

Developing an International Corpus of Creative English

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This paper proposes an International Corpus of Creative English [ICCE] as a worldwide corpus particularly suitable for easy implementation in countries which have tertiary institutions with well-defined populations of students possessing similar cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds. The ICCE is contextualized as a World Englishes corpus with reference to the International Corpus of English (ICE) and the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE). Centred round the Extremely Short Story Competition [ESSC], introduced at the 2nd Asia TEFL Conference in Korea (2004), the ICCE will provide potential in terms of intercultural/interlinguistic research and also practical exploitation in the wider community for both educational and commercial purposes. Specifics of the Extremely Short Story Competition [ESSC] are provided in order to introduce a tightly structured contest which has proved to be an extremely efficient instrument for the generation of texts both inside and outside the (language teaching) classroom.

A progress report, is presented which outlines two pilot projects undertaken at Zayed University [ZU] in the United Arab Emirates [UAE] (2004) and at the British Council in Seoul, Republic of Korea [ROK] (2005). This is illustrated with the prize-winning ESSC stories in both locations. In addition, an account describes the compilation of the first component of the ICCE corpus which is currently being undertaken in the UAE (2005) using the ZU website specifically designed to operationalize the ESSC in twenty federal tertiary institutions throughout the country. Discussion is provided of the benefits of the ICCE for language learning and teaching, applied linguistics and the community. The paper calls for academics in other nations to contribute to the ICCE and offers the ZU ESSC website and support to other countries wishing to participate in the project.

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Call for the Development of an International Corpus of Creative English

An International Corpus of Creative English [ICCE] is proposed. This ICCE would be a World Englishes [WE] corpus composed of texts showing English being used creatively by individuals sharing similar cultural or linguistic backgrounds in selected countries. At present there are a number of established English language corpora consisting of electronic texts gathered to be representative of the English used in particular countries on a worldwide scale. These include corpora, such as the authoritative International Corpus of English [ICE]¹ proposed by Greenbaum (1988, 1991a, 1991b) and the International Corpus of Learner English [ICLE]² initiated by Granger (1998, 2001) and

¹ The ICE corpus is coordinated by Gerald Nelson from Department of English Language and Literature, University College London with, at present, 6 subcorpora available on CD ROM: East Africa, Great Britain, India, New Zealand, Philippines and Singapore <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/ice/> .

² The ICLE corpus is coordinated by Sylviane Granger of the Centre for English Corpus Linguistics

the associated spoken corpus Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage [LINDSEI]³ originated by De Cock, Granger and Petch-Tyson (1999). It is considered that these may all be categorized World Englishes' corpora with ICE being representative of significant aspects⁴ of the English used by communities in a growing number of countries worldwide and with ICLE and LINDSEI having a much narrower focus concentrating on the language used by students in tertiary institutions in diverse countries. The ICCE that is being proposed would include aspects that relate to the broad community focus of ICE but would share the more restricted institution-centred perspective of ICLE and LINDSEI. Focussing on creative English language production, the ICCE, like the ICLE, will be directed at a tertiary student population. However, unlike the ICLE, which has purely pedagogical aims, one of the primary objectives of the ICCE is to encourage the tertiary population to develop their individual creative English resources and take their creative contributions, i.e. what *'they want to mean'*, out into the wider community. This process ensures that the ICCE is not a solely classroom-based activity with instrumental aims closely related to the students' passing of examinations and their developing of English as closely as possible to the norms of native speakers of English. Instead a more holistic, integrative tactic is encouraged which allows tertiary students to engage with the English language, at whatever level they are at, with the possibility of their receiving tangible benefits for their contributions from the community. For instance they might see their contributions on display, they might see them published in a newspaper or book and they might even win an award or prize for their efforts. In addition, these tertiary students would be made aware that their creations would be contributing to international applied linguistic research and might even be used for the education of succeeding generations of their country-folk. Tertiary students' texts created for the ICCE would not necessarily have to be created inside the classroom, although this would not be proscribed. Combine this with the fact that their contributions would be likely to gain a real presence in the wider community, it becomes evident that the outcomes associated with the compilation of an ICCE in any particular country would be likely to make an impact beyond the bounds of tertiary education, raising the awareness of language and culture related to expression in the English language for both local and international users of the English language as encouraged by the International Association of World Englishes⁵.

Rather than proceeding from a theoretical design to a tangible realization, as is usual with the compilation of many corpora, including the ICE, compilation of the ICCE is put forward as a design which proceeds from the pragmatic application of a highly effective and, as yet, under-utilized technique appropriate for application in the language classroom (as suggested in Maley, 1993), to a wider event impacting on the institution and community. Designated the Extremely Short Story Competition, this event has been made generally available to students from both inside and outside the classroom in all

Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium and contains contributions of advanced learners of English as a foreign language (rather than as a second language) from 19 different mother tongue backgrounds <http://www.fltr.ucl.ac.be/fltr/germ/etan/cecl/Cecl-Projects/icle/icle.htm>.

³ This paper focuses mainly on the ICE and ICLE corpora, rather than LINDSEI, since it is primarily concerned with generating and compiling the written element of the ICCE corpus.

⁴ Greenbaum (1991:5) succinctly maps out the required components for the compilation of the ICE corpus.

⁵ The URL for the International Association for World Englishes is <http://www.iaweworks.org/>.

areas of an institution, no matter what their level of English. To date, two pilot projects⁶ have been run at very different institutions many thousands of miles apart. These, in turn, have developed into an event offered to an even wider group of participants to include tertiary students studying at a representative sample of institutions throughout a particular country to compile the core of an ICCE component for that country⁷. When delivered through electronic media utilising Email and the Internet, the ESSC allows a thoroughly consistent approach to the collection of student texts which lends itself easily to the compilation of electronic corpora and ensuing attainment of more theoretical goals. Because of its ease of implementation and its ability to generate large numbers of uniform texts, in diverse locations, it is suggested that the ESSC should be used to form the foundation of a worldwide ICCE representing diverse countries.

Introduction to the Extremely Short Story Competition

The Extremely Short Story Competition [ESSC] was devised by the present author and applied to generate texts produced by World English users. It developed from earlier competitions aimed primarily at native speakers of English initiated by Edwards (Ed., 1997) in New Zealand and Aldiss (e.g. Ed., 2001) in the United Kingdom. Both the New Zealand competition and the United Kingdom competitions were undertaken with one of their objectives being to raise money for charity and both resulted in the commercial publication of anthologies of short stories of only 50 words in length. The NZ anthology was entitled, ‘‘The Top of the Morning’ Book of Incredibly Short Stories’ and was named after the weekly radio chat-show on which many of the stories were featured, with Radio New Zealand ultimately publishing the book. The UK book, which appeared following many similar competitions, the first being in 1982, was entitled ‘The Daily Telegraph Mini Sagas’. Since the aim of the Extremely Short Story Competition was to provide a competition available for World English users of all levels of ability in English, a number of significant changes were introduced by the deviser of the competition to provide for this:

1. The title of the NZ anthology was much more accessible to low level users of English than the title of the UK anthology, which included the item *saga* which was thought to have little relevance for beginners in English at the present time. Whereas the *incredibly* item in the NZ anthology was thought to have more relevance for low level users of English, it was thought that the term *extremely* might have more general applicability and therefore more relevance to such users. Hence the naissance of the term: ‘*Extremely Short Story Competition*’ [ESSC].
2. Both the NZ competition and the UK competition stipulated that in order to enter the competition, authors were required to write exactly 50 words. In practice, this was not enforced rigorously with stories in the NZ and UK books differing considerably in length. In order to ensure that the rules for the ESSC are

⁶ One pilot project was run at Zayed University, United Arab Emirates (2004). Another was carried out at the British Council, Republic Of Korea (2005).

⁷ At present students in over twenty institutions throughout the United Arab Emirates are participating in the ESSC and their texts are being compiled into the ICCE UAE 2005.

completely comprehensible and hence would provide maximum motivation for World English users of the language, the deviser decided to apply the 50 word constraint rigorously and to not accept anything else – “*neither 49 or 51!*”⁸. This has had a real spin-off in practice, for scrupulous application of this constraint means that authors have no option but to check their work very carefully and make deliberate decisions regarding the choice of words they use to end up with exactly 50 words. Rigorous application of the 50 word rule has also had great benefits for the editing process, as will be explained later on in this paper.

3. The UK anthology, in particular, stressed that all the stories should aim to have a beginning, middle and end and therefore suggested that the authors should be attempting to construct, what could be termed, a ‘well-made story’. This was thought inappropriate for a number of reasons: a) low-level users of English might not be ready to construct a ‘well-made story’; b) the idea of what constitutes a ‘well-made story’ may not be universally generalisable; c) the author’s own creative contributions were being sought rather than adherence to any external criteria; d) the deviser wished to generate as much diversity as possible even to the extent of allowing the inclusion of what may be termed words with local rather than international relevance. Eventually the deviser has decided that the rubric for the ESSC should explain that the term ‘story’ here can include “*Fact or Fiction, Poetry or Prose*” and may also incorporate what the deviser has termed “*World English words*”⁹.
4. There is little doubt that editing of the stories for the NZ and UK books took place, when required, subsequent to the public’s submission of stories to their respective competitions, but it may be assumed that this was generally informal and somewhat secondary to the compilation process. However, with the ESSC this had to be formalized because it was predicted that in order to display and perhaps later publish the students’ creative work, most stories submitted would require a minimum of editing. It was predicted that particularly with the creations of lower level students’ stories, the amount of editing required¹⁰ would be fairly extensive, however there was no thought of evaluating the level of English of the students involved. Hence it was thought necessary for all student-authors to formally consent to their work being edited for publication.

⁸ The instrument used for measuring the 50 words was the ‘Word Count’ function available in Microsoft Word with the title and the student-author’s pen-name being considered additional to the 50 words.

⁹ In the United Arab Emirates, the term ‘*nuss w nuss*’ (*half and half*) was introduced to indicate the eligibility of World English words – without this ‘stories’ may have resulted which were likely to refer to ‘Janet or John’s exploits round Edinburgh Cathedral’, rather than the more justifiable and hence desirable, ‘Fatma or Ali’s exploits round the Mosque in Umm Suqeim’ (a suburb of Dubai, UAE).

¹⁰ Recently the deviser of the ESSC attended a book signing by the well-known author Penny Vincenzi (08/05/05) and learnt about the vast amount of editing that goes into the completion of some books – with, at times, copy-editors shaping and changing the direction of the whole narrative – this approach contrasts starkly with that used in the ESSC which ‘crosses the ‘t’s and dots the ‘i’s but whose primary objective is to preserve and, if necessary, bring to light the original intention of the student-author.

5. Similarly in order to use students' creative work for intercultural/interlinguistic research, it was considered necessary to gain consent for this from the student-authors and also, gather brief ethnographic data about their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. At the outset, a student-author profile and consent form modelled on the ICLE and LINDSEI profile forms was devised¹¹
6. Some method of promoting the ESSC within the student body at a tertiary institution was thought necessary. Preliminary workshops¹² were planned for interested faculty and students. In addition it was decided that student texts, after they had been edited, should be imported into Microsoft PowerPoint and these would provide slideshows and notice-board displays which could be used to showcase the student-authors' work, interest more faculty in the process and also encourage additional contributions to the ESSC.
7. In order to provide a secure creative environment where student-authors would be able to safely contribute their creations yet retain their anonymity, a nick-name system¹³ was introduced to denote authorship. This allows students to shorten their names, create pseudonyms – which are in effect '*noms de plume*' or select the term ANON to preserve their confidentiality, as they think fit.
8. The UK publications were 'seeded' by international celebrities¹⁴ to ensure that the competition produced publishable results and their stories were organised into thematic groups. However with the stories written by more anonymous World English users of all levels of English, it was thought that these two components would detract from the '*delight of the unexpected*' produced by a little-known, hence fascinating, body of student-authors, all sharing a common linguistic and cultural background.
9. All submissions to the ESSC, whether created in class or extra curricula, were sent by email to a student organisation¹⁵ who archived them and forwarded them on for editing. This regimented submission process ensured that the 50 word constraint (see (2) above) could be rigorously imposed since all contributions would arrive electronically. Submissions could then be edited effortlessly and prepared for immediate presentation via Microsoft PowerPoint. The PowerPoint format also suggested an egalitarian approach whereby each 'story' was allocated with a frame of exactly the same size to exploit, for both slideshow and hard-copy

¹¹ This received approval from the Zayed University Committee for Research into Human Subjects in May, 2003.

¹² The deviser held workshops with the Zayed University Student Literature Club (November 2003) and later workshops for other interested students and faculty (December 2004). During the running of the ESSC, Microsoft PowerPoint slideshows and notice-board exhibitions were prominently displayed.

¹³ With female Islamic students at Zayed University, many of who were veiled – and all wearing the 'shayla' (Islamic head scarf), this nick-name facility was an absolute necessity to ensure participation and relative freedom of expression.

¹⁴ In Aldiss (Ed., 2001) stories were specially commissioned from Brian Aldiss, Rachel Cusk, John Hegley, John Lanchester, Blake Morrison, Carol Shields, Helen Simpson, Ray Davies and David Lammy MP.

¹⁵ At Zayed University, UAE the Literature Club collected all submissions and forwarded them for editing.

presentations. This frame has become the hallmark of stories output in printed form by the ESSC, as will be appreciated from the ESSC stories shown below.

10. The archiving and editing processes enabled two corpora to be developed:

- a. raw, unedited text
- b. mediated text edited ready for display

Comparison of these two corpora will enable generalisations to be made regarding the minimum changes required to change raw text into text ready for display and publication.

ESSC Pilot Projects 2004 and 2005

To date, the ESSC has initiated two highly successful ICCE pilot projects, one at Zayed University, UAE (2004) and, subsequent to the deviser visiting South Korea to deliver a featured paper at the 2nd international Asia TEFL conference, another at the British Council, Seoul (2005).

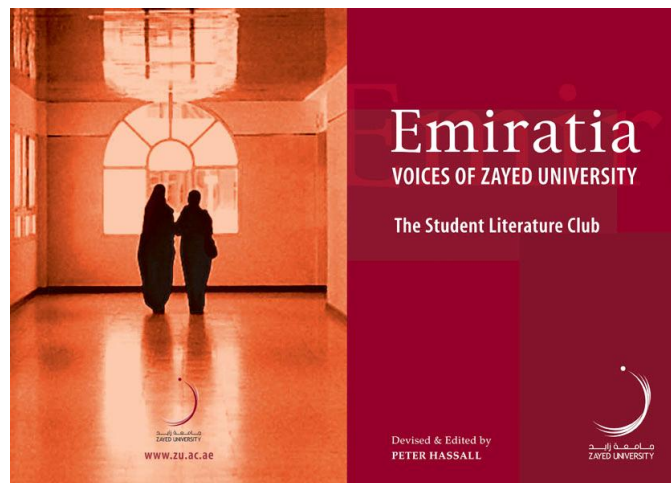
The pilot project in the United Arab Emirates was carefully monitored by the deviser of the project, who also acted as the editor of the stories. The ESSC was run at the two campuses of Zayed University for three months between January and May 2004, following preliminary workshops held at the Dubai and Abu Dhabi campuses, 100 kilometres apart, in November and December 2003. Zayed University [ZU] is a university, established in 1998, solely for female, Islamic Emirati nationals. For the three months of 2004 when the ESSC was run, the Dubai campus¹⁶ had approximately 1000 students; whereas the Abu Dhabi campus had almost 800 students. The ESSC at ZU was supported by the British Council¹⁷ who provided the four first prizes of digital cameras, which the ZU Literature Club had suggested as offering desirable enticement to encourage students to enter the ESSC, along with other prizes from a local bookshop called 'BookWorm'. The ZU ESSC 2004 was designed to be as inclusive as possible, hence four first prizes were presented to ensure that all areas of the student body, at both campuses were represented. Thus ESSC story contributors in the largest section of the University, the Readiness Department most of who had yet to receive a mark higher than 500 on the TOEFL test, were as likely to win a prize, at either of the campuses, as were students in General Education or the Majors. Altogether 250 stories were submitted by 150 student-authors, all of who were national Emirati Islamic women. The student-authors submitted up to fifteen stories each, with most of them submitting just one or two 50 word stories to the ESSC. A British Council team¹⁸ judged the ESSC and helped

¹⁶ Utilizing the international airport code, the Zayed University Dubai Campus is often referred to as ZU, DXB; whereas the Zayed University Abu Dhabi Campus, using the same code for abbreviation may be referred to as ZU AUH.

¹⁷ Stephanie Evans and Jo Maher, Director of the British Council UAE, kindly supported the ZU ESSC 2004.

¹⁸ The British Council team of Doreen Hardy, Ana P Basque-Artaza and Yasmin Mohamed judged the ZU ESSC 2004. Jo Maher, Director of the British Council UAE and Doreen Hardy representing Peter Ellwood,

award the prizes. This initial pilot project was a complete success with Microsoft PowerPoint slideshows being shown in prominent places on both ZU campuses in order to promote the competition by introducing the rules and displaying the prizes, and providing a cumulative display of (edited) creations produced by the student-authors of all levels of English and in all departments of ZU. Prior to the ESSC Awards Ceremony, all the submissions to the ZU ESSC 2004 were gathered together to comprise an anthology which was published in-house by Zayed University and distributed to all the participants in the ESSC at the awards ceremony. The cover of this anthology is shown in Figure 1, below. Entitled, ‘Emiratia: Voices of Zayed University’¹⁹, it has been assigned an ISBN number by the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Information and Culture.



**Figure 1. Cover page “Emiratia: Voices of Zayed University”
(Hassall Dev. & Ed., 2004)**

Regional Director of the British Council in the Gulf, presented the prizes including a bound copy of the ‘Emiratia’ volume (see below) in June 2004, just one month after the closing date of the ZU ESSC 2004.

¹⁹ An extract from the Preface of ‘Emiratia’ (Hassall, (Dev., Ed.), 2004a) is included by way of elucidation:

‘The title of this volume, “Emiratia: Voices of Zayed University”, expresses the editor’s conviction that as the English language becomes more and more widespread and provides a mode of communication that belongs to increasing numbers of people, it should change and expand to accommodate the needs of its new owners whilst enriching the language for everybody. Although the terms Emir [1632] and Emirate [1863] are to be found in the extensive volumes of the Oxford English Dictionary [1989], the term Emirati, referring to a citizen of the United Arab Emirates [established in 1971], is still not to be found. The editor envisages that one day, as a result of the growing reputation of the UAE on the World stage, coupled with the presence of volumes like this one, authored by UAE nationals, the terms ‘Emirati’ [both adjective and noun] and even the possible female form ‘Emiratia’ may come to take their place in the OED and the hearts and minds of English speakers everywhere.

Any possible inadequacies and imperfections perceived as errors in the language of the pieces contained within these pages have been purposefully disregarded in order to foster originality, creativity and ownership amongst students using their own English language. Throughout this book a number of ‘winners’ have been identified. In one sense we, the readers, are all winners since we can benefit from the fresh perspectives and language choices offered by this new generation of Emiratia English users.’

The Preface included above might serve as a model for other anthologies of similar stories produced in different countries and regions of the world.

Since the ESSC Awards Ceremony (June, 2004) the PowerPoint compilation of ZU students' stories written for the ESSC has been presented at two Evenings for Parents of New Students. As well as being discussed in papers presented at international conferences by the deviser, four of the stories from the 'Emiratia' anthology were selected by the British Council Korea to be displayed on their website to generate interest in a parallel ESSC pilot study to be run at the British Council in Seoul (2005) and to illustrate what ESSC stories entail, as shown in Figure 2 which follows:

<p>BRITISH COUNCIL Korea Text only</p> <p><i>If you ever wake up in the the sun rises, you will see eyes. Before the sun turns sky fills with soft chewy ma sky is a soft shade of pink beautiful that in it ...</i></p> <p>EXTREMELY SHORT STORY COMP.</p> <p>Write an extremely short story and win a prize. Write about anything you like, fact or fiction, but do it in exactly 50 words, no more no less! Most your word count (title and name not included in the 50 words) email your story to essc@britishcouncil.org (This is 50 words)</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All levels welcome to enter Poeticic 1st and 2nd prizes at each level: Elementary / Pre-Int / Intermediate / Upper Int / Post-Upper Int Write your name, level and ID number on your story Check your word count - exactly 50 words Submit your entry by Saturday 5th February at the latest Winners will be announced before the end of term Email your story or hand it in to reception Have a look at the sample 50 word stories (Link format) <p>FOR TEACHING CENTRE ADULT LEARNERS</p> <p>We are pleased to present a 50 word story competition and we hope you will enjoy participating in it. For more information, please contact us on essc@britishcouncil.org or call us on 020 7598 3000</p> <p>03/01/2005</p>	<p><i>A Pink Sky</i></p> <p><i>If you ever wake up in the morning, before the sun rises, you will see a sight for sore eyes. Before the sun turns yellow, and the sky fills with soft chewy marshmallow, the sky is a soft shade of pink, a feeling so beautiful that in it you'd sink.</i></p> <p><i>Crimson Rose, DXB</i></p>
<p>Forgotten shoes</p> <p>Yesterday I decided to go to the cinema. I saw a romantic film which made me cry. I was still crying when I returned home. Suddenly I found out that I had left my shoes in the cinema. That was the most amazing thing that has ever happened to me.</p> <p><i>Lolly, DXB</i></p>	<p><i>Scary Night</i></p> <p>I opened my eyes. Everything around me was dark. I could hardly see the clock. It was 2:00 am. I heard something, I'm sure I did. So, I got up from my bed. I walked towards the window to see what that sound was. I opened the window and "aaaaaaaaaaaaahhh".</p> <p><i>Asma, DXB</i></p>

Figure 2. Emirati student texts from the ZU ESSC 2004 being shown on the website of the British Council Korea as promotional material and 'sample stories'

Similar to the United Arab Emirates competition, the British Council Seoul ESSC 2005 was an in-house competition open to students of all levels of English, however this tended to be more formalised than with the ZU implying a perspective more pedagogically oriented and less community based. Although not monitored so carefully, the Seoul ESSC 2005 demonstrated that the ESSC could be easily transferable to very different situations. Fewer stories were submitted in Korea and the submission process tended to be on paper. Unfortunately this meant that only the First Prize Winners and Runners-Up were archived. This was carried out electronically with the prize-winning entries made available on the British Council Korea homepage and also on the main British Council webpage. Four of the British Council Republic of Korea ESSC 2005 [BC ROK ESSC 2005] prize-winning stories are shown below in Figure 3. Here the format of the stories has been rearranged using the PowerPoint frames to make them more easily comparable to the ZU ESSC 2004 stories.

<p>Elementary Prize</p> <p>If I am in an aeroplane which is falling down to the ground and I can make a phone call to only one person, it must be someone who I really love.</p> <p>Can I select just one person at the last minute? Maybe I can't choose....I am going to die.....</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lee Ji-Yun, KOREA</p>	<p>Pre-Intermediate Prize</p> <p>A woman asked her friend, who had just been on date, how it had gone.</p> <p>'We went to the cinema – he looks like the hero of the film,' she said sadly.</p> <p>'Really? He must look so good! What film did you see?' her friend asked.</p> <p>'It was Shrek.' She replied.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Moon Hyun-Jung, KOREA</p>
<p>Intermediate Prize</p> <p>Five years ago I visited Washington DC during the holiday of Thanksgiving Day. Nobody was there.</p> <p>I met an Australian guy in front of my hostel. He said to me, 'People must have gone home to die'.</p> <p>I was confused. Why? The meaning was 'People must have gone home today'.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Jung Sang-Gak, KOREA</p>	<p>Upper-Intermediate Prize</p> <p>Koreans learning English always first learn:</p> <p>'How are you?'</p> <p>'I'm fine thanks and you?'</p> <p>So, it wasn't surprising to read about the Korean man in America, lying on the ground after a car crash. When the ambulance men rushed to him and asked,</p> <p>'How are you?'</p> <p>Guess what he replied?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ri Kang, KOREA</p>

Figure 3. First Prize-Winners of the BC ROK ESSC 2005 for comparison with the First Prize-Winners of the ZU UAE ESSC 2004 (shown below)

Although not wishing to make any lengthy comparison here, the first prize-winning stories from the BC ROK ESSC 2005 contrast significantly with the four first prize-winning stories from the ZU UAE ESSC 2004 shown in Figure 4 that follows:

<p>1ST PRIZE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Little Fish, Big Fish</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>He's loving, caring, sweet and sour He's handsome and beautiful, my knight in shining armor He looked out for me through thick and thin I felt like a little fish with a little fin Can't swim without him Can't be without him What can I say He is my daddy</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">ButterCup, DXB</p>	<p>1ST PRIZE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">My Wishes</p> <p>If anyone asks me what I wish for? I will tell you that I can't tell you, because if I want to tell you my wishes the paper of the book and the ink of the pen will finish before I finish. Allah is the one who knows my wishes.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">FAK, AUH</p>
<p>1ST PRIZE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THE PLIGHT OF THE ART STUDENT</p> <p>Working late at night tilting my computer screen left and right... a little more blue, a little more yellow... no it still isn't right! Cursing, crying to ease the pain then realising that it's all in vain... All this suffering... this terrible plight, all in search of the perfect turquoise.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">SK Hamdan, AUH</p>	<p>1ST PRIZE</p> <p>You looked at the sky, stars and moon. You heard a voice talking to the moon, "Do you feel alone?" The moon said, "No." Then the moon asked, "If being alone makes you cry, why don't you leave your loneliness?" The voice said, "Moon? Would you ever leave your sky?"</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Voice of the Truth, DXB</p>

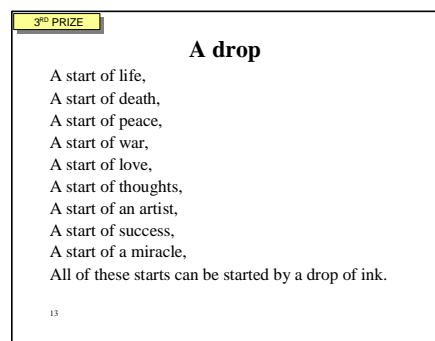
Figure 4. First Prize-Winners of the ZU UAE ESSC 2004 for comparison with the First Prize-Winners British Council Seoul ESSC 2005 (figure 3 shown above)

Editing the ESSC to an English as an International Language [EIL] standard

An appreciation of the ESSC editing phase is crucial for complete understanding of the ESSC event. Discussion of this phase will be made with reference to ZU UAE ESSC 2004 as this was the most closely monitored pilot project. Prior to editing, student-authors wrote their submissions in Microsoft Word and sent them electronically to the Literature Club, where they were archived and then sent on for editing and to be made ready for presentation. The speed and momentum of the competition meant that the editing had to be completed quickly so that students could see their contributions on display with the minimum of delay. If students found that their presented story, on a wall display, a PowerPoint slideshow or read out on the ZU Student Radio, did not match their intended meaning, as occurred in a number of instances, they could then discuss and either negotiate their meaning with the editor or withdraw their submission altogether. The student-authors' wishes regarding such decisions were sacrosanct since, naturally, they were the originators of the texts and the copyright holders.

It is essential to appreciate that in the ESSC standards to be imposed through editing were not simply 'standard English', but involved negotiation between the writer's text and the editor's perception of the intended meaning that was resolved in some sort of World English standard. The task of editing for the ESSC requires that the final product should be, as far as possible, true to the student-author's intentions, yet should comprise an acceptable form of English without any glaringly obvious 'errors' or 'mistakes' in vocabulary, grammar or punctuation that would immediately raise objections from less involved readers, listeners or bystanders and which might inhibit further publication.

Most texts that were submitted required minimal editing, except for the occasional deviant tense, punctuation or spelling item. On first impressions, these appeared largely idiosyncratic occurrences and hence no attempt to suggest anything systematic will be discussed until further analysis has been undertaken. However, at one end of the scale, a number of submissions from students with a range of English ability throughout the University produced more 'sophisticated' texts, where irregularities in grammar were not at all obvious, since they did not depend on it so much. Such pieces tended to be more formulaic or 'stream of consciousness' texts where the student-authors showed that they had devised strategies for circumventing any possible correction or associated criticism, as may be appreciated from the texts that follow in figure 5:



Bus Stops

Scribblings on the beige walls. That time was distant, can't you reflect on your developed footfall? Curly hair, and a positive curve. Little circles, no sharp jabs. And the blonde-haired girl with the elastic snaps skin. Her rosy cheeks plump and blue eyes twinkling. Something of fairytales, most likely Grimm.

Figure 5. Examples of ESSC texts requiring minimal or no correction (appearing in Hassall (Dev., Ed.), 2004)

One or two texts, mainly, although not exclusively from low level students required quite a lot of adjustment in order to make their message clear. When editing texts such as these, it was important to try to capture the 'spirit' of the text to produce something that would result in an acceptable, complete piece and that would be likely to be understood by members of the UAE culture as well as, to some extent, by outsiders. An example of the procedure followed, in the editing of a 50 word story, is shown below in figure. This is an extreme case and, unusually, the editor had to resort to face-to-face consultation with the student-author in order to ascertain the full significance of the writer's words.

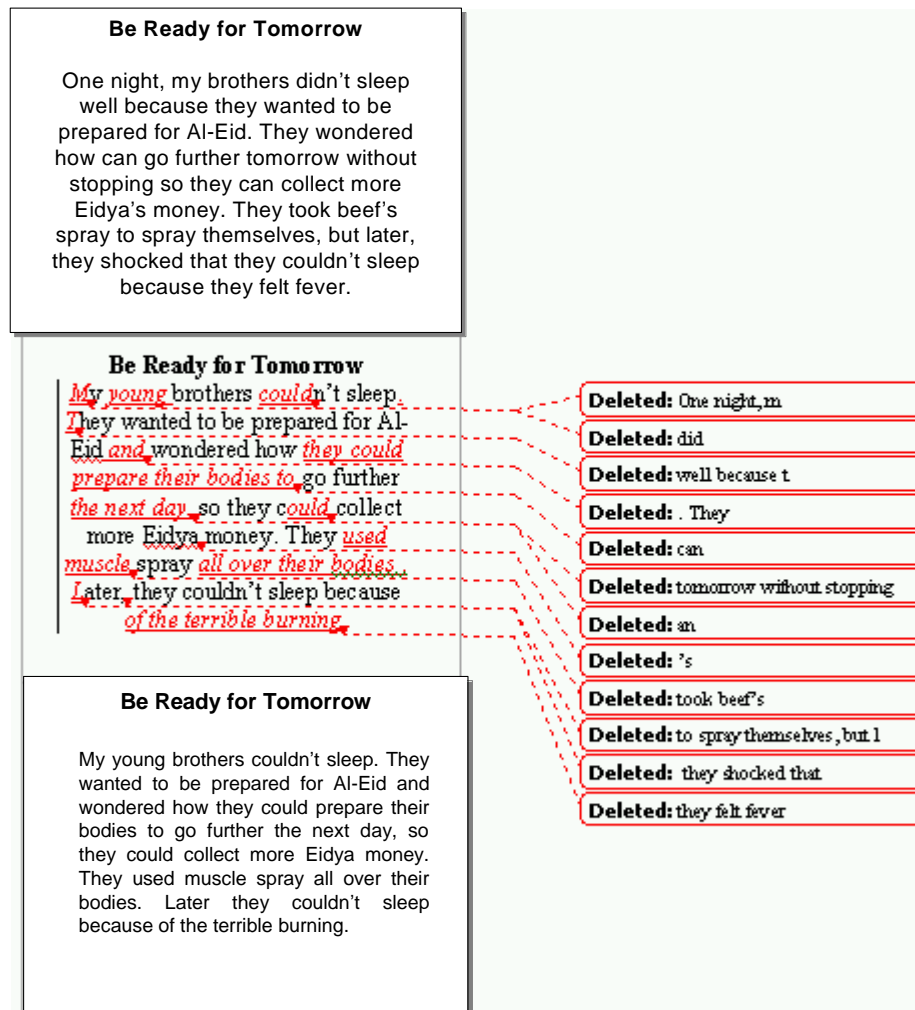


Figure 6. An ESSC story requiring consultation between the editor and student author in order to negotiate meaning

The large number of changes made to the student's work in the illustrative example, shown in figure 10 above, was uncharacteristic of the extent of the editorial revisions typically made to the ESSC stories. However this example clearly shows the nature of the changes that were likely to be made. This 50 word story was a case where the writer clearly had a message to impart and there was obviously something interesting to be discovered about the enthusiasm with which children collected their "Eidya money". However, there are things, such as the explanation of the term "Eidya" and the reason for collecting the money that are left unsaid since they obviously belong to the traditions and culture of the writer and are left for outsiders to discover for themselves. The judges of the ESSC found this submission extremely interesting and eventually awarded it a "COMMENDED" certificate. When, as in the first frame of figure 6, the student-author's original message was virtually incomprehensible to the editor, it was necessary for the writer to be contacted by the editor for further clarification. The kind of intensive negotiation of meaning that took place, explicitly in this case, was the kind of arbitration

that took place more extensively, though less explicitly, throughout the ESSC. It was sometimes the writers, on discovering something untoward about their edited stories, who would approach the editor first and provide further elucidation about the meaning of their displayed submissions hoping for revision of their ESSC texts.

Forgotten shoes

~~On-night~~Yesterday I decided to go to the cinema. I saw a ~~nice~~-romantic film which ~~makes~~made me cry. I was still crying when I ~~have~~returned~~to~~ home. Suddenly I ~~find~~found out that I ~~have~~had forgotten~~left~~ my shoes in the cinema. That was the most amazing thing that has ever happened to me ever.

Figure 7. Edited student text not requiring negotiation with the student author

The underlined words showing additions and crossed out words showing deletions in figure 7 are more representative of the kind of editorial changes made to a student text when no negotiation was required. These changes were made by the editor who has traditional native speaker proficiency having been born in Britain to English speaking parents and whose family had been resident there for many generations. However, the editor had been teaching English overseas in the Middle East, SE Asia and the Pacific Rim for many years and this may well have influenced his perceptions in some way. The changes were made under pressure as the editor had many texts to deal with in a short period of time and wished to put something forward for public display that both he and the student could be proud of and that would not be immediately criticised for what might be regarded as obvious errors or mistakes.

Thus in figure 7, **present tenses have been changed to past tenses** *makes => made, find => found* and present perfect to past perfect *have forgotten => had forgotten*. In addition **a construction involving a superlative (*most* + adjective + noun) and perfect tense + *ever*** has been included and the **present perfect** has been chosen since the author obviously showed some predilection **for using a present tense** in this text, The fifty word rule was met in the student's raw text and, in order to accommodate this **superlative *ever* construction**, the editor chose to make some lexical changes – the item *nice* was deleted as being relatively superfluous and the deviant feature *On night* was replaced by the single item *Yesterday*. The editor could find no other quick alternative to this change that would fulfil the strict 50 word rule and felt that this did not greatly detract from the student's original intention. The preposition *to* was also deleted in the expression *returned to home*, although the editor considers that this appears to be becoming an increasingly common feature in traditional native speaker English. The 50 word rule greatly eased the editing process since no determinations regarding superfluous (in the case of 51 words) or additional (in the case of 49 words) meaning had to be made by the editor.

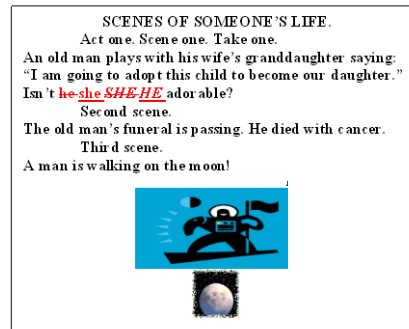


Figure 8. An Edited ESSC story where the student author contacted the editor to explain misinterpretation of her work

Figure 8 is an interesting text that was produced by a heavily veiled student, possibly displaying religious tendencies, in an English class being taught by the editor. Most of the students in the class had written one or more fifty words story for the ESSC and these had been displayed on the wall. The author of figure 8 approached the editor to criticize the changes that had been made to her text. As will be appreciated from this text, the rather convoluted relationship between the old man, his wife and her granddaughter who later is adopted by the old man to become their daughter has not been altered by the editor. After considerable discussion it appeared that this relationship between the characters in the student's ESSC story was vital to the working of the text and was crucial to its success. However, the amendment to the personal pronoun – changing *he* to *she* was fiercely rejected by the student who considered that the sentence *Isn't he adorable?* should be an aside by the author commenting on the man's benevolence rather than, as the editor first saw it, as a comment by the male character on the charm of the young girl. Initially the editor considered that the item *adorable* would more likely refer to a young possibly female child, rather than an old man. However, after some soul-searching, and the memory of lines from English Christian Carols sung at Christmas, such as "*Oh, come let us adore him ...*"²⁰, the editor accepted the student's reversion of the amendment and happily the student then agreed for the story to be displayed with a view to being published and for it to be included in the corpus being compiled for further analysis.

What is being suggested here is that the editor with native speaker proficiency is being utilized as the linguistic gatekeeper in order to provide custodial guardianship to safeguard the cultural content of the ESSC stories. An editor who is not a native speaker would also suffice provided they appreciated the type of language items and their density that would induce immediate criticism of a text if put on display. It may be that what is being developed here is some sort of English as an International Language [EIL] standard which is being referenced to World Englishes. If the ESSC perspective and project is spread to tertiary institutions in other countries, hopefully sufficient data will be amassed which might permit more authoritative statements to be made regarding what this EIL standard comprises.

²⁰ The Carol, 'Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful' by Unknown, 18th Century, originally '*Adeste fideles*', was translated by Edward Caswell (1814-1978) and Philip Schaff (1819-1893) according to <http://www.lutheran-hymnal.com/lyrics/tlth102.htm>. It is now an established part of British English popular Christmas culture, religious and increasingly secular.

Positive Outcomes of the ESSC Pilot Projects

The British Council Korea website on which the prize-winning entries were posted, explains that *'the stories were of a very high standard ... Some of the stories were true anecdotes of personal experiences abroad or incidents at home, others were more poetic and imaginative.'*²¹ The prize-winners were presented with a selection of books, music and British Council sports bags at a prize giving ceremony²². The BC Korea website also provided a link to the British Council Creative Writing World²³ website where the winning stories and another to the ZU website in the UAE.

At ZU UAE, the ESSC contributions demonstrated a similar wealth of topics and obvious involvement of the students, with almost 10% of the total number of students at the University entering the competition, many submitting more than one story, demonstrating that the task was both inclusive and manageable. Several students immediately started writing submissions for the possibility of a further ESSC being held.. All of the contributors received a copy of the volume *"Emiratia: Voices of Zayed University"*. This publication, although produced solely for University's internal consumption, was an integral part of the competition. It was a way of giving back to the students what was rightfully theirs and also fulfilling a promise that their work would be published, having greater permanence. This first encouraged them to enter the ESSC and the realization of this promise has maintained student confidence that similar commitments will be met in the future. This volume also persuaded external organizations to become involved, as may be appreciated from Figure 9.

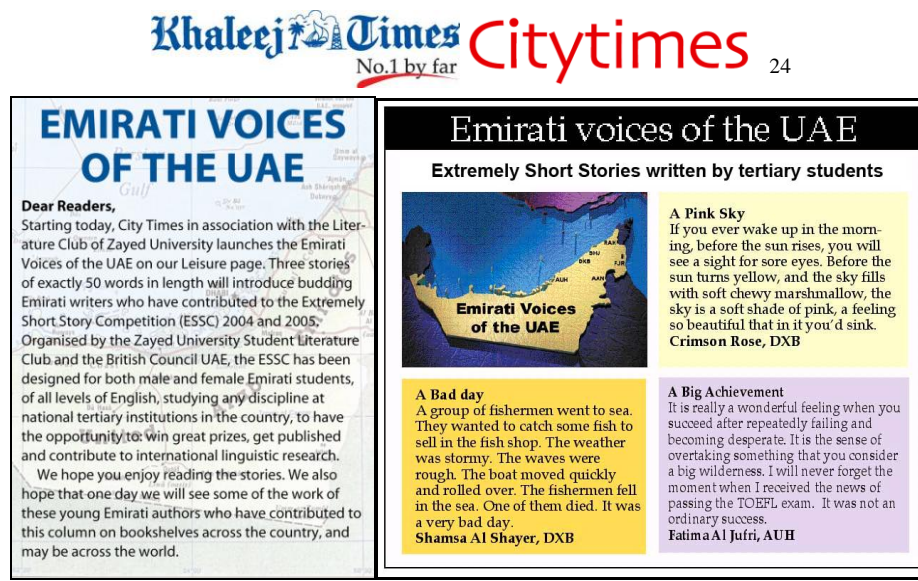


Figure 9. First day of the series 'Emirati voices of the UAE' appearing every day, not Fridays, in the Khaleej Times newspaper.

²¹ <http://www.britishcouncil.org/korea-english-and-exams-adult-learners-social-events-50-words-comp.htm>, accessed 06/06/05.

²² At Korea ESSC 2005 prizes were presented by Kevin McLaven the British Council Teaching Centre Manager, whose interest and enthusiasm made the whole Korean pilot project possible.

²³ <http://creativewritingworld.britishcouncil.org/> - click on E. Asia - accessed 06/06/05.

²⁴ Khaleej Times, Monday, May 16, 2005, Vol. 4. Issue 28.

A major benefit of the ZU ESSC, institutionally, was that it offered an authentic event that students throughout the university could engage in, no matter what department they were in, how long they had been at the university and without reference to their competence in English. Similarly it provided a real focus for faculty and staff from many different departments to pool their efforts in terms of advertising, promoting and supporting the students and their contributions²⁵. Every advertisement for the ESSC contained at least one example of a student 50 word story and together with the PowerPoint slide-shows, radio excerpts²⁶ and cumulative wall-displays, the students' work began to make an impact and a culture related to the ESSC began to develop. English language teachers explained that the ESSC event provided real relief from syllabus-bound teaching for both themselves and their students. The students were offered a real choice to submit whatever they wished and the teachers gained an insight into what their students chose to disclose. Throughout the ESSC, the students' anonymity was respected and they could choose to be as open or as secretive as they wished by skilful use of the 'nickname' procedure.

Benefits of the ESSC for Language Learning and Teaching

In terms of ELT pedagogy, the ESSC event was a way of the teacher 'going out' to the students rather than waiting for the students to come to the teacher. As such, many more students were influenced by the competition than would normally be taught in a language class. In some ways contributions were more open and more representative of the authors' lives and interests, than material which would usually be produced by students in a language classroom, primarily because students had chosen what to invest of themselves for public presentation to the whole University. In this, the ESSC would appear to support constructivist learning theories such as that put forward by Gagnon and Collay (2004) who refer to the idea that learners construct their own knowledge and who see exhibition and display to others as important elements of the learning process. Although it focuses on written rather than oral outcomes and does not require interaction in the originator's L1, the ESSC also shares some elements with Community Language Learning based on the Counselling Learning Approach (CLL) devised by Curran (1972). Like CLL, the ESSC is designed to build confidence in adults who, '*might fear to appear foolish ... the teacher becomes a Language Counselor, he understands them and leads them to overcome their fears*', (Ghaith, 1998). In the ESSC the teacher/counsellor directs students to construct meaningful chunks of language, which in the ESSC are 50 words in length²⁷. Theoretically, the ESSC innovation develops Allwright's notion which

²⁵ A great many people helped in the implementation of this project including Faculty from the English Language Center & the Director Bryan Gilroy, Language and Literature Department, IT Department, the Publications Department and of course the 150 students themselves.

²⁶ ZU Radio – the student radio station read out stories over the air, connecting the ESSC to its roots in Edwards (Ed., 1997).

²⁷ The present author considers that the texts produced by the ESSC are of a significant length, upon which many innovations for English Language Teaching and also E-government may be built. The ESSC stories provide the minimum amount of text within which something really meaningful may be expressed and which can capture something about the cultural background, history and aspirations of the writer. The author has coined the expression 'information byte' to refer to texts of this specific length and has contributed a discussion paper to Microsoft (2004).

considers the benefits to language learners who manipulate linguistic ‘chunks’ of text (1977). The ESSC editing procedure involves considerable negotiation between the student-author and editor. This generally refers to the editor negotiating the linguistic forms (Xuehui Liu & Guoxia Zhao, 2004) as in figures 5, 6, 7, 8, with negotiation of meaning occurring when either the editor locates the student-author, requiring further clarification as in figure 6, or when the student-author alerts the editor that the editing process has failed to capture the significant meaning of the 50 word text, as in figure 8. This promotion of attention to detail in both meaning and length of text was an area which the ESSC appeared to encourage. Similarly the methodology was useful in activating the students’ English and thereby also encouraging an active vocabulary relevant to their own perspective, which in turn would promote polysemy and help contextualise further vocabulary learning and concept formation (Creswell, 2002).

The ESSC has built up a collection of edited contextualised English authored by the students themselves and given back to them for their own consumption. The consideration of a World Englishes perspective appeared to have fully engaged the individual language learner’s psycho-social and cultural identity and the carefully controlled public exposure may very well have made a significant impact on a number of individuals’ perception of their own identity and language learning performance. Multiple copies of “*Emiratia*” (Hassall Dev., Ed., 2004) have been placed in the ZU libraries in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. It is considered that this anthology might provide useful, influential models for students to emulate and perhaps that it might go some way towards enriching the English language. Interest from a neighbouring institution²⁸, suggests that these stories may have local educational benefit since they are published stories written in English by Emirati student-authors²⁹.

Compiling the UAE ICCE 2005 from the ESSC

In order to realise maximum benefit from the ESSC process, compilation of the ICCE has been proposed to collect student-author 50 word texts from representative tertiary institutions in disparate countries.

In the UAE, this has resulted in a nationwide ESSC competition which is being offered to Emirati students, male and female, at federal tertiary institutions and the British Council in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah and this is being coordinated from Zayed University. Students from the many campuses of the Higher Colleges of Technology, UAE University as well as Zayed University will be eligible to enter the ESSC. Because of the distances involved and the large number of students able to enter the competition, the ESSC is being made available via a web-based delivery system. Over 30,000 student-authors are being invited to enter the competition for 6 months³⁰. The ZU Information Technology Department has undertaken the programming of the web-page, which will only admit a story of exactly 50 words in length, and also

²⁸ Personal e-mail from Paul Leslie, LSU Team Leader, Dubai Women’s College Higher College of Technology. May, 2005.

²⁹ The collection of short stories entitled, ‘*The Wink of the Mona Lisa*’ (Al Murr, translated from the Arabic by Briggs, 1994) – provides one of the few examples of text, written by an Emirati national and available in English. This means there is something of a dearth of models contextualised in the local setting.

³⁰ This is an arbitrary length of time, decided upon by considering that the ZU ESSC 2004 was given to approximately 1,800 student-authors for 3 months, resulting in 250 texts written by 150 authors.

constructed a database to store the 50 word stories along with the research profile of all the participants. The British Council UAE³¹ has provided a computer server on which to deploy the website and database and the competition is being sponsored by governmental bodies and local businesses. Workshops for students, staff and supervisors have been held at all the participating institutions to outline the results of ZU ESSC 2004 and introduce the ESSC UAE 2005. As may be appreciated from figure 9, the Khaleej Times Newspaper has promised to provide public coverage of contributions to this competition and this has increased student motivation to participate. The actual extent of the UAE ICCE sub-corpus in terms of number of texts and participants has not been estimated and cannot be fixed beforehand, unlike Greenbaum (1991b:86), who predetermined that the national sub-corpora of the ICE should consist of 1,000,000 words. One million words is a good round figure, however sub-corpora for the ICCE will be dependent, to some extent, on the size of the total population of the nation involved. Hence the number of institutions and the student population participating and also the interest shown by students and their teachers will all be significant factors.

In the UAE, a large group of students with a homogeneous cultural and linguistic background is very easy to identify since federal institutions cater for a largely local Emirati student population, although this is changing. This makes it comparatively easy to compile an ICCE sub-corpus for the Emirati socio-cultural linguistic group and perhaps makes it something that should be exploited before long, whilst it still remains available. This demographic is shared by a large number of other nations who provide or encourage tertiary education for their citizens, A number of such nations may not have contributed to the ICE or ICLE corpora and therefore might make valuable candidates for the ICCE, which has the relative ease of implementation to recommend it as an educational event at representative tertiary institutions.

Potential for research with the ICCE worldwide

Greenbaum (1996:6) states that the criterion for inclusion in the ICE corpus is not the language used in the texts but who uses the language. He explains that generally, *'the people whose language is represented in the corpora are adults (18 or over) who have received formal education through the medium of English to the completion of secondary school'*. The World English users to comprise the ICCE are, in some ways, less circumscribed in terms of English used at school, but instead represent substantial groups of adults (18 or over) who are studying at tertiary institutions through the medium of English (no matter what their level) and who share a distinct cultural and linguistic background. In some ways the ICCE corpus is more prospective than other corpora, since participants must plan what they wish to submit for both research and public view. It is hoped that participants who have contributed to the ICCE corpora may themselves become involved in this research, perhaps as research assistants³², because they are the

³¹ We are grateful for Robert Taylor, Teaching Centre Manager, British Council, who facilitated this and is spearheading the involvement of Emirati students at British Council centres throughout the UAE.

³² As in Hassall (2004), this involvement in the research process may also extend the students' language awareness and encourage them to be more sensitive to making their contributions appropriate for particular contexts so that they might be better able to use Academic English, and even their own World English when required.

ones who have invested something of themselves and are therefore likely to have significant views regarding the full implications of the research.

For each national ICCE that is collected using the ESSC, two subcorpora will be generated: compilation of raw, student text based on the students' first drafts submitted to the ESSC and another of mediated texts edited for publication. Both national ICCE subcorpora will be consistent, composed of machine-readable texts of exactly fifty words in length, with the title and authorship being extra. These two subcorpora may be considered individually, together, or in contrast to each other, in order to determine quantitative and qualitative distinguishing features. As more and more national ICCE corpora are compiled and added to the research pool the resultant opportunities for contrastive research will increase rapidly.

Brief comparison of figure 3 (the winners of BC ROK ESSC 2005) and figure 4 (the winning texts of ZU UAE ESSC 2004) indicates a number of productive fields for qualitative research. Broad themes, narrower topics, stylistic features (as in Leech, 1969) tenor, organisation and word choice (including both national and international 'World English words'³³) may all provide fruitful areas for research into what student-authors from different backgrounds '*want to mean*'.

A number of quantitative studies which might prove enlightening are suggested by Leech (1998), however these have been proposed for purely pedagogical purposes as appropriate for the ICLE. Several of the items in this list could be adapted, as shown in italics below, to make them more pertinent to the ICCLE where student-authors are using the language for their own ends – to communicate *what they want to mean* as much as they are attempting to attain native speaker norms. Here reference to '*learners*' has been replaced by the term '*World English [WE] users*' and '*native speakers*' by the term '*English as an International Language [EIL] specialists*'. Similarly, '*learning the target language*' has been replaced by '*using English*'. The term 'WE users' indicates that the student-authors are using their ESSC stories to communicate in their own World English what they want to mean. The term 'EIL specialist' is used to explain that the editors of the ESSC texts do not necessarily have to be native speakers of English, whatever that might imply. Instead, it is considered more important to have editors who are World English users and who are aware of what language features might, and might not, be acceptable internationally in a creative piece of work. For instance, there are many authors of World English literature, having diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and having been awarded prestigious international prizes for their influential creative writing in English(es), who would be extremely 'well-qualified' and suitably experienced to undertake the ESSC editing role and help the texts of budding World English users receive more extensive exposure than they would otherwise receive. In order to determine some of the distinguishing features of individual World Englishes when compared to a). other individual World Englishes and b), the amalgam of all available World Englishes, the following may comprise pertinent areas of research utilizing the ICCE:

³³ The scarcity of Arabic/English and Korean/English 'World English words' appearing figures 2 to 9 is noticeable despite this being endorsed in the promotional material - see footnote 9 above. Interestingly, a few smatterings of other languages also appear in the 'Emiratia' collection, for instance the final story to appear in the anthology, which is organized alphabetically by title, is intentionally entitled "Yume" (Japanese for "Dream").

1. *What linguistic features of English do the WE users in question use significantly more often ('overuse') or less often ('underuse') than EIL specialists do? (comparison between raw & mediated corpora for one language group)*
2. *How far is the English behaviour of the WE users influenced by their native language (NL transfer)? (comparison between a single raw corpus and what might be predicted by study of the student-authors' native language)*
3. *In which areas do these World English users appear to demonstrate a generalizable systematic performance in English – either similar to EIL specialists or dissimilar to EIL specialists? (comparison between raw & mediated corpora for one language group)*
4. *What are the particular areas of overuse and underuse which native speakers of language A are prone to when using English, as contrasted with native speakers of language B, C, D? (raw ICCE corpora language A, contrasted with raw ICCE corpora language B, C, D)*
5. *What in general is the proportion of a generalizable systematic performance in English (overuse, underuse) peculiar to native speakers of language A, as opposed to such behaviour which is shared by all WE users of English, whatever their mother tongue? (comparing individual, raw ICCE corpora from language A, B, C, D with the amalgam of the corpora A, B, C, D).*
(after Leech, 1998:xiv)

A stylometric methodology for explicating the relationship between different corpora, as suggested by Leech (1998), has been put forward by the present author. Hassall (1998) and Hassall & Ganesh (1996, 1999) develop an 'etic' methodology (after Pike, 1967) for contrasting parallel corpora of expository text by comparing the frequency of orthographic units produced by different language user groups with the aggregate of all these groups, as is suggested by Leech (1998:xiv). For instance, Hassall & Ganesh (1999) examines the frequency of these 'etic' units for five groups of university student text-users from Japan, Korea, Thailand, Taipei and the UAE whilst undertaking a task similar to that on the writing component of the IELTS³⁴ test. The statistical instrument known as Correspondence Analysis [CA] (Greenacre, 1984), which is available as part of SAS (1995) and also XLSTAT 2000 (Fahmy, 1995), is employed to produce a graphical display of the relationship between the language user groups and the most frequent orthographic units that they each use when compared to the aggregate of these groups³⁵. This suggests characteristics of the text produced by each of the language user groups, when compared to each other, and points to a possible source of miscommunication. It is

³⁴ The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) which is jointly managed by: University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, British Council, and IDP: IELTS Australia.

³⁵ This is extended in the more theoretical Hassall (2000) which suggested that scripts completed for the IELTS test could be used to compile corpora to explicate different World Englishes.

hoped that, in the future, similar methodology might be applied to the analysis of mediated and non-mediated ESSC data which go to make up ICCE corpora representative of different countries, compiled of language user groups drawn from distinctive cultures and linguistic backgrounds. Other approaches to the analysis of ICCE corpora would also be welcome.

Involvement in the compilation of ICCE corpora using the ESSC

Johansson (1991) notes the exponential growth in the numbers of corpora-related studies since the 1961 Brown Corpus compiled by Francis and Kučera, it is hoped that this call for the compilation of an ICCE built on the ESSC will further extend and develop this interest. As outlined above the ICCE has obvious ease of implementation, particularly for countries having a tertiary student population with a well-defined cultural or linguistic background. However, it is unusual in that it also promotes an educational event with spin-offs in the local community – giving student-authors the opportunity to air their creations and the community the chance to respond. The Extremely Short Story Competition provides an activity which may be developed for classroom use (Maley, 1993); however to realize the full implications of the ESSC it should be utilized as the foundation for an International Corpus of Creative English. This would naturally need to be well-orchestrated to ensure a consistent approach and this coordination role is something that the current author would gladly undertake.

Perhaps the two most important contributions afforded by the ESSC event, noted by students and academics throughout the UAE have been i) the chance it has afforded students and academics to step outside the language curriculum and pursue something really creative and ii) the chance for the wider community outside the educational establishments, not just their teachers, to appreciate and enjoy what has been created. It is suggested that institutions, on a worldwide scale, should now capitalize on this experience and use the ESSC for a more significant objective, with important implications for research and publication: the compilation of the ICCE in diverse countries. With the continuing support of Zayed University, the British Council, the local media and sponsors, the present author is compiling the ICCE UAE 2005. This is being delivered via a website that will be made available for institutions in other countries to use. This will provide a wealth of data for sociolinguistic research and international publishing that could be replicated in other countries, for the mutual benefit of all concerned.

Institutions in different countries interested in becoming involved in the future development of ICCE through the ESSC project should contact the present author for further assistance and current advice. It is hoped that access to the ICCE project via the ZU ESSC website on the internet will be made available and this will be supplemented by workshops to help potential ICCE compilers consider some of the practicalities involved. If you consider that a) academics in tertiary institutions in your country of employ would be interested in becoming involved in this project and that b) the possibility of getting your student-authors' work published would motivate them to contribute ESSC 50 word stories which could also be made available for research purposes, please contact the present author in order to ensure consistency of approach. In return, access to the available raw and edited ESSC corpora will be provided for those

wishing to undertake further research. Note that it is intended that all royalties from the sale of books or other artefacts associated with this project will be reinvested to encourage further development of the Extremely Short Story Competition and the proposed International Corpus of Creative English³⁶.

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³⁶ The utilization of the 50 word story, which provides the basis for both the ESSC and the ICCE, might well prove an exciting area to develop as an activity for testing English, since the conciseness required and the reviewing necessary to complete a piece of writing on the computer in exactly 50 words is very evident, and in fact often forms an authentic task in the world outside of the language classroom – i.e. being asked to write abstracts, bio-data or reports.

World Englishes, Vol. 25, No 1, pp. 131-151, 2006. Note*: The definitive version is available at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.0083-2919.2006.00451.x?journalCode=weng>

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