

EDITORIAL

Language Centre Forum number 7, explores English language needs for the 21st century. Her Excellency, Fawzia Al Farsi, interviewed by Catherine Lonie, comments on the changes before us: we have the infrastructure and staffing to provide the population with basic education. Now the challenge is to reform and implement changes which will improve the quality of education. She discusses the part to be played by the private sector, by the electronic media in facilitating student learning, the role of continuous assessment. She stresses that whatever changes come about, Omani values, such as acceptance, tolerance and cooperation, will not be forgotten but will flourish in their new environment.

Andrew Littlejohn in his article asks what is happening in our classrooms and what we would like to happen. He cites changes that have come about such as fragmentation in western societies and changing job markets, globalisation and the electronic media. He discusses McDonald's, whose every action is routinised and scripted, from dealing with customers to the model hamburger; how the packaged world of McDonalds has invaded the media so we have McTV, McNews, McNewspapers etc and how even McDonaldisation has reached language teaching from textbooks to the model lesson – invariably based on PPP – Presentation – Practice – Production, irrespective of the context.

Issues of a cultural nature are addressed in Tony Parson's article; like Dr Littlejohn, he addresses just what it is what we should be doing in the classroom in this new millennium.

The electronic media features in Sally Burns' article about a lesson in which students collaborated in the writing of the e-essay and, still in the classroom, Denise and Ted Saur show how the bond between teacher and student can be made firmer by using the language of affirmation. Marian Dunn presents her own 'idiosyncratic' view of grammar – yet another attempt to tackle the vexed question of 'what to do about grammar'.

Philip Skeldon, in a fascinating survey, notes the dearth of published ESP materials and offers a guide to materials he has found, while Ibtisam Al Amri takes us through the steps in textbook evaluation.

Ali Al Zefeiti moves us out of the classroom and addresses the issue of language planning, noting the constraints on the adoption of a language, the criteria to be met when a foreign language is used as the medium of instruction at various levels of the educational process.

The Features section includes two poems by Elena Ranjan William and Tausiff Sultana, a cautionary tale by Felix Paul and a story by a prolific former member of the Editorial Board, Robert Fielding. We wish him success in his new post. Faryal Ahmed has provided us with an extensive survey of the field of counselling and its application in a student context.

The next edition of Language Centre Forum (No.8) will take as its theme: Focus on the Learner: materials, methods and motivation. This is the theme of the 3rd Annual National ELT Conference to be held on the 19th and 20th March 2003 and we look forward to receiving your contributions for this important issue of Language Centre Forum.

Mike Ramsden
Editor