

University of Waikato Spring Online Program: A Report on Successes, Challenges, and Future Considerations

Colin S. D. PHILLIPS

INTRODUCTION

The continued spread of coronavirus during the 2020 and 2021 academic years forced the Nagoya University of Foreign Studies study abroad program at University of Waikato in New Zealand to move online. Up until 2019, NUFs students would participate in a 4-week study abroad program in Hamilton, New Zealand. The program reflected many of the attributes of other study abroad programs such as English language classes, a homestay experience, and inter-cultural exchanges with local students. With the onset of coronavirus, the decision was made not to cancel the program, but to modify it instead. Some aspects of the course changed, obviously by staying in Japan, students could not experience a homestay or the sights, sounds, and smells of life in New Zealand, and the duration was reduced from four weeks to two. At the same time, other aspects of the course continued. NUFs students attended English classes and had opportunities to interact with students in New Zealand, albeit all online.

This report looks at feedback on the program submitted by NUFs students upon completing the 2021 online study abroad program. Also, observations made by NUFs support teachers at the same time are included. From this information,

a summary will be made on the successes, challenges, and considerations of online study abroad programs in the future.

WHAT WAS THE ONLINE PROGRAM

The University of Waikato Spring Online Program is held in February and has a duration of two weeks. It was held online for two consecutive years starting in the 2020 academic year. For this study abroad program, two types of English courses were offered: General English (GE), and an IELTS preparation course. Other aspects of typical study abroad programs were not relevant in this case. Arranging host families, planning sightseeing trips, arranging spending money, and so on, were considerations not necessary during an online program.

WHO WERE THE PARTICIPANTS

For the 2020 online program, there were twenty-six student participants and six NUFS support teachers. For 2021, there were eleven students and four NUFS support teachers. As for the participants in New Zealand, in both years, each course had just one teacher. There were some students in both years that opted to attend the course completely online from home. The majority of students, however, came on campus with their laptops. The GE and IELTS students were placed in separate rooms.

WHAT WAS OFFERED

Program

Over two weeks, the program consisted of twenty-five online classroom hours via Zoom. Additionally, two hours of *independent learning* was scheduled each day.

IELTS Course.

For the IELTS course, students built on their current English language abilities in the four skill areas of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. During the

course, students would develop test-taking strategies and become familiar with the IELTS structure in a Western academic setting.

General English Course.

The GE course was designed to provide English language learning in authentic contexts. Topics and themes were based around New Zealand and suitable for students who needed English for everyday purposes.

Class Materials

All materials for both courses, including handouts, quizzes, and supplementary material were provided to students by Waikato University via Google Classroom. Video communications for all classes were conducted via Zoom. Basic IT requirements included a reliable, high-speed internet connection, a laptop with webcam and microphone, and headphones were recommended. Students in both courses were given a Waikato username and password allowing them access to *MyWaikato* student portal where they would access email, Google Classroom, and Google Workspace.

WHAT WERE THE STUDENT IMPRESSIONS

Two surveys were conducted at the end of the two-week course. University of Waikato had students fill out a separate survey for the GE and IELTS courses. The questions from these surveys were written in Japanese and English. Where students had to write a short answer, it was in Japanese. I used Google Translate to understand the replies in English. NUFS also had students complete a survey. All questions and answers were in Japanese. I again used Google Translate to understand the text in English.

Waikato Survey Results

NUFS students submitted surveys prepared by Waikato upon completion of their course. GE and IELTS students each received their own survey consist-

ing of twenty questions. The questions in each survey were identical. All five students in the GE course completed the survey, while five of the six students in the IELTS course completed the survey. The following is a summary of the student impressions of the courses.

The first nine questions in the survey prepared by the University of Waikato were multiple choice questions with answer options including strongly agree, agree, do not agree, and strongly disagree. For all of the questions, students in the GE course strongly agreed. Students in the IELTS course had a mix of impressions, however none of the students strongly disagreed. Since the answer options were multiple choice, students did not have the opportunity to describe the impressions in their own words. It would have been useful to understand more deeply why the students felt the way they did.

Question 1: My English lessons were useful and interesting.

All students in the GE course strongly agreed with this statement. Most of the students in the IELTS course strongly agreed with it. There was one student who did not agree.

Question 2: I enjoyed using online tools and activities to improve my English.

All students in the GE course strongly agreed. Two students in the IELTS course strongly agreed while the majority just agreed.

Question 3: I liked the teaching materials.

In both courses, most students strongly agreed, but each course also had one student that just agreed.

Question 4: I learnt new vocabulary which helped me improve my overall language skills.

All students in both courses strongly agreed, except one student in the IELTS course just agreed.

Question 5: I enjoyed listening practice.

All students in both courses strongly agreed, except one student in the IELTS

course did not agree.

Question 6: I enjoyed reading practice.

While all students in the GE course strongly agreed, there were a mix of impressions from students in the IELTS course. Only one student in the IELTS course strongly agreed, two agreed, and two did not agree.

Question 7: I enjoyed speaking practice.

All students in the GE course strongly agreed. Again, there were a mix of responses from the IELTS students. Two strongly agreed, two agreed, and one did not agree.

Question 8: I enjoyed writing practice.

All students in the GE course strongly agreed with a mix of impressions from the IELTS students again. Two IELTS students strongly agreed, two agreed, and one student did not agree.

Question 9: My teacher was supportive, and their lessons were fun.

All students in the GE course again strongly agreed. In the IELTS course, three students strongly agreed and two agreed.

Questions 10 & 11 related to the activities conducted in the online classes. Here, students were asked open questions where they had to write out their answers in English or Japanese. In each course, three students wrote their responses in English while two wrote their responses in Japanese.

Question 10: Which topics or activities were your favorite?

Regarding topics, a student in the GE course mentioned New Zealand slang and identity. Another student in the GE course mentioned all topics were their favorite. No students in the IELTS course mentioned about favorite topics. Quizlet, Kahoot!, and groupwork were mentioned as favorite activities in the GE course. Students in the IELTS course also mentioned mini games such as Kahoot! and Quizlet. Some students gave details as to why the activities were their favorites, while others simply mentioned the activity.

Question 11: Which topics or activities did you not like?

Three students each in the GE and IELTS mentioned that there were not any topics or activities they did not like. In the GE course, one student mentioned they did not like listening to music and arranging words, while another mentioned they did not like grammar. In the IELTS course one student mentioned they did not like the writing section, and another did not like the explanations.

Question 12 related to a special lecture given to students in both courses. Included in the question was the preparation and debriefing sessions which students participated in. The answer option was multiple choice.

Question 12: I enjoyed the special lecture including preparation and debriefing & found them beneficial to my learning.

Four out of five students in both the GE and IELTS courses strongly agreed. The remaining two students both agreed.

Questions 13–17 related to the online student exchange organized by Waikato where NUIST students from both courses would engage in discussion activities through Zoom with students at Waikato. Some of the answer formats were multiple choice while others were open questions where students could write their responses. The multiple-choice response options were Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, and Poor.

Question 13: How do you rate the online student exchanges?

All students in the GE course responded with excellent. All students in the IELTS students also responded with excellent except for one who responded with good.

Question 14: Why do you feel that way? (Referring to their answer in Question 13.)

There were a variety of responses as students wrote their impressions. In the GE course, some students mentioned how it was nice to interact with foreign (non-Japanese) students their age for the first time. Other NUIST students enjoyed

learning about New Zealand culture and famous places. A few students in the GE course mentioned how kind the students in the online exchange were. Students in the IELTS course felt comfortable talking with students at Waikato because they asked questions and listened enthusiastically. One NUFs student mentioned that the teachers were kind and polite as well.

Question 15: What did you find difficult about online Student Exchange?

Students could choose as many difficulties as they felt suitable. A total of eight difficulties were chosen by students in the GE course. Four students chose that they wished there was more time for the exchange. Three students chose that they should have improved their vocabulary. Two students chose that they did not understand the other person's English very well. Two students again chose that they could not say what they wanted to say in English. Finally, in the GE course, one student chose each of the following difficulties: it was hard to find the right time to enter the conversation, the topic was boring, it was hard to hear the other student's voice, and the time was too short. Students in the IELTS course chose a total of seven difficulties. Three students mentioned it was hard to find the right time to enter the conversation. Two students chose that they could not say what they wanted to say in English. Two students again chose that they wished there was more time. Finally, in the IELTS course, one student chose each of the following difficulties: did not understand the other person's English very well, they should have improved their vocabulary, the Internet connection was not good, and there were too many people.

Question 16: Is there anything you would like to change about the online Student Exchange activities?

In the GE course, only four students responded, and all were in Japanese. One student mentioned that they would like to take the GE course with other students other than NUFs students. Another student mentioned that they would have preferred to have more time to interact. One student wanted more opportunities to speak English such as making presentation about their lives in Japan. Lastly,

a student mentioned there was nothing to improve. Only two students in the IELTS course responded and both were in English. One student wanted to have the online student exchange more often. The other student wanted an online tour of the Waikato campus (in addition to the online tour of the supermarket they received).

Question 17: Do you have any advice for future Japanese students who will join online Student Exchange activities?

In the GE course, all five students responded in Japanese. One student encouraged future students to ask lots of questions and exchange social media accounts. Another student encouraged future students to think positively. There was another recommendation that future students prepare some questions in advance and to be prepared to elaborate on the topic. Another student encouraged participants to be active in the conversations even if they feel it is difficult to communicate. They added that it was a good opportunity to make new friends. Finally, a student in the GE course advised future students to actively express their opinions to enable them to acquire greater English skills. Only three students in the IELTS course responded to this question and one of them was in Japanese. One student recommended to be active. Another student wrote it is better to think carefully what you want to say and what questions you want to ask. Finally, one student recommends the GE course if future students want to know about New Zealand culture and English itself. The same student also recommends understanding more about the IELTS test before taking the course.

Questions 18: Why did you decide to join Waikato's Online English programme?

In the GE course, all five students responded and chose from a possible twelve possible multiple-choice answers. Eleven answers in total were chosen. Five students chose that they wanted to interact with foreign students. Four students each chose that they wanted to improve their English, wanted to try studying online, and could not travel abroad. Three students each chose that they were

interested in New Zealand, and they were afraid to travel abroad. Two students each chose that they wanted to study at a foreign university, the cost was right, and they saw an online briefing and became interested. Finally, one student each chose that the schedule was right, and that they thought it would be useful for job hunting. In the IELTS course, all five of six students in the course chose nine of the twelve possible answers. Four students each chose that they wanted to improve their English and were interested in New Zealand. Three students each chose that they wanted to study at a foreign university, that they wanted to try studying online, that they wanted to interact with foreign students, and could not travel abroad.

Question 19: Write your suggestions to help us improve the course.

Students could write out their answers for Question 19. Only one of five students in the GE course responded. Their response was in Japanese. The student thought it would be better if they had an opportunity during the Student Exchange to present through slideshow information about Japan. The student felt that for it to be an “exchange”, they should have been able to present Japan to students in New Zealand. In the IELTS course as well, only one student responded, and it was in Japanese. The student mentioned some trouble with securing a stable online connection with overseas resulting in some difficulty hearing, and many participants in the Zoom.

Question 20: Please rate the course:

For this multiple-choice question, all five students in the GE course gave it a top mark of Excellent. For the IELTS students, four gave the course top marks of Excellent, while one student gave the rated the course as Good.

NUFS Program Survey Results

In addition to the program survey prepared by Waikato, NUFS also prepared a survey and distributed to students following the end of the program. All eleven participants (GE and IELTS course) responded to the twenty-six questions. The

questions were in the format of multiple choice and short answer. For multiple choice answer, students were given five options, which included Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, and Poor. All the questions and the short-answer responses were written in Japanese. The NUSF survey was given to all participants in the survey irrespective of whether they were in the GE or IELTS course.

Question 1: Which course did you attend?

Six students participated in the IELTS course, and five students participated in the GE course. Distinctions between GE and IELTS will not be made for any other question in this survey.

Question 2: Overall, how was the University of Waikato Online Program?

Nine students responded that the program was Excellent, while one student each responded that it was Good and Satisfactory.

Question 3: What was the best part of the program?

For this question, respondents could write a short answer. All eleven students answered. There were a variety of responses. Several students responded that they liked interacting with foreign students of the same age during the Student Exchanges. They also felt they were able to deepen their friendship through group work. One student mentioned that there was plenty of time to ask questions. One student did not know much about IELTS, but she is glad that she took the course. The same student also mentioned that the Waikato instructor taught carefully which motivated the student. Another student also mentioned that it was easy to follow the Waikato instructor's explanation and found it easy to ask questions. Some students wrote that learning about New Zealand culture was the best part. Finally, one student mentioned that the instructors spoke a lot of English.

Question 4: What are some points that could be improved in the program?

For this question, only four students responded. One student wrote the length of time for self-study. It was unclear, however, if lengthening or shortening

the self-study time would be the improvement. Another student mentioned the Internet connection. The same student wrote about the time for interaction in class. One student found the hour long lunch break a little short. Finally, one student commented that no improvements were necessary.

Question 5: How was the Zoom class?

For this question, the answers were multiple choice with a range of five possibilities. All eleven students responded to this question. Five students each chose Excellent and Good. One student chose Satisfactory. There were no follow-up questions to understand better why the students responded the way they did.

Question 6: What was the class content that left the biggest impression on you and what class content was most useful?

All eleven students responded to this question. One student wrote about the IELTS content and understanding IELTS was useful. Another student enjoyed challenging themselves by the small quiz every day. It was motivating. The special lecture on diversity stood out for one student as it was able to broaden their perspective. One student remarked on the difficult speaking and writing parts of the IELTS course. Another student mentioned learning the Māori language and culture, such as the *kapa haka*. One student wrote about a video app they used for homework which enabled them to improve their listening skills when communicating with the instructor. Another student mentioned Kami as an app that they used for assignments. One student wrote that even though some activities were independent work, they felt as though they were learning one-on-one with the instructor. The Student Exchange was mentioned as another highlight for a student because they could get information that even the Internet could not have provided them.

Question 7: What points do you think need to be improved regarding Zoom classes or any other comments you may have.

Only four students replied to this question, including one student who thinks that there is not anything that needs to be improved. One student was impressed

with the numerous opportunities to speak in the breakout room in Zoom but wish they were told to continue speaking as long as they were in the room. One student mentioned that the Internet connection needs to be improved. Another student commented on the large number of students in the Zoom class.

Question 8: Let us know what you think of the Student Exchange.

For this question, all eleven students responded. Some students commented on the good atmosphere created when communicating with local students. Another student mentioned that the Waikato students were very polite and enthusiastic, so they enjoyed talking with them. Other students liked the opportunity to understand some differences in culture and customs and eventually were able to exchange contact information. One student found the exchanges very stimulating because they had never previously interacted with foreigners in that way. One student like the format of deciding the main topic beforehand allowing them to prepare in advance. They also felt the student from Waikato to be friendly and easy to ask questions to. Another student felt that by the fifth day, they were able to understand the students in the exchange more easily but wishes they could have participated more actively. One student commented on how obvious the differences between Japanese and New Zealand cultures were, but it was a valuable experience to interact with native English speakers their age.

Question 9: Was the class level appropriate?

This question had five answers to choose from – just right, difficult and challenging, a little difficult, but challenging, a little easy, and very easy. All eleven students responded. Seven thought the level was just right, three thought the level was a little difficult but challenging, and one thought it was a little easy.

Question 10: How was the Special Lecture on February 23rd?

All eleven students responded to this question. The answer options were multiple choice. Seven students chose Excellent, three students chose Good, and one student chose Satisfactory.

Question 11: Did the lecture preparation on February 22nd and lecture debrief on February 24th help you understand the lecture better?

All eleven students responded with nine choosing Very Helpful and two choosing Satisfactory.

Question 12: Have you taken advantage of the social opportunities offered by Waikato?

All students responded with ten stating they had, and one stating they had not.

Question 13: For those students who answered “Had” in Question 12, what were your impressions of using the service?

Ten of the eleven respondents submitted an answer for this question. Many students mentioned that it was very stimulating to meet a group of students from different countries and learn about their culture. Another student mentioned that listening was more challenging than other activities, but feels they benefited from the experience. One mentioned that the different ways students from various countries express their opinions was impressive. The number of students online made it difficult for one student to participate but was glad they tried. Another student mentioned that they were able to learn things in the conversation circle that they were unable to learn in class.

Question 14: Did you make use of your self-study time?

All students responded to this multiple-choice question. Six students chose that they could use the time effectively. Four students said that they could use the time satisfactorily. Finally, one student chose that they could not use the time effectively.

Question 15: Please explain your answer from Question 14.

All eleven students wrote an answer for this question. One student mentioned that the self-study time was not compulsory but did not elaborate how that impacted their use of time. Some students mentioned that it was a good opportunity to get away from the computer and talk with native English teachers physically in the room. Some students mentioned that it was nice to review

what they learned in class. Some other students appreciated the native English teacher's explanation of assignments during the self-study time. Another student mentioned that they were able to concentrate on their assignments with the help of students around them. A student taking online classes from home was not able to concentrate and therefore could not use the time effectively. A different student studying from home was able to manage their time effectively and work on assignments. Finally, one student found the self-study time long and boring.

Question 16: Was the support from the native English teacher helpful?

All eleven students answered this multiple-choice question. Nine students chose Very Helpful, and two students chose Satisfactory.

Question 17: When you had a problem, were you able to talk to the teacher?

All eleven students responded to this short answer question. Most students answered that either they did not have a problem, or they could get help without much elaboration. One student wrote that two of the native English teachers gave sincere answers and that it was easy to talk with them. Another student mentioned that the native English teacher asked them after each class and was able to consult without hesitation. Finally, one student said that during the online class when the connection was slow, the native English teacher could respond quickly, which resulted in the student able to participate without worry.

Question 18: Let us know if you have any comments about the native English support teachers from NUFS.

Six of the eleven students responded to this question. One student wrote that they were pleased to get a response when they asked a question and could understand easily. Another student said that they were told to come to class with a goal in mind and were pleased when they could work hard towards that goal. They continue to add that it would have been nice to get more advice about how to take online classes. One student thanked a support teacher by name because each class they told students what they did well and what they could improve

on. Also, they add, this teacher could talk with each of the students individually during the break. Finally, a student mentioned that they were able to talk about various topics such as music and the future with the support teacher.

Question 19: Did you take online classes from home or university?

All eleven students responded with nine stating they participated from the university, and two participated from home.

Questions 20–22 were for the students taking the online classes from home.

Question 20: Did you interact with participants in the same course?

The two participating students from home responded. One mentioned that they exchanged communication through the LINE application during group work. The other student wrote that they had conversations in English and Japanese in the classrooms and during group work. They were also pleased to be able to talk with students from other departments.

Question 21: Were you able to use English as you expected during the course at home?

Both participants responded that they very much could use English as expected.

Question 22: Did you have any trouble taking the course from home?

For this question, both students responded that they did not have any trouble.

Questions 23–25 were for the students taking the online classes from university.

Questions 23: Did you interact with the participants in the same course. Tell us your impressions. (For students who participated in the course at university.)

All nine students who were at the university responded to this question. One student mentioned that it was difficult to talk in the breakout room because there was not enough time. Another student wrote that they used the LINE group when they had trouble. One student said that they were able to interact somewhat during the mini games and activities. Another student mentioned that they were able

to interact with students from other departments, which they said, they normally do not get an opportunity to do. One student wrote that they were glad to be able to take group photos at the end. Finally, one student mentioned that they knew some of the other students already and therefore could communicate without barriers. They also said that it was nice to meet students from other departments.

Question 24: Were you able to use English as you expected in your coursework at university?

Only nine of the eleven students responded to this multiple-choice question. Four students chose Very Well, three students chose Well, one student each chose satisfactory and could not do it well.

Question 25: Do you think you could handle this online course at home without coming to university and without the support teachers?

For this short answer question, nine of eleven students responded. There was a variety of impressions given. Some students thought that it could be done at home without support teachers. Others felt studying from home would be possible, but the conversations with the support teachers were exciting. Some students wrote that help from the Waikato teachers would be sufficient and the NUFSS support teachers would not be necessary. Other students thought the opportunity to speak in English with the support teachers contributed to the program. Finally, one student mentioned that if there were any difficulties with the Internet connection, participating at home without support teachers would be difficult.

Question 26: Was the pre-program information and support from the University of Waikato and our university sufficient? (For all participants.)

For this question, all eleven participants wrote that the support was enough.

Question 27: Would you take this kind of short-term online training program again in the future?

All eleven students responded to this multiple-choice question. Six students wrote that they would very much. Four students wrote that they thought they

would. One student mentioned that they do not think they would.

Question 28: What learner outcomes do you feel resulted from this training program?

All eleven participants responded to this short answer question. Two students responded that they understood about New Zealand and Māori culture and are motivated to study in New Zealand. One student mentioned that they learned the importance of positivity. Another student stated that their writing improved, while listening and speaking skills improved for others. Other students mentioned that they could speak without hesitation and therefore felt their speaking skills improved. One student wrote that they became more competent at asking questions through speaking and email. Finally, a student felt their listening to main ideas improved in spite having difficulty listening for details. Over the two week course, they felt their speaking ability also improved and became comfortable speaking actively.

WHAT WERE THE SUPPORT TEACHER IMPRESSIONS

NUFS has provided support teachers to the Waikato online study abroad program for the last two years. For the 2020 program, six support teachers were used. In 2021, four teachers were used. The support teachers were paid by NUFS and was based on the number of classes they supported. In the program year 2020, the six support teachers taught a mix of GE and IELTS throughout the two weeks. In the program year 2021, one support teacher would stay with GE and another with IELTS for the first week, then two new teachers would fill those roles for the second week.

The role of the support teachers was based on the idea that students would benefit from having a native English teacher nearby to help them primarily with language difficulties encountered online, but also any technology difficulties. The teachers in Waikato oversaw lesson planning and implementation. They also carried out the primary explanations and demonstrations. The support teachers

discussed together that if students had difficulty understanding what was said online, they would make attempts themselves first to solve the problem. Support teachers would intervene if thought the students' needs were not being met. Even at that point, low key suggestions would be made to the students to help them resolve the conflict.

Apart from typical foreign language classroom misunderstandings, most students negotiated through the online course quite well. Occasionally the teacher from Waikato would use unfamiliar vocabulary or pronunciation. Some students were proactive in resolving their challenge, but many others needed encouragement from the support teacher. Confirming the homework and assignments was also something the support teachers did to ensure the program ran smoothly.

One area that proved confusing for students and support teachers was how to best use the self-study time. The program schedule allotted for two one-hour self-study sessions. One in the morning after the first Zoom and the second after lunch. The objectives of the self-study sessions were not adequately discussed between Waikato and NUFs. At first, when tasks were not assigned during the self-study sessions, students and support teachers felt at a bit of a loss for what to do. During the second Zoom sessions, the Waikato teachers would ask what the students did during the self-study sessions. They asked if they took a nap or went for a walk. It was Waikato's intent to have the students work independently on homework or assignments. The support teachers had later asked the Waikato teachers if they were going to assign tasks for students to work on during the two self-study sessions. It was at this time that the Waikato teachers clarified how they wanted the self-study sessions be used. The Waikato teachers from that point on encouraged students during the self-study session to close their laptops, put their smartphones in their bags, stand up, walk around, and get something to eat or drink. The Waikato teachers had intended the self-study sessions to be a mental and physical break from online study. They emphasized the importance of resting your eyes and moving around. Students at first felt that they wanted

to stay busy. This short-term study abroad was valuable time to them. Support teachers as well wanted students to get the most out of the opportunity. In the end, students and support teacher accepted the Waikato plan to rest during the self-study session. Support teachers then used the time to have individual and groups conversations with students, which they were grateful for.

WHAT ARE SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Considerations for students

NUFS students enrolled in a study abroad program often can learn how to manage classroom communication from the New Zealand teacher. Each teacher has their particular way to best run their classroom. The online environment adds another few layers of complexity to communication in English, and students would benefit from a preparation workshop before the online study abroad course begins. Phrases to help students navigate some of the trouble caused by online technology could be the focus of such support. Students can develop a repertoire of phrases to use when there is trouble with the Internet connection, microphone, online games, and so on.

In addition to language skills, students during a preparation workshop ought to be rehearsed in how to manage their technology efficiently. Zoom functions such as mute, screen sharing, and breakout rooms can be challenging and time consuming if they are not practiced beforehand. Other considerations such as email etiquette in English, how to download files, and how to build simple slide-shows are skills sometimes expected as fundamental when taking courses online.

Considerations for the support teachers

Support teachers and the English teachers in New Zealand should communicate often and openly about their roles in the course. The teachers in New Zealand plan months in advance for their courses and assume responsibility for its implementation. The NUFs support teachers, on the other hand, are accus-

tomed to the learning styles of the students. The teachers in New Zealand and the NUFS support. Teachers both want the best possible outcomes for students but may have different ideas about how it is achieved. For example, if a student could not catch the directions from the New Zealand teacher online, how should the NUFS support teacher manage the situation? The NUFS support teacher would not want to intrude on their counterpart in New Zealand. Afterall, students are attending University of Waikato courses.

During the two years of conducting this study abroad course online, the NUFS support teachers have played the role of assistant to the teacher in New Zealand. They are in the background ensuring students are not burdened with technology challenges and encourage students to be active in overcoming their own language challenges. The NUFS support teachers and the New Zealand English teachers over the last two years have been able to work out these roles and work harmoniously.

CONCLUSION

Like many students and teachers at NUFS and abroad since the onset of coronavirus, measures have been taken to continue the positive experiences of study abroad programs as much as possible while confined to the physical location of their home countries. Students may not have the full pleasure and excitement that comes with visiting a faraway country, they do continue to have opportunities to learn English from native English speakers, enrich their knowledge of different cultures, and interact with different types of people. Challenges with and the limitation of technology can initially feel burdensome, but well-thought-out preparation workshops with students can help mitigate these challenges. NUFS support teachers can play a role in that by extinguishing small challenges when they ignite and encourage students to communicate actively. Studying abroad while online may seem contradictory at first, but these times during coronavirus has shown that it is not only possible, but indeed very successful.