



EDITORIAL

The pervasive use of English as *the* lingua franca (ELF) of our times is an undeniable reality. The statistics are, in this regard, staggering, indicating, for example, that one in three individuals worldwide can communicate in English and, in addition, that non-native English speakers nowadays surpass native ones by a ratio of more than four to one (Jenkins, 2015). Underscoring the dynamic and evolving nature of English usage, this linguistic landscape is marked by a constant appropriation of the language by its non-native users, who employ it in ways that often transcend native-speaker norms (Seidlhofer, 2018). This presents profound pedagogical implications, requiring, as scholars note, a paradigm shift in teachers' views and practices in their classrooms (Kohn, 2018; Seidlhofer and Widdowson, 2020). The conventional notion of the 'ideal' native speaker as the ultimate authority in language use and instruction needs to give way to a more inclusive approach mirroring how ELF works in real-life situations (Rose et al., 2021). How exactly though that can be achieved in practice remains a challenge, as, to date, there is a relative scarcity of empirical research (Bayyurt and Dewey, 2020).

In light of the above, the 14th Issue of *RPLTL* emerges as a dedicated exploration into the intricate process of integrating ELF in educational contexts. I would like to express my gratitude to our Guest Editor for this special volume on ELF, Stefania Kordia, an enthusiastic scholar in the ELF area. Her inspired study in this field is mirrored on the meticulous work of this volume.

Divided into two parts, this Special Issue aims to illuminate various facets of this process. The present volume, *Part I*, delves into the core of the matter through the lens of teacher education and includes a range of empirical studies illustrating how teacher educators can foster the much-needed shift in teachers' views and practices. On this basis, the forthcoming *Part II* (June 2024) extends the discussion to issues related to the language classroom, as regards, among others, the development of learners' competences as ELF users, the cultivation of intercultural awareness, and the role of classroom-based assessment. In doing so, we aim to contribute to a nuanced understanding of 'good practice' in the realm of ELF, guiding practitioners toward effective implementation.

Given his ongoing contributions to the field, this Special Issue is dedicated to our dear colleague, **Nicos Sifakis**, the founder of *RPLTL* and a pioneering scholar who has played a pivotal role in defining and addressing the pedagogical implications of ELF. His groundbreaking work, encapsulated in the construct of *ELF awareness* (Sifakis, 2014, 2019, 2023), has offered a comprehensive framework for effectively integrating ELF in education, serving as a guiding beacon for educators and researchers towards embracing a perspective that resonates with the evolving dynamics of global communication. His insights largely permeate the proposals presented in this Special Issue as well, making this dedication a fitting tribute to a visionary researcher who continues to shape the ELF field.

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Editor-in-Chief

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