

### Jeremy Harmer Interview Summary (MP3)

#### *Background to project and interview*

[03:02 ] Has now done about 5 major video sessions of teaching – two editions of the *Practice of English Language Teaching*, *Essential Teacher Knowledge* and *How to Teach English*. Similar but slightly different. *How to Teach English* – a CELTA-like book, filmed lessons and extracted little bits and activities to show, e.g. different teachers setting up activities at different levels. In first *Practice of ELT* filmed 11 lessons in the UK with native speaker teachers, edited them down, so 45-minute lesson would become 9-10-minute ‘lesson story’ – examples of good practice. Second *Practice of ELT* video: absolute priority to stop it being exclusively native speakers; filmed in UK, Turkey and Mexico. Ended up with very variable quality (though talked with teachers about lesson plans etc.) - ‘lesson documentaries’, episodes from teaching, one quite long lesson, others shorter excerpts. Asked people to reflect. *Essential Teacher Knowledge*, TKT-type book, set up a classroom and had teachers demonstrate techniques, e.g. using a phonemic chart. In all except the last case, a crucial part is a filmed post-lesson interview with the teacher. When you just watch a video, you just get what you see, but, particularly when you are a teacher in training, the thinking behind what teachers do is really interesting.

[07:10] Two other videos – one many years ago in Guadalajara – agreed for British Council to come in and video a lot of lessons in school he was director of - a major project. The other: fabulous talk by Rosie Tanner about video coaching – blew his mind. Discuss Rosie Tanner’s work and presentation. Discuss SM’s background.

[09:52] (*Shift from presenting models of good practice to lesson documentaries a result of variability of quality?*) Yes. Absolute rule when videoing teachers: cannot show anything that would put the teacher in disrepute. Discusses example when misspelling on the board resulted in heaving to heavily edit good teacher’s lesson because of future wide distribution of video.

[11:33] (*Any differences in video content between 4th and 5th edition?*) Significant differences – 4<sup>th</sup> edition filmed 11 lessons in Britain (Embassy school), got some really good lessons and two outstanding lessons. For 5<sup>th</sup> edition made absolute decision not to stay in the UK.

1 SM: any additional video? or any changes to the actual  
2 video content?

3 JH: significantly different. and those were the two  
4 additions where in the fourth addition we filmed  
5 in eleven lessons in Britain in the UK. and they  
6 all came from embassy. is it called embassy?  
7 yes its called embassy ces. because they agreed  
8 to help us. and you know we got some really good  
9 lessons from that. and two outstanding lessons i  
10 think. but for the fifth addition that was where  
11 we made an absolute decision not to stay in the  
12 UK. but actually to be in the UK but also to travel  
13 to other countries as well.

14 SM: so thats where the turkey and Mexico footage came

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15           in for the fifth addition?  
16    JH:    thats right. yes. yes.

[12:54] (*Any feedback how trainers and teachers have responded to different video content?*) Teaches online MA at the New School in New York shows the videos for that – a lot of the MA students’ comments are centered on what the teacher said in the interview. Passionate about advantages of filming and being filmed – one of the greatest CPD tools. Discusses best interview video they shot: two teachers both set up a speaking activity with C1 and B1 students, in interview watched clips and discussed why their set-ups were different. Textbook responses, but also seeing each other teach for the first time – told each other what good teachers they were.

25    JH:    yes indeed. well and certainly my ma students. i  
26           teach an online ma at the new school in new york.  
27           and i use some of the videos with that. and a lot  
28           of the students comments are my students comments  
29           are very much centred on what the teachers said  
30           in their interview. you know i noticed that mark  
31           said this. and that was interesting because i do  
32           this. and so on and so forth. in one particular  
33           case that ive talked about a lot. im actually  
34           passionate about the advantages of filming by the  
35           way. and being filmed. i think its the most its  
36           one of the greatest development tools we have you  
know?

[17:09] SM: takes quite a lot of thought and investment to get good quality video.  
JH: For sure. Cost over £100,000. Problem for IH and he suggests otherwise excellent videos, and perhaps 1<sup>st</sup> (*i.e.* 4<sup>th</sup>) edition of Practice of ELT – represent a very tiny fragment of what English teaching looks like. Very small classes. (*In 5<sup>th</sup> edition*) 20 students in an ordinary Turkish university. Crucially, tried to provide adolescent and kids’ classes as well as adults, as so much of the methodology JH and JS focus on has been adult-focused (CELTA and DELTA).

[19:00] (*Aware of anything else you would see as competition?*) Quite a lot of American stuff online – will send email with details. In 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Practice of ELT, JH talking, then clip, then JH explaining what happened next, then clip, etc. – that’s why ‘documentaries’. Variable quality nothing to do with non-nativeness. Was excited about 5<sup>th</sup> edition, because offered a view of what teaching actually looks like.

[21:44] Also potentially very good British Council collection of South-East Asia videos. SM refers to some previous interviews.

[23:18] Audio quality matters more than the video - absolutely crucial. Three-camera shoot a lot better than a two-camera shoot – gives you versatility. Could only use two cameras when filmed abroad. Got a Flip cam from Pearson to film short clips with teachers. Asked all teachers to describe a recent successful lesson – 1.5-minute clips, has about 85, some on YouTube. Extraordinary that everyone ends up smiling.

SM: a lot of good stuff available with teachers talking about lessons, just need curating. Audio, costs etc. more of an issue for recording lessons.

37 a random thought just occurred to me while you were  
38 talking. one is im sure other people have said  
39 this to you but its actually the audio quality that  
40 matters more than the video. thats just absolutely  
41 crucial. a three camera shoot is a lot better  
42 than a two camera shoot. but when we filmed abroad  
43 we could only use two cameras mostly. but three  
44 cameras just give you such versatility. i also and  
45 i really enjoyed this. i was given a do you know  
46 those flip cams? theyve gone out now because a  
47 company bought flip cam and then destroyed it. so  
48 it was just kind of a commercial wrecking activity.  
49 but i got a flip cam. pearson gave me a flip cam  
50 some time ago. and they asked me to go and  
51 interview teachers for little clips to post it on  
52 their website. and i asked all the teachers the  
53 same question. and the question was can you  
54 describe a successful lesson youve taught  
55 recently?  
56 SM: yes. i think ive seen those. those are  
57 available on youtube arent they?  
58 JM: some of them are on youtube. ive got about  
59 85 of them.  
60 SM: yes.  
61 JM: i think theyre absolute magic. becausetheyre im  
62 not trying to be immodest. im not i didnt do  
63 anything. I just asked them a question and pointed  
64 a camera in their face. but theres something really  
65 extraordinary about the fact that when they do that  
66 they all end up smiling. and you have little a half  
67 minute youve got this incredible resource of one  
68 and a half minute clips of.

[25:53] (*What would you like to add to the video content for a 6<sup>th</sup> edition?*) A pre-lesson interview with the teacher (*What do you hope to achieve?*), then post-lesson interview, then interview some of the students. Also: wants to find a better way of recording lessons which use digital technology (like IWB). Thinks need to video other kinds of lessons, e.g. telephone lesson in France, Skype lessons. Also: would like to have the teacher in an inset commenting on what they see. SM: technology opening up these possibilities.

[29:45] Does a lot of video feedback to his MA students – used to be a nightmare. Now much easier. SM mentions VEO and IRIS Connect, Camtasia – things getting easier, but still stuck with idea that video is record of something in real time.

[31:44] Perhaps a problem with IH videos? – they show whole lessons – some of it is monumentally boring, and that's no disrespect to the teachers, but not everything that happens in a lesson is necessarily interesting! . SM: CELTA observation

requirements. JH: Practice of ELT not aimed at specific qualification, so took decision to edit.

[33:13] (*Feedback from trainers as to how they use the video content?*) Do what was expected: set it up, watch and discuss. Has used them extensively himself in teacher training situations, though not in a course. Discusses how he used one of the lessons – get people to watch for different things – focused observation tasks change everything.

[35:02] (*Any other advice for trainers?*) On-going discussion from what you've seen. Definite viewing tasks. Post-viewing, extract the questions JH asks and get people to predict what teachers' answers were. Getting people to role play the feedback session. Discusses a particular lesson and responses to it. People first analyse the lesson transcript, discuss, then view – readjust their opinion. Leads to discussion of role of personality. Discuss how critical teachers are when analysing transcripts.

69 well i think it was just about each video lends  
70 itself. there are about three areas id go for.  
71 one is sort of ongoing discussion from what youve  
72 seen. so for example in the case of allen. in the  
73 case of allen he uses he calls it live listening.  
74 and he says that what he does is you know he speaks  
75 for you know 45 seconds 50 seconds. then students  
76 (xxxx) reconstruct them. then do it again.  
77 so thats a perfect lead in to you know quite an  
78 indepth discussion about that kind of listening  
79 versus other kinds of listening and video. and so  
80 thats the first thing. and thats the first thing.  
81 second thing. a definite viewing task seems to me  
82 to be you know. well no. ill start again. its very  
83 advantageous to give students a definite video  
84 watching task. if youre going to do a general video  
85 watching task then i think youre even in that you  
86 have to give them something to do having watched  
87 it. which is to say do you think this is a? you  
88 know pretend say do you think this is a pass  
89 distinction or fail lesson? what are your reasons?  
90 that kind of thing. the second another thing you  
91 can do which works really well i think with my  
92 videos is to extract from them the questions that  
93 i ask them. and get them to predict what the  
94 teachers answers were based on what theyve just  
95 seen. keep going.  
96 SM: so you edit out the questions? or you edit out?  
97 JH: no no. i think you just sort of give them the  
98 questions and let them just sort of discuss what  
99 they think the teachers answers will be. and then  
100 play the interview.  
101 SM: okay right. i see. yes yes.  
102 JH: and thats you know and so on and so forth. but  
103 another one which is really good fun which is a  
104 bit of a kind of a leap. ive spent the day reading  
105 articles about storytelling.

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106 so you know youre the observer. have a good think  
107 about what youre going to say. your mary  
108 or whoever the teacher is have them think about  
109 what you think about your lesson. but i mention  
110 the mary. one of the best videos ive got is from  
111 the 2007 edition of the practice of English Language  
teaching.  
112 a lovely girl called does this terrific lesson. and  
everybody  
113 loves this. they you know and she makes you know  
114 teachers watching it laugh. theres a two  
115 or three really kind of great moments in that  
116 video. and she does it with enormous charm.  
117 but you really its worth analysing. and again  
118 because for example a question that occurs with  
119 her is do you think the balance of teacher talking  
120 and student talking is appropriate. and with her  
121 something really interesting happens. which is if.  
122 say what they think of the lesson. and this has  
123 happened with two or three occasions. theyre not  
124 theyre rather critical. and then when they watch  
125 the lesson they start apologizing. because shes  
126 got such charm and natural kind of teaching  
127 ability. and thats a (xxxx) comment. so we could  
128 have a three day discussion about what that means.  
129 but anyway. they then feel guilty that theyve been  
130 critical of her.  
131 SM: sorry. can i just check? what did they watch that  
132 they were critical of?  
133 JH: ill start again. before they watched anything.  
134 from a transcript of a part of the lesson.  
135 SM: okay right.  
136 JH: a transcript. and you get them to analyse the  
137 transcript. which by the way is a huge this is a  
138 really cool thing to do. you get them to analyse  
139 the transcript of an excerpt of this video lesson.  
140 and they have to analyse it indepth and say what  
141 they think of it.

[41:47] Also: if you taught that lesson, what would you have done differently?  
Interesting, if filming is good enough, to just focus on 2/3 students and think about  
what their reactions were to the lesson.

[42:25] Did a workshop about filming teachers; discusses two examples of school  
directors filming all classes or having cleaners film classes. Discuss normalising  
filming of teaching and lecture capture.

[47:37] Massively underused, there's a lot of stuff, impossible to select individually.  
Worrying: some of it getting really dated.

*Closing remarks*