



ESSAY

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### Make It Extremely Short, Please!

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In the near future, many Japanese learners of English, from junior high boys and girls to experienced teachers of English, may be counting the number of words they have written. No, you don't even have to do that; click Word Count on the Tools menu, and you will know right away how many words you have written in your story. Have you got the right number for your extremely short story?

The Extremely Short Story concept was originated by Professor Peter Hassall of Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates. He developed it into a competition, the ESSC (Extremely Short Story Competition), so that his students could both practice English writing with a specific goal and get awarded for their excellent performances.

The idea was soon exported to Japan; Professor Hassall was the exporter while Professor Nobuyuki Honna, chief editor of *Asian Englishes*, was the importer. The Japanese Association for Asian Englishes (JAF AE), over which Professor Honna presides, decided to be responsible for administering the ESSC in Japan as part of the commemorative events to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

The association organized a steering committee for the ESSC, and the committee has recently published a very useful and informative guidebook, *Emiratia: World English Voices of Emirati Women ~JAF AE's Official Guidebook to the Extremely Short Story Competition ~*<sup>1</sup>. As you may be guessing, this book has a forerunner in UAE, *Emiratia: Voices of Zayed University*<sup>2</sup>. The Japanese version of the guidebook includes a preface, written by Professor Hassall exclusively for Japanese readers.

"Extremely Short" is not really a scientific way of expressing how short your story is supposed to be. It must contain only and exactly 50

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1 Published by The Japanese Association for Asian Englishes on July 1, 2006, ISBN4-9903072-0-8 C1082).

2 Published by Zayed University, ISBN 9948-03-1549.

words, and this is the most interesting and educational part of the whole story. A Japanese junior high school girl will figure out without much difficulty that she needs to write “do not” instead of “don’t” if her story turns out to be 49 wordlong. She will look up in a dictionary and decide that she may write “deliberately” instead of “on purpose” if she needs to get rid of a word to make it 50. Such a small effort here and there will enable a writer at any level of proficiency to come up with an extremely short story.

You will read below an example of an extremely short story, “Because of You,” composed by a Japanese student in one of Professor Honna’s courses at Aoyama Gakuin University, Tokyo. The first three lines convey lonely feelings of this student, depressed and helpless, and because of this melancholy, the rest of the story appears contrastively heartwarming. A reader could not help saying, “Cheer up! Yes, your mother is always with you.”


Another entertaining part of the ESSC is that the extremely short stories can be presented as a Power Point file. How you would like to present it is up to you: you may select a font of your choice, its size is up to you as long as you can manage to write all lines on one page, and you can even choose a pattern and colors for your background to the best effect.

JAF AE is planning to hold its first ESSC during the winter months of 2006. We are truly grateful to the following organizations for appreciating the significance of the ESSC and providing us with financial support:

Because of You

My voice does not mean anything.  
My thoughts do not mean anything.  
Nobody cares about me.  
But you,  
you treat me as something special.  
Because of you I can smile.  
Because of you I can feel safe and protected.  
Everything is because of you.  
Mom I’m here because of you.

AGU



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The competition will be administered domestically, to begin with. As JAF AE accepts entries only on its Website (<http://www.jafae.org/>), it is technically quite feasible to make the ESSC an international event. A collection of extremely short stories by Japanese learners of English will be an exciting asset to teachers and researchers. It will be much more exciting if the collection is enriched with the words of international learners of English.

Therefore, I look forward to the day when students of English all over the world are busy counting the number of words they have written. Oh, no, you don't have to do that; please remember to click Word Count on the Tools menu to make it extremely short.

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