



## Live Moderated Chat Transcript

### Using Coursebooks

<Jill> Welcome to the chat session with Jeremy Harmer on 'Using Coursebooks'  
<Jill> Hello Lien, Jeremy will be with us in a few minutes to start the chat.  
Whereabouts are you from?  
<lien> canada  
<lien> hi, by the way!  
<Jill> Hi Ecuadorian - I'm guessing you're from Ecuador, right?  
<ecuadorian> Yes, thank you for the opportunity!  
<Jill> So, what sort of classes do you both teach?  
<ecuadorian> Secondary class 8-9Th levels, using Snapshot right now  
<lien> general, business, Cambridge,etc etc at an EF school in Vancouver  
<Nick> What do you think of Snapshot? Do your students like it?  
<ecuadorian> yes they like it very much and so do teachers in the school  
<Jill> How long have your been using it?  
<tony> Hi all from spain  
<ecuadorian> Two years, we've seeing New Snapshot coming soon  
<Nick> I like Snapshot because it makes it easy to make every lesson a structured SOCIAL event.  
<jeremy\_harmer> Hi everyone, good evening. I am very sorry to be late.  
<Jill> Hi Tony, Hi Danika - what sort of classes do you teach?  
<tony> Not teaching at the mo  
<danika> I teach business English at a college and I use Market Leader  
<Nick> Hi Jeremy. Did you fall off your bike?  
<jeremy\_harmer> Just about. It's a good thing i don't have to speak because I'm very out of breath!  
<Jill> Does someone want to start with a question for Jeremy while he recovers?  
<Nick> I think the most important part of a coursebook is the binding. It keeps all the work together and in sequence. What do you think Jeremy?  
<jeremy\_harmer> I think there is truth in what you say coursebooks provide a systematic and 'collected-together' body of work which students (and in the case of kids, their parents) find immensely comforting. That's one of their chief virtues, I think.  
<ecuadorian> Well, here we are the school staff together, we want to know what comes after Snapshot... we mean after Upper Intermediate we have two classes without a program.  
<Jill> Have you looked at Going for Gold?  
<tony> have you come across a good recently released text book (What?) For 16+  
<ecuadorian> pearson people here in Ecuador had recommended us work with Get on Track and Fast Track  
<jeremy\_harmer> well, ecuadorean, if your kids have finished snapshot successfully, presumably you're looking for something a bit more grown-up and so I wonder, like Jill, whether you can't start looking around the 'adult & young adult' courses - or even think of running your own course???  
<Nick> Jeremy, if you teach one-to-one, would you still use a coursebook?  
<jeremy\_harmer> Nick, I think it depends on the student. The best thing about one-to-one is that you can negotiate with your 'class' of one, and really deal with their specific needs. Some students really appreciate a coursebook in that situation whereas others may want to deal with newspapers or chat or whatever. I know that's a typical 'it depends' answer, but the teacher's role as a real



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- helpmate/facilitator is at its peak with one or two students.
- <lien> Jeremy - as a Brit in N.Am I have a question- have you ever presented/trained N.Am teachers, I am finding that methodological attitudes are very different and this has a very fundamental impact on the nature of coursebooks
- <jeremy\_harmer> Hi lien. Yes, I have worked a lot with bi-national institutes especially in Brazil & Peru You're right that we come from two distinct methodological traditions sometimes, but there's much more about us that is the same than is different! If you believe in rapport, if you believe in creating the right conditions for students to learn and grow well then I reckon we're all pretty much in the same business! But (getting specific) there is a big difference in some of the coursebooks, though when you see American English versions of, say Blueprint or English versions of say 'Interchange', well there are similarities. However, I think british course materials tend to go into things in a bit more detail and depth. Some teachers might prefer the greater 'freedom' that some NA materials provide, some not. What do you think (I'll stop for a bit!!)
- <lien> yes - except that the materials here tend to be rather dreary from a European our point of view, and teachers here feel that integrated coursebooks with colour(!!!) are not 'academic' enough
- <Nick> I find NA materials tend to treat structure and skills in different ways. They do not integrate the learning of the two in the same. Is that what you have found lien?
- <lien> The biggest surprise for me was that integrated American English coursebooks are still quite a novelty
- <jeremy\_harmer> Lien, I have sympathy with the European thing. Some Br materials are a bit worthy and serious and, to our shame (us course writers, I mean) we do get very Eurocentric if we're not careful. the colour thing, well, that's just a matter of taste. But can you imagine publishing a b & w course now. I don't think it would be popular!  
As this conversation goes on I'm thinking that teaching and learning is so much a matter of personal style, which comes from our own educational tradition and our trainers' preferences!!
- <Nick> When on-line learning becomes popular, books without moving pictures will seem very old fashioned.
- <jeremy\_harmer> Ah, Nick, that's a big 'when!' I'm not sure on-line will ever replace course/workbooks!
- <Jill> Has anyone ever used any online learning or something instead of a traditional coursebook?
- <Nick> No but I heard of a teacher who taught a 26 lesson course based on the dictionary!
- <Jill> Sounds... interesting! How did they manage that?
- <Nick> One letter per lesson.
- <jeremy\_harmer> At the moment I'm running a number of dictionary sessions with teachers in different places and in preparation I spent a whole lesson messing around with a dictionary with my students which worried me. i thought they'd be bored but they absolutely loved it!
- <lien> Maybe the problem is that integrated coursebooks suit the majority of language schools in non-English speaking countries where students only study for 3/4 hours a week, but for language programmes of 20+ hours a week perhaps integrated skills books don't give enough variety - each lesson is

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- coming from the same angle???
- <aaa> My students insist on having a course book with a lot of texts and on reading them aloud and translating into Polish. And then they don't listen and are bored.
- <jeremy\_harmer> Hi aaa, where are you/they?
- <aaa> I'm in secondary school in Poland
- <jeremy\_harmer> The only answer is (and this applies to any situation) \*bargaining\* where teachers say, look I'll do some of what you want (reading aloud/translating word for word) if you'll do some of what I want (reading for gist or whatever). Two fantastic articles from ELT Journal in '92 by Jame Sherman and Dilys Thorp make this point beautifully.
- <aaa> Are those articles available on the net?
- <jeremy\_harmer> aaa, not unless you're a subscriber to the journal. But I know you can buy a CD with all the articles from the last 15 years or so.
- <Nick> It's very encouraging that in many countries new style of school exam are encouraging better styles of teaching / learning.
- <jeremy\_harmer> Well, I'm a big fan of writing, but Lien, I am sure would appreciate that some teachers/students don't go for it ... at all, e.g. in Brazil and other NA context - yet process writing is really big in higher ed in the USA.
- <lien> Yes - I really found that in Poland aaa
- <aaa> Yes, Nick, it's also true about Poland. Our new "matura" (final secondary school exams) is fantastic as far as this is concerned
- <Nick> Yes, Jeremy. I like the new American books on 'editing' skills as well.
- <lien> But is it process writing as we know/want it?? But its true - a lot of the best research is here but its very far from the classroom. Jeremy - tell me more about the editing
- <jeremy\_harmer> I suppose one of the great heroes of British ELT was John Haycraft because from the beginning he eschewed theory (a risky position to take) and concentrated on the practical, and I don't think it's too fanciful to suggest that this is where some of the more hands-on style of British TEF comes from (going back to Lien's comments) but of course that does not include the rest of the world, like Poland, Ecuador etc etc
- <Nick> Lien, for me the important thing about Process Writing is that students should take one piece of writing to 'perfection' every month or so. Most students learn the opening gambit of writing, but they don't learn the endgame.
- <aaa> Nick, do they "perfect" the same text? Correcting their mistakes over and over again?
- <Nick> Yes
- <aaa> I tried to do something like that but I made a mistake. I gave them their marks after the first draft and then suggested editing and putting the edited versions in the library as fun.
- <jeremy\_harmer> one style of writing teaching/learning where yes, aaa, students work on the same text perfecting it as they go through  
various drafts with the teacher's (and other students') help. But that's, as Nick says, an occasional event there's all the other writing too, fun writing, genre analysis writing etc. Good fun, all and although teachers can decide when and where to do it, of course, coursebooks are getting better at including it too.
- <Nick> It's great to try it with poetry.
- <aaa> It was a big mistake. I never saw more than one second draft.
- <jeremy\_harmer> what happened aaa (a classroom activity is never a mistake, only an



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opportunity for development !!!! (I sound like Adrian Underhill or Julian Edge!!)

<Nick> It's not a bad idea to give marks (grades) at every stage of the writing process. Or ask the students to grade their own work.

<jeremy\_harmer> Well, actually, getting students to 'buy into' process writing is not that easy, but I agree with Nick about 'staged' grading some teachers in programs like the ones lien describes have students build up portfolios of work for a final grade and this encourages working on drafts etc.

<aaa> jeremy, Nick, thank you. It was fantastic to talk to you.

<jeremy\_harmer> It was great hearing from you aaa.

<aaa> Bye

<jeremy\_harmer> Bye. See you next time

<lien> Thanks, bye

<Jill> Bye, thanks for coming. The next live chat session will be on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May at 6pm UK time. Jeremy will be joined by Professor David Crystal, talking on the subject of 'Using Dictionaries'.