum but also a master's thesis or research project. Based on the reflection session with students conducted at the term-end, all of the students agreed that for four practicums conducted in 2019, the timing for each was the best. From the supervisor's perspective, how to strike a balance between practicum and research is an issue that needs to be resolved.

2. SI practicum with new perspective

In planning the SI practicum, scaffolding approach, practicality, collaborative learning, and balance of directionality of language were considered. Prior to designing the practicum, the author took time to hear from the students to ensure the practicum matched their needs and current conditions. TUFs adopted a quarter system, and the relevant class was open for the spring and fall quarters. Spring quarter is the first period that students take SI classes, and it conflicts with the job-hunting season for them. Therefore, the need for a scaffolding approach and flexible scheduling by adjusting the activity level and audience size to avoid excessive pressure on the students was confirmed. In the fall quarter, students' interpreting skills are expected to improve compared to spring, but they are required to complete and submit a master's thesis or research project for graduation. Thus, the execution timing of the last practicum had to be carefully considered. Each aspect is further elaborated in the following sections.

2.1 Scaffolding approach

In designing practicums, the scaffolding approach was utilized. To what extent information is shared with speakers in advance determines the level of interpreting because preparation indeed matters in interpreting performance. Seleskovitch (1978) stated that "there are no conferences for which the interpreter does not need to prepare" (p.124). Gile (2018) described strategies and tactics to manage linguistic and cognitive difficulties in SI and refers to "preparation" strategy. The more prepared an interpreter is, the better their performance will be. If the information given in advance is limited and preparation is insufficient, it is especially challenging for novice interpreters. In contrast, if interpreters are provided sufficient information in advance and well prepared, the interpretation level can be adjusted to be less challenging. Additionally, audience size adds psychological pressure on students, especially for beginners. Considering these aspects, the first practicum was designed to make students alternately assume the roles of not only interpreters but also speakers on their own to ensure that they can be well prepared for interpreting tasks when their classmates are speakers. Besides, rehearsal opportunities were provided one week before the actual performance day and the audience size was limited to smaller groups to avoid excessive psychological pressure in their first practicum.

2.2 Practicality

Portable SI equipment was introduced for the first time in consideration of practicality especially in Japanese

interpreting market. When SI is explained, SI booth is generally mentioned as standard mode. For instance, Seleskovitch (1978) mentioned that “[i]n simultaneous interpreting the interpreter is isolated in a booth” (p.110). AIIC (n.d.) explained SI as follows: “In standard simultaneous mode, the interpreter sits in a booth with a clear view of the meeting room and the speaker. He or she listens to and simultaneously interprets the speech into a target language. Standard simultaneous interpreting requires a booth (fixed or mobile) that meets ISO/IEC standards for sound insulation, dimensions, air quality and accessibility as well as for the appropriate equipment (headphones, microphones).” Accordingly, thus far, SI practicums at TUFS have been conducted mainly in an SI booth with invited guest speakers. However, the booth environment is not the only setting for SI, as Pöchhacker (2004) referred to “portable transmission equipment (microphone and headset receivers) as used for guided tours” (p.19) as one of the forms of SI. Gile (2018) also mentioned that portable equipment is sometimes used instead of an SI booth. In Japan’s interpreting market particularly, portable transmission equipment has been widely used in many conferences, especially in business fields (Hiratsuka 2013; Tsuruta & Naito 2010). Moreover, the demand for interpreting in business settings is outstanding in other studies as well. For instance, Shinzaki, Ishiguro, Itaya, Kitama, and Nishihata (2019) conducted a questionnaire survey for interpreters who had received training in Japan and had worked as paid professional interpreters. One hundred ninety-nine interpreters responded to the questionnaire, and it was determined that businesses account for the top 14% among various fields of interpreting. Many companies adopt SI rather than consecutive interpreting when time saving is prioritized. However, most companies often do not have an SI booth installed, and even if they do, meeting rooms equipped with an SI booth are limited, in which case portable SI equipment is frequently used because it is handy and can be operated anywhere.

Figure 1. Portable transmission equipment used in the SI practicums



Tsuruta and Naito (2011) referred to the inception of the graduate level interpreting program at TUFS and explained that one of its objectives was equipping students with interpreting skills that can be used when working for corporations. Also, Tsuruta and Naito (2010) mentioned the portable SI equipment was frequently used in the actual market and stated that interpreting training must be made practical. However, the portable equipment had not previously been used in practicums despite the fact that students are more likely to be exposed to SI using portable equipment, especially in business settings. Therefore, the portable SI equipment has been introduced for the first time in the practicum at TUFS to improve the program’s practicality and match the needs of the actual

interpreting market in Japan. As shown in Figure 1, a combination of transmitter and receiver is used in the practicums.

2.3 Collaborative learning with undergraduate students

In the conventional SI practicum program at TUFS, guest speakers would be invited to create an opportunity for students to interpret their speech (Tsuruta & Naito 2011, Tsuruta 2015). However, one of the challenges of involving external resources, such as guest speakers, is scheduling. Thus, it is necessary to check the availability of guest speakers and arrange the schedule far in advance from the actual date of the practicum. During the spring quarter, students are usually busy with job-hunting activities, and some may face scheduling conflicts between their practicum and job interviews. Because guest speakers are invited to the practicum, it is not desirable or polite for some students to be absent or request a change in schedule at the last minute. One solution, as proposed by the author, was utilizing internal resources. Internal resources could include university students, classes, facilities, and events. Thus, in the first and second practicum designs, collaboration between undergraduates and graduates has been introduced. Additionally, collaboration with the university's internal event is conducted in the third practicum.

2.4 Directionality of language

In designing interpreting practicums, language directionality has also been an issue for consideration. It is desirable to provide well-balanced opportunities of practicums from English to Japanese and vice versa. In the first practicum, speakers spoke in English; however, to create directionality, a Q&A session was intentionally established to ensure questions from the audience were asked in Japanese. The second practicum comprises a discussion in Japanese by undergraduate students that was simultaneously interpreted by graduate students. The third practicum involved four speakers; English was the primary language used, but one speaker partially spoke Japanese. Additionally, both English and Japanese were used in the Q&A session. Consequently, both directionalities were realized. In the fourth practicum, the invited guest speaker was Japanese and the directionality was from Japanese to English (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Four case studies

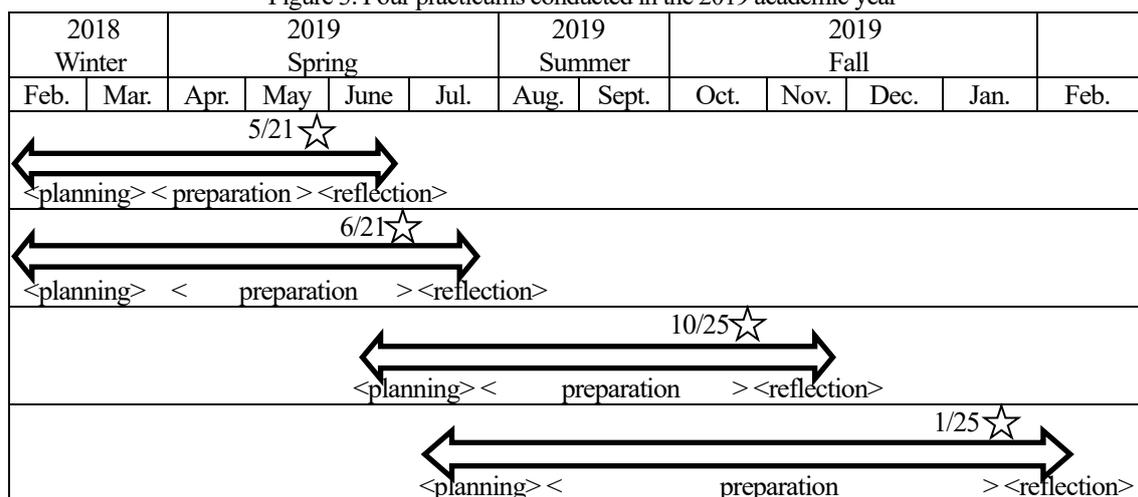
Practicums	Participants	Directionality		Portable*	Booth**
		E=>J	J=>E		
Campus tour	10	○	○	○	○
Collaboration with undergraduate class	80+	/	○	○	/
Subtitle translation and SI for internal events	200+	○	○	/	○
SI for guest speaker lecture	100+	/	○	/	○

*Portable: use of portable SI equipment, **Booth: use of SI booth

3. Four case studies: From planning, execution, and administration

The 2019 academic year comprised the following quarters: spring (Apr. 18–Jul. 18, 2019); summer (Jul. 19–Sept. 30, 2019); fall (Oct. 1–Jan. 28, 2020); and winter (Jan. 29–Mar. 31, 2020). As shown in Figure 3, four practicums were executed on May 21, June 21, October 25 in 2019, and January 25 in 2020. In designing each practicum, elements such as (a) audience, (b) directionality of language, and (c) interpreting settings (use of portable equipment or interpreting booth) were considered. The planning of each practicum started far ahead of the actual execution date, as shown in the “planning” timing. For each practicum, students were required to record their performance using an IC recorder, transcribe their interpreting, and submit the revised version as well as a reflection report; an in-class feedback session followed to aid further improvement, as shown in the “reflection” timing. Two of the practicums were conducted in the spring quarter, while two were conducted in the fall. Details of each practicum from designing and execution to administration perspectives are elaborated in the following sections.

Figure 3. Four practicums conducted in the 2019 academic year



3.1 Case 1: Campus-tour practicum organized by the program

The first practicum designed and executed in 2019 was to conduct SI in the style of a campus tour. The university’s official open campus was scheduled for mid-July. Unfortunately, the timing and target audience did not coincide because the timing was too late (after the spring quarter) and the audience mainly comprised high school students. Thus, the program organized an internal campus tour to enable execution within the spring quarter. This allowed for targeting the undergraduate students interested in joining the graduate program as well as familiarizing first-year graduate students with the program. This is because some graduate students are enrolled from other universities and are unfamiliar with the TUFs campus and system. This first practicum was conducted in a small group intended to suppress psychological pressure of students in charge of SI, as stated in the scaffolding approach.

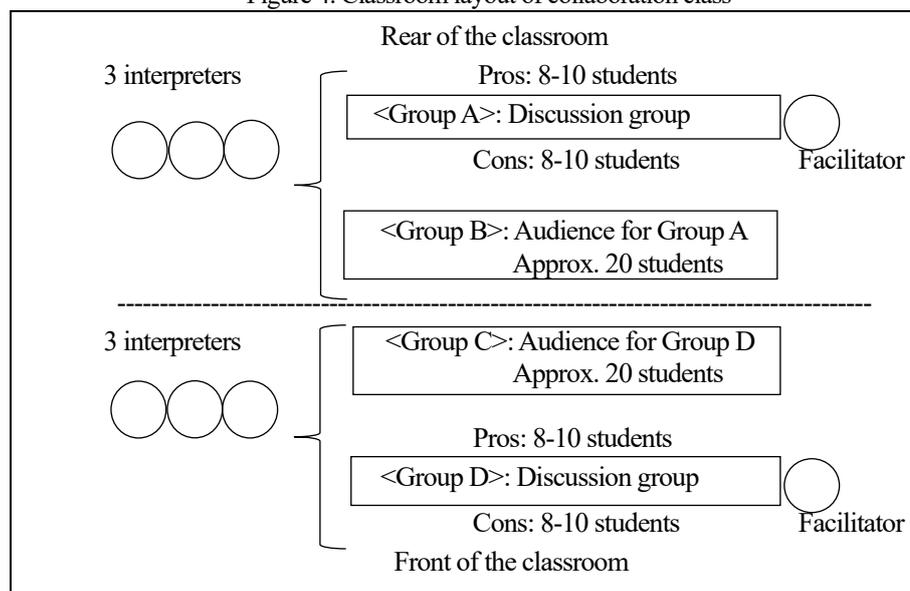
Because it was the first time adopting portable SI equipment, it was necessary to purchase portable SI equipment. Once portable SI equipment was purchased and delivered, I took time to demonstrate how to use and maintain the equipment for the program's graduate students. I also instructed them about how to take turns when using the equipment in pairs, which was practiced in class. The program's campus tour was structured to present an overview of the university and the interpreting and translation graduate program in the classroom equipped with an SI booth and then to move on to touring the campus monument, the Research and Lecture building, library, and cafeteria, etc. Prior to executing the campus-tour practicum on June 21, 2019, a rehearsal was conducted one prior week to ensure students could identify necessary aspects of interpreting tasks. Some points recognized in the rehearsal as needing improvement included noise factors. When two transmitters are switched on and off, it had to be operated carefully to avoid affecting the audience with uncomfortable noises. Additionally, students realized that they must consider their breathing noise because both speakers and interpreters walk around during the tour, which is quite different from static SI booth situations.

3.2 Case 2: Practicum in the collaboration class with undergraduate students

The second practicum designed was collaboration with an introductory class on interpreting for undergraduate students taught by the author. The aim of this class was to have participants acquire broad knowledge on the profession of an interpreter by providing an overview of the interpreting types, history, theory, training method, code of ethics, career development, issues in the industry, etc. The advantage of this practicum was to achieve flexible scheduling and win-win situations for undergraduate and graduate students. Unlike inviting guest speakers, it was possible to flexibly set appropriate time. Moreover, it was beneficial for undergraduate students to experience using portable SI equipment and listening to graduate students' SI performance. Similarly, it was beneficial for graduate students to have a hands-on experience in front of an audience and receive direct feedback in a safe environment. "Safe" means that there is no significant damage for any participant even if graduate students' interpreting performance is not satisfactory. Rather, it will be a good learning opportunity for students to identify what went well and what did not. From the perspectives of administration and operation of the practicum, it was beneficial to utilize internal resources to provide hands-on experiences for undergraduate and graduate students without incurring costs.

The second practicum was a collaborative activity with a large class size, but was smoothly operated through a planned structure and rehearsal opportunities. When the author was teaching another interpreting training class with 24 students, the designed term-end assignment was a roleplaying activity to experience the roles of speaker, interpreter, and audience. I spent sufficient time structuring the activity, which was successful owing to the rehearsal opportunity (Nishihata 2018). Based on the achievement of the roleplaying activity, a structure was thoroughly planned and a rehearsal opportunity was provided one week prior to the actual date of the second practicum. In this activity, the classroom space was divided in two with desks arranged as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Classroom layout of collaboration class



Around 80 undergraduate students were divided into four groups (groups A, B, C, and D). Groups A and D were the discussion groups, and groups B and C were the audience groups. Each discussion group comprised a facilitator and discussion members who were separated to determine pros and cons of the discussion topic, “the advantage and disadvantage of social network service.” The three graduate students assigned to each discussion group alternately interpreted the discussions from Japanese to English, and undergraduate students in each audience group listened to SI performances through portable SI receivers.

3.3 Case 3: Practicum at the university’s “TUFS cinema” event

The third practicum conducted was subtitle translation and SI at the university’s internal event, “TUFS cinema.” TUFS cinema is an irregular university event aiming to deepen the understanding regarding society, history, and culture. Combining film screenings and discussion sessions with experts form the basic structure of the event. It is free and open to the public and does not require a reservation. This practicum was realized because of a request made by internal faculty looking for somebody to work on subtitle translation and SI. The first inquiry received was a request for some graduate students available for subtitle translation and SI. Because there were six students in the program, negotiation was made to determine the possibility of three students being in charge of subtitle translation and the other three students being responsible for SI. The negotiation was done successfully, and six graduate students voluntarily joined the subtitle translation and SI teams. The subtitle translation team worked on translating subtitles in June and July 2019. The event was held on October 25, 2019, and the SI team was responsible for interpreting in an SI booth for the presentation and discussion session with the facilitator and directors before and after the screening. The event was organized as open-to-public by the university’s public relations office, and more than 200 people attended. Students prepared a feedback sheet on their SI performance as well as a subtitle translation and collected 65 feedback sheets from the audience.

3.4 Case 4: Practicum at the guest speaker lecture

The final practicum was designed as an open-to-the-public lecture given by a guest speaker. Particularly for the last practicum, challenges included execution timing and venue availability. January is the university's entrance exam season nationwide, and classrooms equipped with an SI booth were unavailable. The only internal venue available was a large event hall that accommodated over 500 people. One of the challenges in executing an open-to-the-public lecture was generating publicity to gather participants. The speaker is a seasoned conference/broadcasting interpreter and has a doctorate in international communication. She had been teaching consecutive interpreting at TUFS for the past 15 years as a part-time lecturer. She taught the graduate students in their first year of the master's program. Based on her background and the fact that she was set to retire in March 2020, she was the most appropriate guest speaker candidate; it became a commemorative event for us to show her our appreciation for her long-term contribution to the program. The author contacted her directly to speak at the last practicum, which she warmly agreed to.

The preparation started more than six months before the actual practicum date and roles and tasks were prepared in detail. In addition to 6 graduate students, I recruited totally 13 first-year graduate students in the program and undergraduate students in my interpreting and translation seminar as staff members for support to conduct the event. Their roles included making and posting event flyers, unlocking/locking the venue and borrowing/returning keys, setting up necessary equipment, reception, guiding the audience, making announcements before and after the event, operating lights and sound, attending to the guest speaker, preparing the bouquet presentation, explaining to the audience how to use SI equipment, and collecting the equipment after the event. For publicity, in addition to the university's bulletin board, event information was shared through the following means:

- mailing list of the alumni of the program
- university's official website
- email announcement to the internal faculty
- e-magazine of the language supporters of the university's Center for Intercultural Studies
- email announcement to members of the Japanese Association of Interpreting and Translation

Consequently, more than 100 people attended the event. The graduate students prepared feedback sheets to circulate the audiences as they did in the third practicum, collecting 43 sheets.

4. Discussion

For each practicum, graduate students' SI performance were recorded, transcribed, and a revised version with a reflection report was submitted. A reflection session was held in the class for further improvement. Additionally, students alternated writing reports for each practicum; these are posted on the program's website (TUFS Japanese–English Interpreting and Translation Program 2019). Based on the reflection of the four designed and

executed practicums, achievements and challenges identified are detailed in the following section.

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Variation of practicums

The conventional interpreting practicum at TUFS was to invite guest speakers and have students conduct SI in booth settings. In addition to SI practicum in booth settings, introducing portable SI equipment enabled students to experience various practicum styles as introduced in the campus tour and through collaboration with another undergraduate class.

4.1.2 Utilization of internal resources

In practicums inviting guest speakers, difficulty of scheduling and remuneration must be considered. When a guest speaker is invited, remuneration must be budgeted far in advance based on the standard amount stipulated by the university. Additionally, the guest speaker's schedule has to be respected and prioritized; however, it is especially difficult to arrange the schedule during the spring quarter when graduate students often face scheduling conflicts owing to job-hunting activities. Besides, their SI capability had not reached a sufficient level by spring quarter to invite speakers. By utilizing internal resources through collaborating with undergraduate students, hands-on experiences were realized for graduate and undergraduate students without incurring cost. In the third practicum, graduate students could experience subtitle translation and SI with a large audience, which also contributed to the success of the university's internal event. Both cases reveal win-win situations for all the stakeholders without incurring administrative costs for conducting the practicums.

4.2 Issues to consider

4.2.1 Availability of appropriate classroom

The introductory class for undergraduates "Overview of Interpreting" has a relatively large number of participants. However, it is difficult to anticipate the exact number as fluctuations occur each quarter. For the class opening in the spring quarter of 2019, a classroom with a 50-person capacity was assigned, but over 70 students attended in the first week. As there were no large, empty classrooms available, it was necessary to request the administration office to switch classroom with another class. Besides, to change the layout as shown in Figure 4, movable independent desks and chairs were necessary because some of the classrooms were equipped with a large desk with a fixed chair. As a result of negotiations and adjustments, a classroom with a capacity of 100 persons was secured, and the second practicum was conducted. Thus, securing the requisite type of classroom is a crucial aspect of allowing for certain types of activities in class.

4.2.2 Event held on weekends

As for scheduling the fourth practicum, or open-to-the-public lecture, the practicum date was set for a Saturday to ensure that working people, including alumni, could attend. However, the concerning point was that administration office is closed on Saturdays, and any administrative and operative tasks would need to be undertaken by students. For the lecture in the large event hall that accommodates over 500 people, we were responsible for operating all of the necessary equipment including the lighting, audio system, SI booth, and projectors. Additionally, all of the necessary equipment, such as microphones, had to be borrowed from the relevant administration office at the university prior to the weekend. Therefore, the rehearsal was conducted on Friday, the day before the execution day, to ensure that the students could receive instructions from technical staff on how to use the equipment on their own. It is beneficial to draw more participants by setting practicum date on weekends, but extra consideration is needed if the event is held on weekends.

4.2.3 Feasibility

In designing and executing practicums, there are several aspects that must be considered to make it a success. Points to be considered include the following: (a) timing of execution, (b) level of difficulty, (c) style of practicum, (d) scale of the event, (f) target audience, (g) venue, (h) budget, and (i) publicity. Because the practicum must be prepared far in advance, timing of execution is important. Furthermore, the level of difficulty must be adjusted depending on students' capabilities. Practicums can be conducted both in classroom settings and outside by utilizing portable SI equipment. Event scale and target audience must also be considered, ideally beginning with small steps and gradually increasing the scale. Additionally, the venue must be reserved far in advance. Finally, generating publicity is also essential to gather participants for any lectures that are open to the public.

4.2.4 Balance with master's thesis/research

Globally, in many graduate interpreting and translation programs, thesis submission is not a requirement to obtain a master's degree (Takeda 2010). However, the interpreting and translation program at TUFSS requires students to submit a master's thesis or research project, such as a translation of a book, to complete the program. Thus, it is a challenge to set appropriate timings and consider practicum workload to ensure that it does not affect the quality of the students' master's thesis/research negatively. As the submission is due at the beginning of January, it was judged to schedule the last practicum after the master's thesis/research project submission date. Therefore, from a supervisor's perspective, one issue was that graduate students tend to spend less time and energy on research, although it depends on individual effort. From the instructor's perspective, some students prefer practicums and spend insufficient time on master's research, resulting in low quality research. In each practicum, both preparation and reflection took considerable time. In designing and administering practicums, preparation must begin far in advance of the actual practicum date. For the last practicum, for instance, preparation actually started six months before but it was not too early to start at all. This time, the practicums were

conducted four times per year. Considering time and energy needed for completing a master's thesis/research at an acceptable level, it is realistic to set practicum frequency to fewer than four times annually.

5. Conclusion

Reflecting on the designing, executing, and administration of the practicum, three findings were identified. The first is the benefit of using portable SI equipment. SI practicum was previously performed in an SI booth in a classroom setting. However, by newly introducing portable equipment, it afforded more options in designing practicums, as was shown in the cases of the campus tour and collaborative class with undergraduate students.

Second, utilizing internal resources made it possible to adjust the schedule flexibly compared with inviting guest speakers. Because graduate students tend to face scheduling conflict owing to job-hunting activities and their SI skills remain at a beginner's level during the spring quarter, it was confirmed that practicums that utilized internal resources were a more desirable option.

The third point is the practicum frequency. In the 2019 academic year, four practicums were conducted. Students' opinions were that four times yearly was the best and most appropriate frequency. From the perspective of an instructor, who is responsible for designing and supervising the practicum, four times was appropriate; however, it should not exceed four for two reasons. First, students in the program are required to complete a master's thesis/research and other required classes in parallel. If they are overwhelmed by the tasks required for practicums, they spend less time on research, which could negatively affect the quality of their research. Additionally, practicum planning and designing must begin far in advance of the actual practicum date because it entails extensive tasks such as adjustment and negotiations with stakeholders, preparing necessary equipment, and securing a venue. Therefore, four times or less annually would apparently be the realistic frequency concerning feasibility.

The fourth practicum was conducted on January 25, 2020, after consulting with students. The date was chosen because (a) students were required to submit their master's thesis/research project on January 7 or 8, 2020, and (b) January 18 and 19, 2020 were the university's entrance exam dates, and the venue was unavailable. The positive side was that students could take time to prepare for the last practicum after submitting their master's thesis/research. The drawback was that it was impossible to hold an in-class reflection session because the last SI class during the fall quarter ended on January 10, 2020. If practicums are conducted four times, the timing of execution—especially of the last practicum—is challenging.

One student commented that graduate school is where one learns multitasking, while another student insisted that she is fulfilled with her achievements because of the various experiences gained through practicum and research in the program. For a graduate school of interpreting and translation program, striking a balance between research and practicum for students as well as instructors continues to be a point worth considering. Furthermore, the following 2020 was an irregular year because of COVID-19 and we faced a totally unprecedented challenge to get accustomed to *the new normal*. How interpreting practicum was conducted online will be reported on a

different occasion.

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