Creative Writing in ELT: Extremely Short Stories

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In this paper we propose the use of Extremely Short Stories (ESSs) in Japanese tertiary English education. An ESS is an English story in exactly 50 words, a common creative writing activity originating in English-speaking countries. It was introduced into ELT for two main reasons: to incorporate perspectives of World Englishes into English learning by encouraging students to express their cultural views in English, and to help students develop critical thinking and creative writing abilities. Our ongoing investigation into the effectiveness of ESSs for Japanese university students learning English reveals that students develop writing skills, especially in creativity and discourse management, and change their attitudes towards English and English learning over a semester of ESS activities in class. We believe that writing ESSs is an effective activity to get students used to writing in English, to raise awareness of critical thinking, and to improve practical writing skills.

　本論文では、日本の大学での英語教育におけるESS使用を提案する。ESSとはちょうど50語で英語のストーリーを書くもので、英語圏で始まった一種の創造的記述活動である。ESSは、（1）英語を習得する過程で、英語で学習者独自の文化を表現するという視点をもつWorld Englishes（WE）の考え方を取り入れ（2）学習者が英語で批判的思考、創造的記述を身に付けることを主な目的として英語教育法に導入された。日本の大学生を対象とした本研究では、ESSが英語記述能力、とりわけ創造性と談話構成能力の発達に効果をもたらし、また一学期に及ぶクラス内でのESS活動により、英語学習に対する学生の態度に変化が生じた事が示唆される。ESS活動を通じて、学生が英語で記述することに慣れ親しみ、批判的思考を養い、自分の言葉で考えを表現し、実用的な記述能力を習得できる可能性を提案する。

IN KACHRU'S (1992) model of World Englishes, Japan belongs to the Expanding Circle in which students do not necessarily have frequent opportunities to use English outside their English class. In tertiary English education in Japan, the primary focus tends to be on *form* (i.e., grammar and structure) rather than on *meaning* (intelligibility and comprehensibility). Also, students often lack confidence in their English ability, which results in their reluctance to write or speak English. In this paper we examine the effectiveness of one type of English creative writing activity, Extremely Short Stories (ESSs), in building students' confidence in their English proficiency as well as developing their critical thinking and creativity. It was hypothesized that through continued ESS writing, students would develop not only writing skills but also the ability to analyze contexts. An investigation using both qualitative observation and quantitative survey analysis was conducted to determine the degree of effectiveness of ESSs in English learning and also to see if students changed their attitudes towards English learning through semester-long ESS activities. This paper begins with a brief description of

ESSs and ESS competition (ESSC), followed by our investigation of ESS activities in tertiary English education. The benefits and limitations of ESSs are then discussed based on the findings of our study, and implications for English teaching are proposed.

What is an ESS?

An ESS is a free English composition. It enables people to write freely in English with one strict rule: It must consist of exactly 50 words, not 49 or 51. A title and author's name are optional and not included in the 50 words, and they can be written in any genre—in poetry or prose, fact or fiction—on a topic of the writer's own choice (Hassall, 2006).

History of ESSs

According to Hassall (2006), ESSs started as a competition among English-speaking writers and celebrities in the UK almost 30 years ago. In 1998, this ESS concept was introduced in New Zealand, but again it was mainly for English speakers. ESS works were then introduced to non-English speakers in the United Arab Emirates (Hassall, 2006). Hassall developed ESS writing into a national competition in order to motivate English learners to become more creative and independent in their writing. In 2004, the British Council became a sponsor for the Extremely Short Story Competition (ESSC), and since then, the ESSC project has expanded to Asian countries such as China, Korea, Russia, and Japan (Hassall, 2011). In 2005, Professor Nobuyuki Honna imported the concept of ESSC to Japan (Takeshita, 2006), and ESSCs were held by the Japanese Association for Asian Englishes (JAFAE) for 7 years. Since 2013, *The Japan Times* newspaper has been sponsoring ESSCs each month, giving readers a topic on which anyone can write an ESS and submit their work online (The Japan Times ST, 2013).

Incorporating ESSs Into English Teaching: Rationale of the Study

The rationale behind our introducing ESSs into tertiary English education was twofold. We hoped the ESS activities would encourage students to write freely in English within their language repertoire without worrying about making grammatical mistakes. In addition, we had a goal of bringing the concept of World Englishes (WE), developed and explored by Kachru (1985), into an EFL setting where the primary focus tends to be on *accuracy* rather than on *intelligibility*. The main focus of this writing activity is students' creativity and their skills in expressing themselves. Moreover, by incorporating Hassall's (2006) notion of competition into the classroom setting, it was hoped that ESSs would motivate students to actively participate in not only writing but also reading work by their peers.

Taking a WE perspective, the current investigation was designed to see if ESS activities affect learners' English writing ability. We examined whether ESS activities revealed notable changes in students' writing strategies, especially in terms of creativity, and whether the continued use of ESS activities generated changes in students' attitudes towards their English skills. Previous research into ESSs has focused on students' grammatical development (Okaura, 2009) or was based on one-off activities (Miyake, 2012), but this investigation used both a replicable research methodology and a concrete class activity.

The Study

Participants

The investigation was conducted in three different classes at a University in the Kansai area. In total, 166 students participated. All students were non-English majors with various levels of English proficiency. For analysis purposes, students were categorized

according to their English proficiency, based on their performance on placement tests at the beginning of the semester. However, due to time restrictions in General English classes, students in the classes did not have as many opportunities to work on ESS activities as the students in other classes, except for one class (28 students with high proficiency). This is because students were required to complete a number of different learning tasks both in class and at home during the first semester. Therefore, this paper reports on survey analyses and findings of qualitative observation from the writing of 91 students who submitted around 12 ESSs each during the first semester, as well as completed pre- and post-ESS activities surveys regarding the activities (see Table 1).

Table 1. Proficiency Levels of Participants Who Completed Post-ESS Activities Surveys (n = 91)

Class name	Mid	High
General English		28
Writing & Presentation		29
Reading & Discussion	34	

Methodology

The methodology consisted of designing ESS activities, implementing ESS activities, and quantitative survey analysis. It should be noted here that this is not a traditional experimental study involving control groups, but rather action research. Over several years of teaching English in tertiary English classes, we have observed a general lack of self-confidence about English and low motivation among students in classroom English learning. Therefore, this investigation examined whether ESS activities can positively influence students' attitudes towards English and increase their motivation and self-confidence.

For the study, the principles of ESSs were slightly modified to adjust for the classroom setting. Instead of allowing absolute free writing, a weekly topic (e.g., *sea*, *new*, *happiness*) was chosen for the ESSs. In order to foster creativity, students were required to put a title to their work and also encouraged to find pictures to accompany their texts. This decision was made to allow students more freedom in expressing themselves by combining visuals with English and to use sources other than English if they lacked confidence in their English production. For the purpose of integrating illustrations with their work, they were allowed to use PowerPoint slides for the ESSs in addition to a simple Microsoft Word format. Grammatical mistakes were not corrected in the writing and authors' names have been removed from the works to protect their anonymity.

The ESS study took the form of a weekly routine. Students were given a topic in class and created an ESS at home (as a homework writing assignment). In the following class, these texts were distributed so that students could read the work of their peers. This reading activity also incorporated the notion of ESSC. This made the writing activity more competitive and served as both an extrinsic and intrinsic motivation factor. Students reviewed each work and voted for their favorite title, design, and story, giving reasons for their choices. Teachers were able to observe the students' reactions to other students' work and collect multiple works throughout the semester for closer analyses of individual development in English skills.

In order to identify attitudinal changes over time, and to receive feedback on the ESS activities, attitudinal surveys were conducted at the beginning and end of the semester. Students were asked to complete the same attitudinal survey, in which they assessed their competence level in five English skills (vocabulary/grammar, reading, writing, listening, speaking) using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = unsatisfactory to 5 = excellent). In the post-ESS activities survey, after more than 10 weeks of ESS

activities, students also responded to six questions regarding the ESS activities (see Appendix A).

Results

Pre- and Post-ESS Activities Survey Results

Most students ($n = 91$) responded to both surveys, with the exception of one student who joined the class a few weeks late and thus missed the pre-ESS activities survey and five students who failed to complete the post-ESS activities survey. The question items regarding attitudes towards English were exactly the same in both surveys. The results of students' self-assessment of English skills in the pre- and post-ESS activities surveys are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' Self-Assessments of English Competence

Survey	Measurement	V/G	Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
Pre	average	2.35	2.82	2.29	2.35	2.09
($n = 91$)	SD	0.83	0.78	0.81	1.03	0.95
Post	average	2.59	2.97	2.50	2.50	2.35
($n = 86$)	SD	0.63	0.44	0.76	0.60	0.87

Note. Ratings were on a 5-point scale, from 1 = unsatisfactory to 5 = excellent; V/G = vocabulary and grammar

The results of the self-assessments indicated that students felt that their skills had slightly improved over the semester, but there were no statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-ESS activities surveys ($p > .05$ on dependent *t* tests). Given the fact that students had to complete various class activities in addition to ESSs, it is not surprising to see the slight improvement in every skill. The statistically insignificant

improvements in each skill in the post-ESS activities survey are also not surprising, as limited improvement in students' self-confidence had been expected in just over a semester. However, a closer look at students' responses to the Likert-scale assessments suggests that some students did have more confidence at the end of the semester in reading and writing.
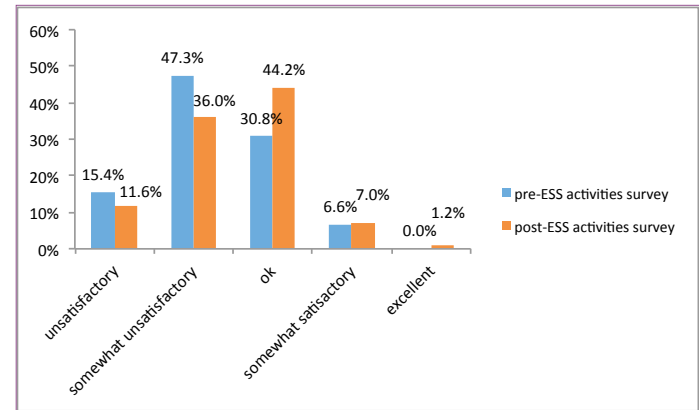

Figure 1. Students' self-assessment of writing skills.

Figure 1 shows students' responses to the writing ability Likert-scale item. Decreases to the *unsatisfactory* and *somewhat unsatisfactory* responses and an increase on the *okay* response can be observed. It can be interpreted that ESS writing activities may have contributed to students' greater self-confidence in their writing skills, especially among the students with low confidence at the beginning of the semester.
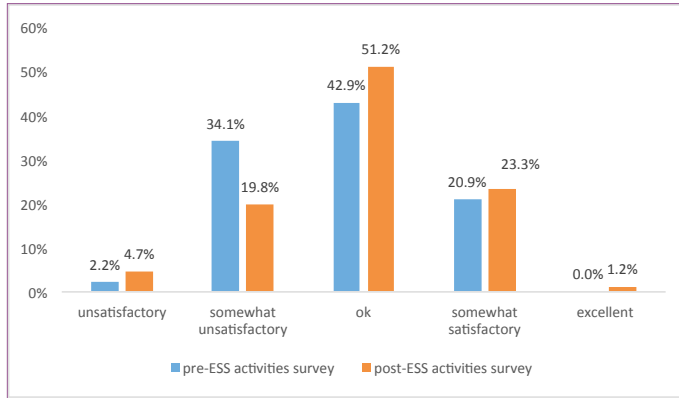
Figure 2. Students' self-assessment of reading skills.

Figure 3. Student responses to the question "Do you enjoy ESS activities?"

Because ESSs were primarily introduced as a writing activity, our focus was originally on the writing skill improvement. However, the surveys revealed rather unexpected feedback about their reading skills. Figure 2 shows students' assessment of their reading ability. In the post-ESS activities survey the number of students who chose *somewhat unsatisfactory* dropped by nearly 15%, and the number of students who chose *okay* increased by nearly 10%. The similar increase rates among students with low self-confidence in writing and reading skills are further supported by students' comments such as "ESS is good practice to read and write English sentence," "ESS is good for fast (speed) reading," and "We enjoyed writing and reading ESS." These comments suggest that students perceived ESS activities not only as writing activities but also as a combination of writing and reading activities. Moreover, over two-thirds of the students (68.6%) answered that they enjoyed the ESS activities (see Figure 3).
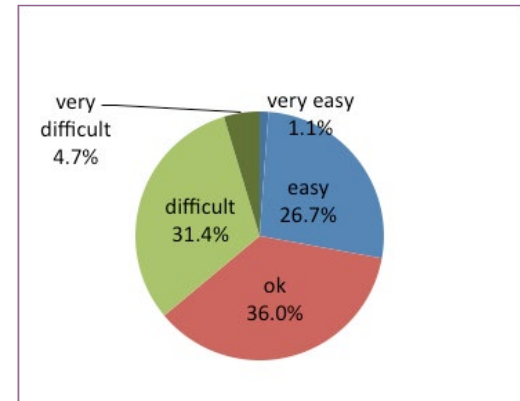

Figure 4. Student responses to the question "Is ESS easy / difficult?"

It should be noted that there were mixed responses in terms of the difficulty level of the activity as shown in Figure 4. Although 27.8% of the students said the activity was easy or very easy, 36.1% of the students felt it was difficult or very difficult, and the other 36.0% thought the difficulty level was okay. It was first hypothesized that students who felt it difficult may not have enjoyed the activity. Indeed, the majority of the students who found ESS activities easy enjoyed the activity (87.5%). On the other hand, of a total of 31 students who thought ESS activities were difficult, only half (16 students) did not enjoy the activity, and the other 14 (one student did not answer the question) said they enjoyed the activity. It can be argued that this is one of the strongest points of ESS activities; even though the task was considered difficult for some students, difficulty did not necessarily demotivate them. This argument is supported by students' comments listed in Figure 5. Students were not specifically asked to respond in English but perhaps because the questionnaire was written in English they all responded in English. All the comments are in the students' exact wording and no grammatical corrections were made.

- It is easy work, and we can practice English.
- Everyone wrote great ESS and it makes me fun.
- It seems a game, so I can enjoy ESS. Also it makes me happy when I could make a good ESS.
- I enjoy to think ESS's designs.
- I can know that thinking of a lot of people.
- It was difficult for me to make an ESS, but I could enjoy watching other ESS.
- It's easy for me to write short story. And I can gain confidence that I can write in English.

- It is easy because just only 50 words. We can continue it.
- Making short but creative is difficult, so it is important in English and also Japanese.
- ESS has not many words, so it is not so difficult, but it needs some skills, for example writing, grammar, imagination skills and so on, so I can train many skills.

Figure 5. Excerpts from students' feedback on ESS.

Overall, the ESS activities were generally appreciated by the students as fun and useful activities for learning English. Their feedback suggests that ESS activities encourage students to write freely, due to the short length and less frightening environment (no grammar correction involved). The feedback also suggests that ESS activities allow students to learn other people's thoughts and different perspectives. As a result, ESS activities help students gain confidence in their English ability.

It should be noted, however, that the survey had a limitation. Students who responded *yes* to the question *Did you enjoy ESS activity?* were led directly to an open space with an arrow where they were asked to give their reasons for their response, but there was no arrow provided for the *no* option. Therefore, students may have felt that they did not need to provide a reason if their answer was no. As a result, no negative feedback on ESS activities was collected.

Case Study: Creativity Development

Over the semester-long observation, a notable development in students' work and their attitudes towards English in general was witnessed. Although the degree of development in their work was not universal, many students developed their organization, structural skills, and creativity through the ESS activities. At the beginning of the semester of writing ESSs, most students

started with very little discourse management in their work. That is, their work tended to be highly descriptive and informative but not in the shape of a "story," and most work was directly topic related, often with the topic itself serving as the title. In addition, students relied on their own self-centered perspectives of the topic. Therefore creativity, in the sense of originality and divergent thinking (see Birckbichler, 1982; Clegg, 2008; Creme, 2003; Dai, 2010; Gibson, 2010; Lau, Ng, & Lee, 2009), had a very minor role in their work. We focus now on the work of two students (A and B) as a case study, and the students' development over the semester is discussed. Both students were enrolled in the Writing & Presentation course, but not in the same class, as classes are divided according to the students' majors. The ESS topics given in the semester and the work by the two students on each topic are given in Appendix B.

The two ESSs in Figures 6 and 7 were written by students A and B on the same topic, *Word*, and were their second attempt at writing an ESS. For their first attempt at ESSs, no topic was given (free writing was assigned), and thus it was excluded from the analysis.

Figure 6. ESS on topic *word*, written by student A in week 1.

Figure 7. ESS on topic *word*, written by student B in week 1.

The title of student A's work "Word is I" is directly topic related, whereas student B does not even have a title on his work. Also, they both start their works with "Word," again showing direct connection to the topic without further critical thinking. Most of A's work and the first half of B's work present descriptive and information-only elements, without further development into stories. It can be argued that these two students struggled to put their own message into their stories, and lacked story organization skills.

Teacher instructions in the following weeks included (a) to make an interesting and attractive title for the work and (b) to avoid using the topic word in the title. However, in order to encourage the creative element in each work, no explicit instruction such as making a story in a narrative format was given to the students by the teacher. Instead, students often discussed the elements of a good ESS when reading peer works, and the following suggestions naturally came up in every class:

- an interesting title,
- an interesting story,
- a matching picture,
- good use of fonts and color (for better presentation), and
- a unique idea (divergent thinking / creativity).

The work from week 2 to week 4 suggested that both students were still weak at organizing a story in exactly 50 words. It seems that they paid more attention to *writing 50 words* than to *telling a story in 50 words*. In week 5 (Figure 8), student A reverted to her previous style of repeating the same word, as she had done in week 1. However, there was some development of a story in her work, as seen in "But!! We may grow fat to eat so much delicious foods," and her story ends with a concluding remark "We must pay attention too!!" This suggests that she was starting to develop story organization skills in her work.

Figure 8. ESS on topic *food*, written by student A in week 5.

The assigned topic in week 6 was *Success*, and the titles of the work of both students are almost identical, the only difference being the plurality (*Efforts* and *Effort* respectively). This suggests
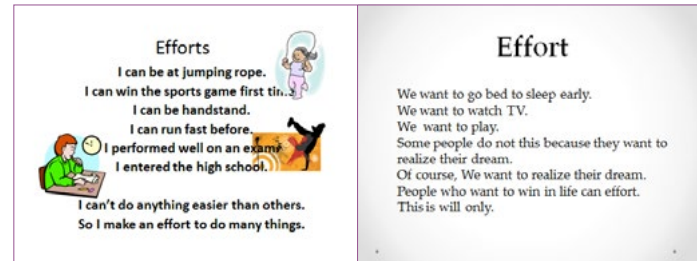
that although they tried to avoid using the topic word in their titles, their divergent thinking was not fully developed at this point. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9. ESSs on topic *success*, written by students A and B in week 8.

The first sign of divergent thinking, that is, shifting perspectives (Lau et al., 2009) is present in student A's work in week 8, as shown in Figure 10. In this example, student A tried attributing the first person pronoun "I" to something other than herself. By doing so, she successfully managed to look at the world from a different perspective, and maintained her work in a narrative story organization. Also, perhaps more interestingly, she did not use the topic word *water* anywhere in her work, and she did not explain the fact that *I* is water. Instead, she let the matching picture explain the concept of water.
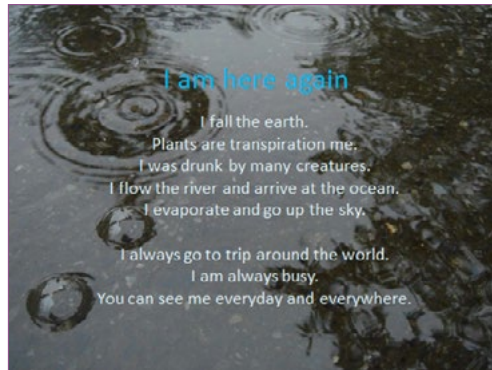
Figure 10. ESS on topic *water*, written by student A in week 8.

Then in the following week on the topic *time*, student A tried talking to time as if it were a person, using the second person pronoun "you" (see Figure 11). It can be argued that around this time, she developed divergent thinking as well as originality in her storytelling, and explored different ways to express herself and her ideas every week.
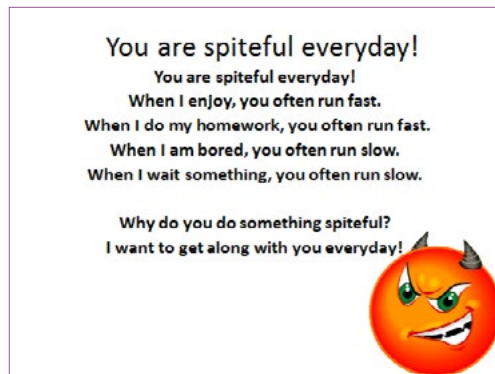

Figure 11. ESS on topic *time*, written by student A in week 9.

On the other hand, student B still struggled with the story organization in week 8. He failed to make clear connections between his title "Rainy Season," the story component *summer,* and the last remark on "saving water" in the 50 words (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. ESS on topic *water*, written by student B in week 8.

The next two examples (Figures 13 and 14) are from week 12 on the topic *memory* by the two students, after more than 10 weeks of continued ESS activities. The topic word did not overtly appear in either work. This suggests that these two students had developed their analytical and critical thinking in relation to the given topic. Both students gave a similar, yet unique, title to their works.
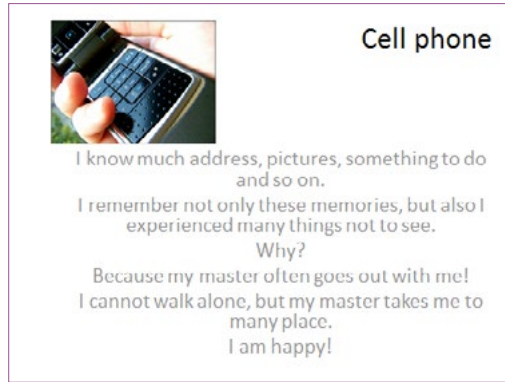
Figure 13. ESS on topic *memory*, written by student A in week 12.

Figure 14. ESS on topic *memory*, written by student B in week 12.

Student A used the *first person pronoun* strategy again in this work by using "I" to express the thoughts of a cell phone. Her story does not contain the phrase *cell phone* but it was obvious as we read it that the "I" in her work represents the cell phone, not the author herself. Using the title and a matching picture as an indicator of the main character of the story, she succeeded in conveying her intentions without stating, "I am a cell phone," which would probably have been her method at the beginning of the semester. She also tried a new strategy in this work by including herself as the "master." Reversing the characters through pronoun use, she explores the world from the perspective of her belongings.

Student B's week 12 work (Figure 14) further exemplified his development in story organization skills. With the first sentence playing the role of attention getter, he successfully invited readers to share his rather bitter memory. Strong emotion was present throughout his writing, and he ended his story with another strong, but positive emotional phrase "I can fight anything," which makes the reader applaud his spirit. Divergent thinking and a wider range of perspectives are not yet present in his work, and he kept looking at the world from his own perspective throughout the semester, as can be seen in the use of the first person pronoun in his ESSs. However, his work shifted from descriptive and informative stories to narrative and original stories over the course of the semester.

It is also noteworthy that the two students' writing in week 12 on the topic *Memory* was so creative that it is hard to guess the topic word from their work. As can be seen by the number of grammatical mistakes, their English competency was not very high. However, ESS activities enabled them to improve other

skills in English writing, namely critical thinking and discourse management. It is suggested by the case studies that the two students developed their writing skills and divergent thinking strategies at their own speed, but further analysis on the works of more students is needed to determine the factors affecting this speed.

Changes: Attitudes Towards Learning English

Another noticeable change that came about through ESS activities was in the students' attitudes towards English learning. One of the questions in the pre- and post-ESS activity surveys was "What is the most important skill in English writing?" and students were given a space to write their response freely. Their responses were categorized and are presented in Figure 15.
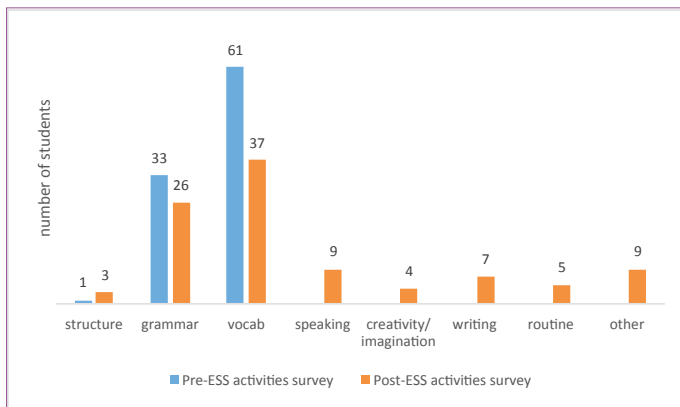
Figure 15. Student responses to the question "What is the most important skill in English writing?"

In the pre-ESS activities survey, vocabulary, grammar, or a combination of the two were the dominant responses. In the post-ESS activities survey, however, the number of the students believing vocabulary to be the most important skill in English writing notably dropped. Although vocabulary and grammar were still the dominant opinions, students provided a wider range of responses in the post-ESS activities survey. It is speculated that comments categorized in creativity / imagination, writing (e.g., "if you don't know vocabulary and grammar, you try to write anything" and "write many sentences"), and routine (e.g., "Don't worry what is wrong, many practice") may have been triggered by ESS activities, and some of the students were shifting their focus from *form* to *meaning*.

Discussion

The results suggest that writing ESSs is indeed a useful activity in English classrooms and has several potential benefits for students. One of the common problems in English classrooms is that learners are often reluctant to practice their English due to the negative relationship between anxiety and willingness to communicate (WTC; Koga, 2010; Yashima, 2002). An advantage of writing ESSs is that it reduces anxiety among students by providing a less intimidating environment where the focus is not on grammar and accuracy but on the message and creativity. It is also less intimidating because students write only 50 words, far less than the amount they are normally required to write in English composition classes. Furthermore, the 50-word rule brings a fun element into the writing activity (Lieberman, 1977; Ranjan & Gabora, 2013; Tsai, 2012), and students learn tactics such as using a variety of expressions to convey one message in order to conform to the 50-word rule. As a result, the vocabulary learning process becomes practical and self-directed, and thus the new expressions are more likely to be retained than when learners are forced to memorize a set of words.

Another advantage of using ESSs as a class activity is motivation. The researchers' class observation and students' feedback in class suggest that the notion of competition not only motivated the students to actively work on creating ESSs, but also motivated them to take the reading activity seriously in choosing their favorite work. It is true that extrinsic motivation may sometimes function as a demotivator (Boi Hoang, Sun Hee, & Yang, 2010; Dörnyei, 2001), but comments such as "I'd like to win this once!" and "I think I made a good ESS this week, so I'm very confident!" were often noted by the researchers. Students' comments suggest that making a good ESS was rewarding and gave them self-satisfaction, indicating intrinsic motivation. Therefore, they were more likely to write ESSs with enthusiasm in order to win the class competition, rather than feeling it was just a task or assignment for their grade. Similarly, it was observed that students enjoyed reading peer works, often discussing the reasons for their choice and the factors of good ESSs. In this way, the reading exercise became meaningful without giving students any comprehension questions, and learners spontaneously discovered writing strategies through the peer review activity.

By producing ESSs weekly and reading other students' ESSs, learners developed basic story organization skills and critical thinking, as well as became exposed to a variety of perspectives on the world. These skills then will be assets not only for writing longer and more academic essays, but also in practical and social situations the learners may encounter in the future. Most importantly, the routine writing and reading activities helped learners gain self-confidence in their English abilities.

However, there are also some limitations of ESS activities. As much as it is encouraging for the students, the no-grammar-correction policy may have a negative impact on the students' learning experience. As has been long discussed in comprehensible input theory (Krashen, 1981) and comprehensible output

hypothesis (Swain, 1985), the quality of English in students' work can be of questionable value as input for other students. Also, as seen in a number of studies (e.g., Stafford, Bowden, & Sanz, 2012; Varnosfadrani & Basturkmen, 2009), explicit correction is argued to be more effective for English learning, though not conclusively so (Adams, Nuevo, & Egi, 2011). The degree of correction and ways of raising awareness of grammar in students' writing need to be carefully considered in order to maximize the benefit of ESS activities.

Conclusion

English teachers in Japan often struggle with their students' low motivation towards learning English. In this paper we proposed the use of ESS activities in English classes in order to facilitate students' independent development of writing skills, such as structural organization skills and discourse management skills, through weekly writing assignments, as well as to assist them with engaging in active reading. By having ESSs as a routine activity rather than just a one-off fun writing experience, we enable students to familiarize themselves with writing in English without too much stress, and to gain self-confidence in expressing themselves within their own English repertoire. Many students think that they need to learn new vocabulary and new grammar to improve their English, but we believe that using their available knowledge for communication is also very important. After all, they have experienced formal English education for more than 6 years by the time they enter university in Japan. What is needed in tertiary English education is to give learners opportunities to access their knowledge of English and to produce English in meaningful contexts as often as possible, so that they will be able to use English in what is called a globalized world. We believe that ESS activities give students such an opportunity, and also provide authentic critical thinking and context analysis tasks, through which they develop their own

writing strategies. Our case studies on two students suggest that they developed their writing skills and divergent thinking strategies at their own speed. Our next step will be to investigate if all the students go through a similar development and whether they demonstrate different development patterns in their works.

One of the most remarkable benefits of ESSs is that any learner can participate in the activity. Realizing their potential for creating comprehensible writing gives students self-confidence, and analyzing the elements of good ESSs provides opportunities to critically analyze their writing for accuracy and appropriateness. Further research is needed in order to determine the degree of effectiveness of ESSs in learners' grammatical and vocabulary development. However, it is argued that ESSs establish a natural environment in which delivering messages in a comprehensible and intelligible way is more important than minor grammatical mistakes. Moreover, the kinds of attitudes that students develop over the semester (e.g., allowing mistakes and trying to understand the message regardless of their proficiency) should enable them to interact successfully during real communication in English as an International Language.

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Appendix A
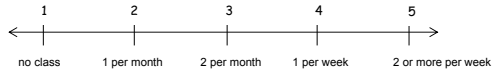### Pre- and Post-ESS activity surveys

(Note that Section 10, *About ESS*, is only included in the post-ESS activity survey.)

English Survey: Give us your honest opinion!

gender: Male   Female
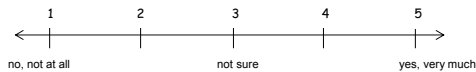
year: 1   2   3/4

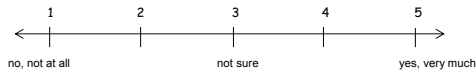English class: Psychology [   ]   Environment [   ]   Socio/Mass Media [   ]

Questions

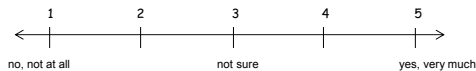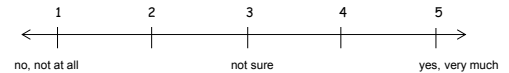1. How many English writing classes did you have in the previous year?

1	2	3	4	5
no class	1 per month	2 per month	1 per week	2 or more per week

2. Do you like English?

1	2	3	4	5
no, not at all		not sure		yes, very much

3. Do you like reading in English?

1	2	3	4	5
no, not at all		not sure		yes, very much

4. Do you like reading in Japanese?

1	2	3	4	5
no, not at all		not sure		yes, very much

---

5. Do you like writing in English?

1	2	3	4	5
no, not at all		not sure		yes, very much

6. Do you like writing in Japanese?

1	2	3	4	5
no, not at all		not sure		yes, very much
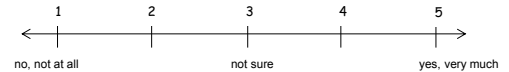
7. How do you rate your English skills?

① Vocabulary & grammar

1	2	3	4	5
unsatisfactory		ok		excellent

② Reading

1	2	3	4	5
unsatisfactory		ok		excellent

③ Writing

1	2	3	4	5
unsatisfactory		ok		excellent

④ Listening

1	2	3	4	5
unsatisfactory		ok		excellent

⑤ Speaking

1	2	3	4	5
unsatisfactory		ok		excellent

8. **How comfortable do you feel in using your English skills?**

①. Vocabulary & grammar

```
        1       2       3       4       5
    <---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--->
    very uncomfortable      ok      very comfortable
```

②. Reading

```
        1       2       3       4       5
    <---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--->
    very uncomfortable      ok      very comfortable
```

③. Writing

```
        1       2       3       4       5
    <---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--->
    very uncomfortable      ok      very comfortable
```

④. Listening

```
        1       2       3       4       5
    <---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--->
    very uncomfortable      ok      very comfortable
```

⑤. Speaking

```
        1       2       3       4       5
    <---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--->
    very uncomfortable      ok      very comfortable
```

9. **In your opinion, what is the most important skill in English writing?**

10. **About ESS**

①. **Is ESS activity easy/difficult for you?**

```
        1       2       3       4       5
    <---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--->
    very difficult      not sure      very easy
```
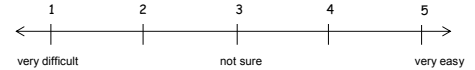
②. **Do you enjoy ESS activities? Please circle your answer.**

NO / YES

Why?

③. **In your opinion, did you improve your general English skills through ESS activities?**
NO

YES → how?

④. **In your opinion, did you improve your English writing skill through ESS activities?**
NO

YES → why?

⑤. **Which activity do you prefer, ESS or essay writing?**

```
        1       2       3       4       5
    <---|-------|-------|-------|-------|--->
    essay writing      same      ESS writing
```
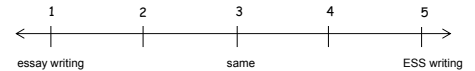
⑥. **In your opinion, is ESS activity important in English learning?**
NO

YES → why?

Appendix B

ESS Topics and Work by Students A and B

[Blank spaces mean that the student did not produce any work for the topic.]

Week / ESS topic	Work by student A	Work by student B
Week 1 / Word	Word is I Word is an expression. / Word is a love of U. / Word is a duty. / Word is emotion. / Word is destruction. / Word is so happy. / Word is a sad. / Word is an interesting. / Word is a danger. / Word is a comfortable. / Words are many emotions. / Word is a necessary for a life.	Word is simple. / Word is short. / We use word. / We often use it. / Why we use it? / If we so not use it, we can not communicate. / Now, We use "wakamono kotoba". / We forgot history of word. / We forgot meaning of word. / We need to use it polite. / I think.
Week 2 / New	I like new clothes. / New clothes can change my feeling. / When I am sad, new clothes cheer me up. / Also to buy new clothes can get rid of my stress. / To go shopping is very fun for me. / To find favorite clothes is like to treasure hunting. / I love it.	
Week 3 / Group	When we are born and die, we are alone. / However, we can not live alone. / We must help each other because one person is a weak. / So we make many groups such as family, friends, colleague, neighbor and so on. / We have to support and respect each other all time.	Sports looks like life. Sports are needed people. / Not only in the field, But also in practice. / In the field, / The people who designated can do play, / Even If its sports are individual competition. / In your life, / Even If you can live alone, you can not do anything. / We always life looks like group sports.
Week 4 / Family	Pets are family! There are 5 members in my family. / When there is a dog in my family. / What do you think about pets? / I my opinion, they are family members / which are not human. / I have my favorite dog, her name is sky. / I love this dog. she is my daughter. / People should treat them carefully because they have lives.	Home is my space. Every day is hard. / Reflecting my life, when I was exhausted, / my home makes me relaxed. / We have space to sleep but this is not usual. / We hope to space to away from society. / I appreciate my family, / I appreciate my home and father and mother.
Week 5 / Food	Delicious is guilt! Eating delicious foods make us happy. / Eating delicious foods make us smile. / Eating delicious foods make us pleasant. / Eating delicious foods make us refresh. / We have a sense of fulfillment to eat delicious foods. / But!! We may grow fat to eat so much delicious foods. / We must pay attention too!!	
Week 6 / Success	Efforts I can be at jumping rope. / I can win the sports game first time. / I can be handstand. / I can run fast before. / I performed well on an exam. / I entered the high school. / I can't do anything easier than others. / So I make an effort to do many things.	Effort We want to go bed to sleep early. / We want to watch TV. / We want to play. / Some people do not this because they want to realize their dream. / Of course, We want to realize their dream. / People who want to win in life a effort. / This is will only.
Week 7 / Place		Smile or Smile I want to smile every place. / Smile is weapon to communicate. / I think smile is always needed. / Japanese say I often comes in a cherry gate. / Mean, We forgot to smile. / there is no choice smile is easy / when we enjoy and sad. / Smile calls favorite place in yours.
Week 8 / Water	I am here again / I fall the earth. / Places are transpiration me. / I was drunk by many creatures. / I flow the river and arrive at the ocean. / Evaporate and go up the sky. / I always go to trip around the world. / I am always busy. / You can see me everyday and everywhere.	Rainy season Now we are maybe in the rainy season. / I dislike this season but in this year I dislike it more and more. The reason is hot! I like summer and I want to play outside but I worry about this summer We will need to save water.
Week 9 / Time	You are spiteful everyday! You are spiteful everyday! / When I enjoy, you often run fast. / When I do my homework, you often run fast. / When I am bored, you often run slow. / When I wait something, you often run slow. / Why do you do something spiteful? / I want to get along with you everyday! 	One minutes makes life Time do not say anything us / so We have to do anything. / When we use one minutes, we / do not know one minutes make / our day and our life. / If someone do not use many / time effectively, / life is loser. / Such person cannot share the / time with people and family.

Week 10 Friend		
Week 11 Travel		
Week 12 Memory		