

Huw Jarvis Interview Summary

[00:31] JG: Website just you? HJ: Yes. Before going into teacher education, background in EAP. One of the things looked at at the time: digital literacy and validity of websites, .org, .com, etc. Considered this carefully, came up with .org – having website called TESOLacademic.org was a political decision. A dot com would have suggested a commercial company which we are not, dot edu or ac are reserved for academic institutions – so a dot org was the obvious choice as it suggests academic credibility which is important in all the we do.

[01:46] JG: What sparked the idea? Several drivers. Been to amazing conferences with great speakers who impacted on HJ's practice. Felt it was a shame not everyone had access to this – many students never able to get to conferences. Also gut instinct – if you see people talking about their work, you get a sense of their passion, of what drives them, you get paralinguistic features, missing when you read (sometimes dry) books and publications. With rapid technology developments this became possible to do. Was just going for whatever was the easiest to get up. Very easy to get lots of key people saying this is a wonderful idea, harder to get people to actually do something. Keith Johnson agreed to do the first one, then Anne Burns, then David Nunan. Once there were two or three, it became easier to get other people on board.

1 HJ: partly throughout the duration of my career ive
2 been to some amazing conferences and seen some
3 really great speakers whove impacted on my
4 thinking and what i do. you know some of the big
5 plenary speakers people like david nunan who i
6 saw at iatefl years and years ago. and i started
7 and one of the things i was thinking about is
8 what a shame it is that not everyone has access
9 to those kind of talks and that you have to go to
10 a conference. and thats a fairly privileged
11 position to be in. it involves finances etc etc
12 etc. so that was part of it. and then ive been
13 worked with you know ma tesol. ive been working
14 on ma tesol programmes for many many years. and
15 many of those students were in that boat and were
16 probably never ever going to be able to get to
17 conferences. and so that was part of it. but also
18 i think there was a sense in which my gut feeling
19 is that if you see people even if its a youtube
20 video rather than a face to face meeting. if you
21 see people talking about their work you get a
22 sense of the passion that they have and you get a
23 sense of what drives them. and youve got all
24 those kind of paralinguistic stuff going on you
25 can see. and thats kind of quite missing when you
26 read their books and their publications. and
27 those books can sometimes be quite dry. and
28 seeing somebody behind it i thought would be a
29 good thing. and with the rapid development of
30 technology it just became something that

31 JG: (xxxx)possible.
32 HJ: was possible to do. as i said in that paper
33 originally just as wmv files. im not despite my
34 publications im not a technical whiz kid by any
35 means. so i was just sort of going for whats the
36 easiest way of getting this stuff up there. and
37 wmv files and moviemaker at that time worked. and
38 put my first one up which was i mean it was quite
39 difficult at first to get people. no thats not
40 true. i was going to say it was quite difficult
41 to get people onboard. thats not true. it was
42 very easy to get lots of key people saying this
43 is a wonderful idea.
44 JG: and then hard to get them to actually do it.
45 HJ: it was rather more (xxxx). Saying okay and now
46 can you sit in front of a camera or get one of
47 your phd students to record you. fortunately we
48 had our external examiner at salford was keith
49 johnson at the time. so i got to know keith quite
50 well and he agreed to do the first one. and then
51 i think it was anne burns who agreed to the
52 second. and i met david nunan and it all. i was
53 going to a conference where david nunan was
54 speaking and he agreed to do one. and once i had
55 sort of two or three it then became a lot easier
56 to get those other people who said this is a good
57 idea onboard. because you know you do what your
58 peers do dont you.

[05:32] Bigger challenge in academia, not just in language education - recognising that ways of disseminating knowledge are changing – can be daunting.

[06:09] JG: The sort of people being asked to get involved are used to expressing themselves in the written word, in a certain register and genre, with time to think. People interpret what HJ wants in different ways.

[06:45] HJ: Leave it as open as possible – happy to get any copy! – but also adds to it – it’s up to them how to approach it.

[07:33] JG: How do you choose people? HJ: Partly pragmatic – approached many more people than have provided copy. Decided to approach people who have informed the delivery of the modules HJ works on in language education, and other people on module reading lists, who are big names. Some sort of rationale in approach, but in the end, happy to get copy from any of the big hitters. Basically all professors who have done primary research - needs mechanisms to say these are worthy people to be delivering this. JG: What about people like Scott Thornbury or Briony Beavan – where do they slot in? HJ: Thought long and hard; ST doing next one, and reasoning twofold – ST moving into research more now, also HJ wants people to come to the site and ST is a good name to have. The old guard big hitters are a kind of dying breed – so much of TESOL is now privatised, taken out of academic remit. Fewer newer keynotes coming through. Thinks it’s much more

difficult to become a global leader in language education research now than years ago. A reflection of the way ELT provision is changing in the sector, recognition of research significantly less than it used to be.

(JG summarises own situation re research.)

[15:32] JG: How much/what sort of feedback did HJ get from his students at the time? HW: it's great to see the speakers. Very often makes the content much more accessible. Also good emails from people across the globe. Over first 6 months/year tracked carefully where the site was being accessed – at first most hits from the UK, as expected, within 6-7 months hits from Ethiopia, Nepal (2008 – people had to download things). Started to get a sense that it was working. Beyond the UK we started to get significant hits from other places where postgraduate TESOL provision is well established e.g. the US and Hong Kong, however, it was also good to see some hits from countries which are considered low-tech environments such as Ethiopia and Nepal.

60 JG: and what was their feedback on them.
61 HJ: the feedback was i mean they. i think i was
62 tapping into something because the feedback from
63 the students was its great to see them. its great
64 to see faces behind these names. its great to see
65 what they actually look like. never mind the
66 content stuff its just good to see them.
67 JG: sure yes no absolutely i think thats true
68 actually. it makes them feel a lot more real.
69 HJ: absolutely absolutely. and then in terms of
70 content very often it makes the content much more
71 accessible you know. so you listen to somebody
72 give a quick talk about the things that they
73 publish about its easier to get a sense of what
74 theyre on about. because the academic books and
75 scholarly research papers can be quite dry cant
76 they. so i was getting good feedback from
77 students. i was also getting in those days via
78 email. it was pre you know pre web too pre
79 facebook and twitter and so on. i was getting
80 some good emails from people across the globe
81 when the website went live. so i got one i
82 remember one in fact it was the first one from a
83 teacher in south america sent me this email
84 saying thank you so much for setting up the
88 website.

[18:45] JG: Mentioned minor edits (in HJ's paper) – how much support do you give people? JH: It varies quite a lot. Solo operation, so no time to do a lot of editing. Some people get quite a lot of technical support from their universities. HJ can occasionally clip things that went a bit wobbly if asked. Reassures people if they go off track, etc. can take bits out. Some of the audio quality is quite poor – with the latest version of Movie Maker can do a little bit about that - couldn't do that with some of the early ones. The early ones also had a limit as to size.

[21:34] Asks people to use a microphone, otherwise suggests projecting as if to a large conference room.

[27:28] JG: Using Movie Maker a default choice? HJ: Software that came with the package. Widely used package. A lot easier now – can just upload onto YouTube.

[24:04] JG: YouTube versus the website – once on YouTube people tend to go there. People directed to website or YouTube? HJ: When something new is out, directs to YouTube – less and less to the site, unless there's something else happening on the website. There are some add-ons on the website (e.g. post SurveyMonkey links etc.) A new challenge: encouraging people to be active engagers in materials, how to engage people through social media. A learning curve. Sometimes thinks online environment just a group of people talking to each other (JG: not a bad thing!) Opportunities of not just watching, but adding comments taken up by some, but not all. Webinars are the way it's going. JG: a lot of people putting in a lot of work to provide this free content.

92 HJ: and then i it was
93 HJ: getting people to try online stuff. i mean there
94 are times when i do talks and people say ive
95 tried it and thanks for doing it. so there are
96 definitely success stories and that. but i think
97 its a challenge for us to do that. people have or
98 maybe they dont have time or whatever for
99 whatever reason theres not everyone is into it.
100 so the opportunities of not just watching a video
101 but sharing it or adding a comment or commenting
102 on someone elses comment are being realised by
103 some but not realised by everyone. i mean i think
104 thats changing. i think you know whether the
105 content on tesolacademic well the content on
106 tesolacademic is certainly not the only way that
107 thats going. so i think the way its heading are
108 webinars for example where you do sort of say
109 okay were all going to meet at this time. and as
110 you know the british council and iatefl do some
111 amazing webinars where people do go (xxxx).

[28:53] JG: What is your motivation? HJ: Essentially, to bridge the research-practice dichotomy – thinks it's dysfunctional and wants to counter that. Plus, the whole issue of access and paywalls. Feels quite strongly that knowledge and research should be made freely available to anyone. Also: something that gets you out of bed in the morning! (JG discusses her motivation and results of this work.)

[32:12] HJ: Part of why gets invited to conferences is because of the site - enjoys that, too.

(Agree on altruism/privileged position. Concluding remarks.)