



EDITORIAL

When, in 1998, the postgraduate programme in English language teaching (ELT) at the Hellenic Open University accepted its first students, it was immediately felt that it filled a gap in the continuing education and training of in-service ELT teachers in Greece. The programme was, and still is, targeted at practitioners with a first degree in English language and linguistics and has a strong practical orientation, in the sense that all written assignments demand that trainees actively involve their own classes in processes like lesson planning and (micro-)teaching, evaluating, and carrying out small-scale needs analysis projects. Many assignments require that trainees perform demanding and time-consuming tasks that involve, among other things, recording their classes, transcribing and analysing classroom discourse, evaluating courseware and curricular documents. These processes, which become more demanding and in-depth with trainees' final dissertations, are unprecedented and invaluable, especially as concerns the Greek state school system, as they both help provide raw data about the teaching, learning and evaluating practices of state school teachers and, more importantly, significantly contribute towards the improvement of teaching and learning in that context.

The prevalent feeling, from the early days of the programme, has been that it responds to a need that most teachers of English, especially those working in state schools, share, that goes beyond simply getting to grips with current theorizing in ELT and extends to becoming actively aware of and, ultimately, essentially competent in, the processes involved in the development of a wholesome professional pedagogical profile. It is a deep conviction of everyone involved in this postgraduate programme that it has facilitated that process for hundreds of graduates and will continue to do so in the many years to come.

The primary aim of the electronic journal *Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning* is to celebrate this very process. Its mission is to promote the research carried out by the best of our students and graduates and, in doing so, contribute to the broader research base in the ELT context in Greece. In addition to that, we are interested in promoting (and publishing either full length articles or extended summaries of) quality research carried out by graduates of the other postgraduate programmes of the Hellenic Open University that focus on the teaching, learning and assessing of language. Our aim is to prompt interdisciplinary dialogue and, essentially, broaden readers' awareness of various aspects of the different language teaching and learning contexts both inside and outside Greece. To that end, we would be interested in publishing original research, informed opinion, or book reviews that touch upon all aspects of the teaching, learning and assessment processes experienced in all levels of education in the public and private

domains by language researchers or practitioners operating in Greece, Europe, or the rest of the world.

At this stage, we plan to publish two issues per year. The first two issues of the journal have a celebratory character. They are primarily targeted at the language learning and teaching professional population in Greece and, for that purpose, contain articles that are written in Greek (that said, though, all articles are accompanied by an abstract in another language—in issue 1, English, and, in issue 2, English, French or German). The first issue, that you already have at hand, presents research carried out by graduates of the postgraduate programme in ELT at the Hellenic Open University and is heartily dedicated to the initiator and director of that programme, from its inception till this day, Professor Sophia Papaefthymiou-Lytra. The second issue, due in June, will contain the proceedings of a conference that took place in May 2009 in Athens and celebrated the first decade of the postgraduate programmes in the teaching of English, French and German of the Hellenic Open University.

More specifically, the papers in this first issue address a multiplicity of topics that aim to shed light on and put forward specific proposals concerning different aspects of foreign language education in the Greek state school context. The research presented concerns all levels; in particular, six papers focus on the primary school context, three on junior high schools, two on senior high schools, whereas one paper addresses second-chance schools, which involve adult learners. With regard to the topics covered, three papers discuss aspects of learner motivation, two focus on learning difficulties, and others target issues such as the cross-curricular framework of state schools, task-based learning, assessment and alternative assessment practices, multiple intelligences, the teaching of grammar, technology-enhanced learning, and discipline issues. Special interest is cast on teacher education concerns, with two papers researching teacher beliefs and motivation and others addressing more specific in-service teacher education topics such as syllabus design, teacher observation, reflective practice, and teachers' beliefs about their own foreign language competence.

It is our conviction that the areas discussed and the proposals put forward by the authors of these papers will be considered by interested stakeholders, such as fellow EFL teachers, tutors and students of foreign language education university departments, school advisors and other decision makers. These proposals are especially important as they are grounded in the experience of and research carried out by state-school practitioners.



As already mentioned, this inaugural issue of *Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning* is dedicated to Sophia Papaefthymiou-Lytra. For decades Professor Papaefthymiou-Lytra has been a leading figure in the education of EFL teachers, predominantly as a professor of applied linguistics at the University of Athens. In 1997 she was invited to offer her experience and expertise in the development of the postgraduate programme in English language teaching at the Hellenic Open University. Her leadership and scholarly vision as director of that programme, a position she still holds today, has been unique in that it

helped shape a programme of the highest academic caliber with panhellenic scope, that has brought about remarkable improvements in the ESOL pedagogy of this country. The papers of this issue speak volumes about some of these improvements and their unique importance for the state school context. Apart from her involvement with the postgraduate programme in English language teaching, Professor Papaefthymiou-Lytra has contributed singularly to the research, implementation and evaluation of all aspects of distance learning methodology, something for which the Hellenic Open University is especially indebted to her. For all these reasons, we gratefully dedicate this issue to her and hope she continues to act as an advisor to the editors of this journal as well.

As editors of this electronic publication, we will do our best to turn it into a springboard for the promotion of quality research and the exchange of ideas and informed opinions on language teaching, learning and assessment both inside and outside Greece. We prompt everyone sincerely interested in these domains to contribute to this endeavour.