



BOOK REVIEW

Macnaught, L. (2024). *Writing with students: New perspectives on collaborative writing in EAP contexts*. Bloomsbury.

Jeremy Koay Australian Catholic University, New South Wales, Australia

I found Lucy Macnaught's *Writing with Students* when I was searching for newly published books in academic writing pedagogy. As a teacher of academic literacy working with first-year students, I was drawn to the central idea of the book: how teachers co-construct text with students without recommending alternative wording (e.g., vocabulary, phrases). This idea may resonate with those who hold the view that teachers play an active role in text construction by guiding students to be aware of the choices they make in their writing. The book can be divided into three sections. The first lays the theoretical foundations of various writing pedagogies that underpin the book. The second, possibly the most relevant to practitioners, discusses what teachers and students do during joint construction. The final section is research oriented and would be of interest to classroom discourse analysts from the Systemic Functional Linguistics/Semiotics traditions.

The first section consists of Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 1, *Writing Development in EAP Contexts*, situates joint construction within collaborative writing, in which teachers lead the co-construction of an academic text. The chapter offers an overview of various influential teaching approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching and text-based approaches. In joint construction, Macnaught highlights the importance of explicit teaching, making invisible academic norms and culture visible to students who are unfamiliar with "registers associated with power and educational success" (p. 17). Macnaught presents an overview of the three influential genre traditions in writing pedagogy: Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), English for Academic Purposes, and New Rhetoric. Although technical terms are used

Correspondence

Jeremy Koay
jeremy.koay@acu.edu.au

Publication

Received: 15 September 2026
Revision: 27 September 2026
Accepted: 28 September 2026
Published: 28 September 2026

Copyright

©2026 TESOL in Context



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution – ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

unapologetically in the chapter, they are sufficiently explained. A contribution of this book is its comprehensive yet concise summary of various theories and approaches.

Chapter 2, *Scaffolding in Writing Development*, focuses on theories that underpin joint construction, drawing primarily on the works of Vygotsky. One timely contribution is Macnaught's clarification of the concept of scaffolding, a term often used to describe any form of support provided by teachers. Drawing attention to "the diminishing nature of teacher support" (p. 39), she highlights the idea that scaffolding involves gradually transferring agency to learners. Consistent with a sound understanding of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development, this chapter justifies the need for joint construction to support students' future independent writing.

The second section consists of Chapters 3 to 5. Chapter 3, *Student Micro-Tasks during Joint Construction*, highlights the importance of spending more time on "how to write" and less on "what to write" (p. 75) as this stage is designed to integrate and build on students' language knowledge. Macnaught proposes two strategies for doing this: ensuring that students have a shared set of notes related to the writing topics and creating a text outline before writing. As the main goal of teaching writing is to prepare students for future writing, Macnaught highlights the importance of having students talk about language and reflect on their language choices.

Chapter 4, *Teacher Guidance during Joint Construction*, discusses teachers' role. It insists that "teachers need to explicitly share their expert knowledge of academic writing practices and processes" when interacting with students (p. 89). To illustrate teacher-student interaction, classroom discourse excerpts are provided in the chapter. A significant theoretical contribution that teachers would appreciate in this chapter is Macnaught's extension of the term *metalinguage*. Traditionally, this term has been used to refer exclusively to discussions of linguistic structures. As joint construction aims to help students learn to use academic language effectively, Macnaught extends the term to include discussing "the process of generating or modifying wording", "appraising and reflecting on language choices", and considering "recurrent language choices" that could be used in future writing (p. 101).

Chapter 5, *Teacher Organisation of Joint Construction across a Lesson*, identifies how teachers coordinate student activities in co-constructing a text that is more advanced than individual students could produce independently. This chapter explains the need for students to shift their focus from reproducing language structures in a model text to examining and reflecting on language choice. This shift is particularly relevant when incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into writing curricula. Rather than accepting AI-generated texts generated by AI uncritically, students need to evaluate the generated texts and discern appropriate language choices by applying Macnaught's extended metalinguage.

The third section, which comprises Chapters 6 to 8, is research focused. Chapter 6 analyses how teachers use phonological (verbal), kinaesthetic (e.g., tapping wording on a whiteboard), and graphological (e.g., drawing a star symbol beside a line of text on a whiteboard)

expressions in joint construction. Chapter 7 argues that detailed analyses of classroom discourse can yield pedagogical insights and discusses the challenges associated with such analyses. Chapter 8 critically reviews current research practice (i.e., the use of phase as unit of analysis) in analysing classroom discourse and proposes an alternative approach. For researchers interested in analysing classroom discourse, these chapters offer future research ideas, such as examining how teachers adapt and change initial metalanguage to meet students' ongoing language development needs and investigating how teachers and students negotiate power relationships in validating language choices.

As a teacher of academic literacy, I find the explanations and examples of teacher–student interactions in Chapters 3 to 5 particularly insightful and useful. Despite efforts to make the book accessible by explaining technical terms throughout, readers with some familiarity with SFL may still experience difficulty understanding some of its technical content. The level of technicality is, in my view, appropriate and necessary, given that the book was published in the *Bloomsbury Studies in Systemic Functional Linguistics* series. I would recommend this book to academic literacy teachers and advisors interested in understanding how they can co-construct texts with students. Reflecting on my teaching context, I am reminded that pedagogical innovations are only as effective as the conditions that enable them. When student attendance is inconsistent, implementing even well-founded approaches becomes challenging. This serves as a reminder that effective writing pedagogy cannot be considered in isolation from the broader realities of the classroom (e.g., cost of living, fuel crisis).

Dr Jeremy Koay (SFHEA) is a Lecturer at the Australian Catholic University. He teaches Academic Literacy in the Diploma Programs. He has taught at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Vietnam, bringing an international perspective to his practice. He has served as a reviewer for *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *TESL-EJ*, *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, and *International Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. His research interests include academic writing, teacher professional development, and autoethnography.