

Voilà. A course in French for adult beginners. 2nd edition 2004, Jacqueline Gonthier and Crispin Geoghegan. Hodder & Stoughton. Student book £14.99; ISBN 0 340 81367 9 Complete Pack £32.99 0340883030

This course claims considerable versatility. It claims to provide suitable material for real beginners and *faux debutants* wishing to '[revive] their basic language skills' and with a range of motivations for learning 'for leisure, business and/or as part of a course of study'. The authors also claim that it can be used both for class-based learning and for self-study. Moreover, although it is presented as a course for 'adults', they clearly have more than half an eye on the 16-19 age range (NVQ level 1) through the choice of topics and skills.

The book is divided into four sections each containing three units at the end of which there is a revision section entitled *Faisons le Point!* Each unit contains around 20 or so activities in which the communicative aims are covered first through dialogues with grammar and vocabulary points being presented briefly as they arise before being practiced more fully towards the end of each unit followed by fuller grammatical summaries. In addition to listening comprehensions, *Voilà* uses tried and tested formulae like information-gap and role-play activities plus from a very early stage authentic additional material.

That the book has now been revised for a second edition is indicative of success at least in some quarters. Aesthetically, it has the beating of most of its rivals, being produced on glossy paper and lavishly illustrated with colour photographs and drawings. Most *Cahiers* readers might ask whether this book clearly produced for FE would be suitable in an HE environment, particularly as some AFLS members have been involved in *Foundations French* which consciously aims at beginners in Higher Education. With genuine adult beginners there may be an argument for the slower progression offered by *A vous la France* while other colleagues will prefer a course that puts structures first and derives its communicative elements from them such as *Façon de parler*. As for self-study, it would be an exaggeration to claim that *Voilà* is a better choice than either *Teach yourself French* or *Colloquial French*.

Be all that as it may, *Voilà* undoubtedly contains well organised and beautifully produced course materials that draw on the experience of seasoned language

teachers and I am sure that it could serve as the basis for a successful beginners course in French in a university open language programme. Yet in a number of ways it constitutes a compromise choice, depending on whether one is working in HE or FE and if the latter whether with adults or young people in the 16-19 age range, or whether one is faced with genuine beginners or rusty recommencers and whether one wishes to adopt a communicative approach from the word 'go'. For self-study, however, it has to be acknowledged that there are better options.

Tim Pooley

London Metropolitan University