



## **The Use of Writing Groups in the ESL Classroom - a Case Study from Hong Kong**

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### **Abstract**

Writing in the English as a second language (ESL) classroom seems to be a never-endingly contentious issue, with continual concerns over form versus process, teacher-only as audience, the amount of practice that is appropriate, and the authenticity of tasks, assessment and feedback. Writing tasks regularly suffer from a set of limitations and problems – viz, the main purpose is the collection of summative marks; the teacher is the only audience; the product is completed at a single setting with a set time limit; the topic, length, genre and time limit are set by the teacher; the task is not authentic; and the focus of the exercise is the product rather than the process. This paper describes the writing experiences of three Secondary 3 (Grade 9) ESL students in a Hong Kong secondary school who, together with a mentoring teacher, wrote collaboratively to produce and publish, in their own time, an 11,000-word novel over eighteen months. The group's creative and operational processes are discussed within the context of typical ESL school writing tasks. The authors' views of the writing process, expressed during an experience-sharing session with ESL teachers, are also highlighted.