

Foreword

Tim Smith

Director, Higher Colleges of Technology, Al Ain

This is the fourth volume in the “Foundations for the Future” General Education series from the HCT Press. Once again, it follows on from a highly successful conference, held annually at the HCT’s Centre of Excellence for English at the Al Ain Higher Colleges of Technology. The theme of the April 2010 conference was centred on vocabulary teaching and learning, and brought together a large number of professionals working in English language teaching.

As with previous volumes, which explored graduate outcomes, reading, and writing, the articles presented here are focused specifically on how theory, pedagogy and practice relate to adult Arab learners, and are written by HCT faculty, and by researchers and practitioners from other institutions in the region and internationally.

I am delighted that HCT is continuing to take a lead in this valuable and exciting field where there is limited literature specific to the learning conditions in the Gulf region. Developing vocabulary is clearly a critical component of every English language classroom, but enriching the vocabulary of our students is also a key function of all teachers in all subjects.

Words are the building blocks of any language. While grammar may hold the words together, it is the words themselves that are the driving force behind the communication of meaning. A few letters (or sounds) arranged in a particular order can represent a rich and complex tool that can broaden and shape our understanding of the world. Take, for example, the word, ‘culture.’ At one basic level, this word can simply mean ‘traditions,’ but with further exploration of the complex array of concepts and viewpoints within which this word is embedded, this short word can lead us to a profound understanding of the shared knowledge and values that bind a specific group of people together.

Teaching and learning words is not as straightforward as it might seem superficially. It is a process that requires time, a process of review, and an endless drive to relate these tools of thought into ever more complex networks of associations.

I would like to thank the authors of these papers, which reflect their professionalism and dedication, and their desire to deepen their understanding of the context in which they are teaching. I trust that practitioners in the region will find the papers in this volume relevant and useful and that they provide a springboard for future research.