

Taking students seriously

Authors Jane Revell and Jeremy Harmer explain to **Melanie Butler** why teachers must win their students' emotional involvement from the start

I think this is the first time you two have ever worked together, but can either of you remember when you first met?

Jeremy: I think I first met Jane many years ago when she was part of a British Council film team that came to Guadalajara, where I was director of the Instituto Anglo Mexicano de Cultura. They were filming our teachers.

Jane: Yes, we were there to make some video teacher-training materials called *Teaching and Learning in Focus*. What I remember most about that encounter is energetically dancing to Laura Branigan's 'Gloria'. Not sure I could do that now!

What have you discovered about each other from being co-authors?

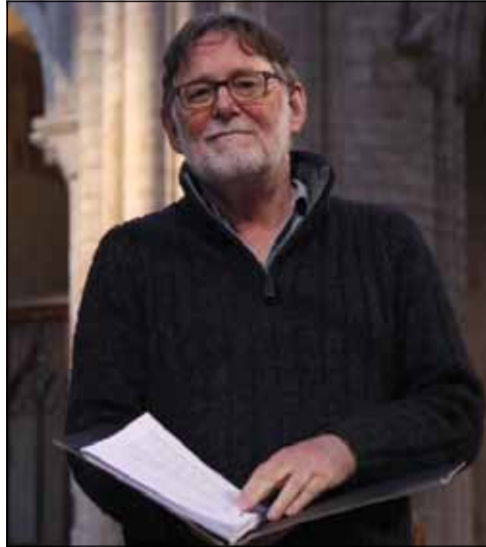
Jeremy: I have discovered that Jane is full of rich and sometimes idiosyncratic ideas for topics, and that this, combined with her powerful language-learning focus, makes her an ideal co-author.

Jane: What I like about Jeremy is that he's very creative about finding new ways of doing things. He pushes the boundaries. At the same time he's very open to other people's ideas too (namely mine!) and very supportive as a co-author. I think we share not just an approach to teaching – above all about interesting content – but also a wider world view, and that shows in the material.

I was struck by the books' freshness of design and the nifty new ideas. How much do you think that is due to the cos-



Pictures courtesy Helbling



EDUCATION IN FOCUS Jane and Jeremy have embraced the 'clear vision' behind Jetstream

mopolitan publishing team?

Jane: Oh they're a wonderful team! Terrifically dynamic and very open-minded. I think that's why we've been able to be a bit more adventurous. And we're made to feel valued as authors.

Jeremy: Speaking personally, I am thrilled to join a project with such clear vision. As to our publishers, I find their approach refreshingly human in the current climate.

You always start off a topic with the student – what was

the thinking behind that?

Jeremy: One thing that the whole 'teaching unplugged' movement has reminded us of is that student stories and student 'texts' are a – perhaps the – vital resource in a classroom. They have to be accessed first. If we want student engagement, then getting their emotional involvement from the start is vital.

Jane: Yes, and it also serves as a diagnostic opportunity for the teacher: it shows everybody right away what language stu-

dents already have, and what they still need.

I know Jeremy is passionate about taking the course outside the coursebook – using films, music, the web. Why do you think that is so important?

Jane: Because it motivates students, encourages them to be independent and gives them a sense of achievement. And if they get interested in the topics – which we hope they will – it's something they will really enjoy.

Jeremy: You can't keep eve-

rything between the covers, not in an age of YouTube and Facebook. We aim to encourage students to engage more and more with the online world – in English, of course.

One thing that struck me is the work on memory – I understand that Jane championed that. I'm sure we have all read by now that memory is a muscle that needs to be trained.

Jane: Absolutely, use it or lose it. In the book we suggest exercises where students are asked to recall words or facts or recreate pictures, and there are more memory games to be found in the teacher's guide. Improving your memory in one area will improve it generally in your life, so it's an important thing to do.

Jeremy: Successful memorisation is a crucial component in language learning (as Earl Stevick reminded us all those years ago). I was thrilled to see Jane's focus on that. We encourage students to think about the stories and conversations they encounter and try to reconstruct them. It is good for brain processing, but also helps them remember key language.

The course stretches from A1 to C1. Which levels do you personally most enjoy writing for?

Jetstream is a six-level course for adults published by Helbling Languages. Other authors include Amanda Maris and Mary Tomalin

Jeremy: In general my 'happy' levels are intermediate and upper intermediate. So much to play with, so much to play for!

Jane: I actually like the lower levels. I really enjoy the challenge of providing students with interesting ideas to explore and engaging activities to do, even though they have minimal language.

What was most difficult about the project and what was the most fun?

Jane: Most difficult was too much to do in too little time. I would have liked more time to think. And to talk to my co-author! Most fun was researching topics and then transforming that research into an engaging and flowing lesson.

Jeremy: The most fun was finding topics and designing activities which we hope students will enjoy and learn from. The hardest thing was finding topics and designing activities which we hope students will enjoy and learn from.

What would you like each student to take away from the course?

Jeremy: Interesting stories and topics and the remembered language they used to access those topics.

Jane: Totally agree! ■

JETSTREAM LET YOUR ENGLISH FLOW

EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR ADULT LEARNERS

NEW

JETSTREAM is the brand new Helbling Languages 6-level course for adult learners.

Written by renowned authors **Jane Revell, Mary Tomalin, Jeremy Harmer and Amanda Maris**, **JETSTREAM** has just the right balance of topics and design integrated with cutting-edge technology to get your students using their English effectively in all aspects of their working and personal lives.

- Motivating topics
- Focus on vocabulary
- Personalisation
- Grammar to go
- Emphasis on speaking
- Thinking & Memory
- Cross culture
- Stories
- Dialogue karaoke videos
- JETSTREAM Workbook
- PLUS - fully integrated digital components on e-ZONE

More information at www.helblinglanguages.com/jetstream



ALSO AVAILABLE
Combo Full Student's Book & Workbook edition and 2-part split edition.



communication made easy

100 Clements Road - London SE16 4DG - UK
info@helblinglanguages.com

www.helblinglanguages.com