

# Reflections on the Effects of Free Writing in an EFL Writing Class

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## Populations

## Writing Assignments & Topics (Some review / instruction performed between writings on each topic)

**73 Freshmen & Sophomore Private Univ Students** (2018 Freshmen & 2019 Sophomores are same cohort)

(All English majors)

**9 Freshmen Public Univ Students**

(Variety of majors)

\*Informed consent obtained from all\*

**Private Univ:** (no textbook used)

Set 1: Hobbies, favorite game / sport, favorite movie

Set 2: School days, clubs, part-time jobs, favorite holiday

Set 3: Foreign country to visit, studying at university, favorite food

Set 4: Where you want to live, favorite book, school trips

Set 5: Weekend activities, favorite TV show, pets, animals

Set 6: Summer vacation, North Korea problem, celebrities

Set 7: Birthdays, aging society, concerts

Set 8: Halloween, global warming, Japanese comedians

Set 9: New Year, declining birthrate, musician 'idols'

Set 10: Spring break, age of adulthood, internet of things (IoT)

\*\*All writing periods = 10 mins; Each topic used 2X\*\*

**Public Univ:** (*Writing for Fluency and Accuracy*, Boon 2017)

Unit 1: Narrative Paragraphs: Interesting things about me (2X 5 mins & 10 mins) - About their partner (5 mins)

Unit 3: Descriptive Paragraphs: My friend (2X 5 mins & 10 mins) - About their partner's friend (5 mins)

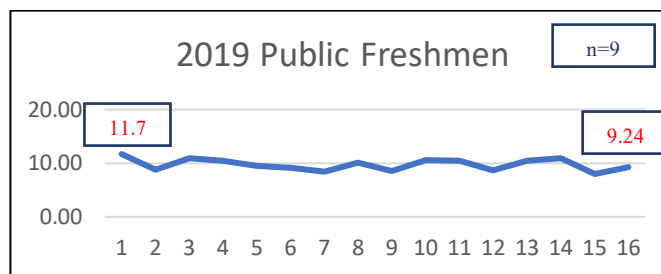
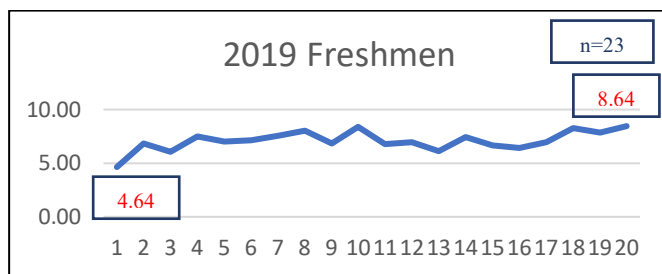
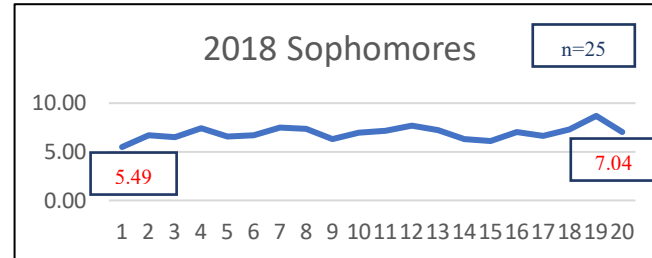
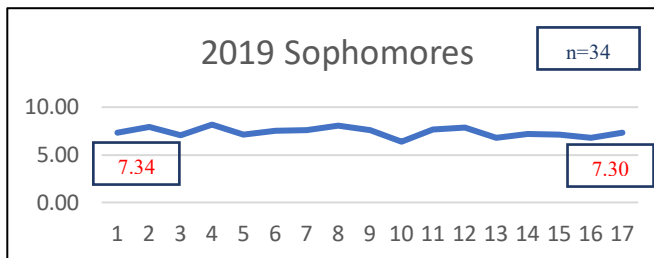
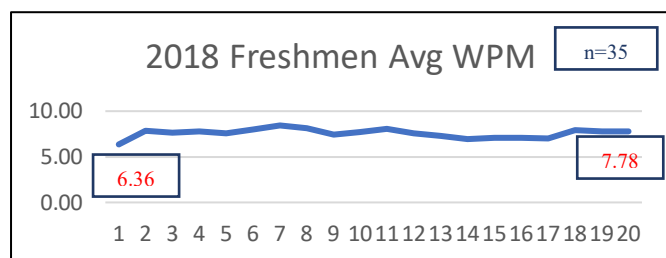
Unit 5: Compare and Contrast Paragraphs: - Two popular pets (2X 5 mins & 10 mins) - Comparing self and partner (5 mins)

Unit 7: Cause and Effect Paragraphs: My study habits (2X 5 mins & 10 mins) - Classmate's study habits (5 mins)

Unit 9: Summary Paragraphs: A typical day summary (5 mins)

Unit 11: Opinion Paragraphs: Working in a group (2X 5 mins & 10 mins) - Classmate's opinions (5 mins)

## Words per Minute (WPM) Comparison Data



**Questions / Comments:**  
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## Discussion

- Free writing has been recommended and used in L2 writing since the 1980s (Jacobs, 1986); Very little research on free writing in Japanese univ contexts
- Azizi (2015), Baba & Nitta (2014) found slight increase in WPM over time. Like Muller (2014a;b), **this study saw no significant increase in WPM** over a semester, or over a year's time (see 2018 Freshmen - 2019 Sophomores). *More research is needed in this field to truly establish the efficacy of free writing.*
- Shekarabi (2017) found free writing improves textual cohesion; Nordin, Zabidin & Kamaludin (2019) report free writing lowering EFL writing anxiety.
- Darling (2018); Head (2016); Hwang (2010) & Muller (2014a; 2014b) found students felt that free writing was beneficial to their English writing skills.