

Keynote Lecture

From deficiency to integration: English as a Lingua Franca, translanguaging, and linguistic theory reimaged

Authors: Nicos Sifakis

Affiliation: University of Athens

Outline

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and translanguaging research have fundamentally transformed the ways in which linguistic theory conceives of multilingual communication and language architecture. This keynote examines the conceptual contributions these complementary frameworks make to theoretical linguistics. While ELF interrogates how speakers utilize English across multilingual environments, translanguaging demonstrates the integrated and fluid mobilization of the entirety of speakers' linguistic resources: a unified repertoire rather than discrete linguistic codes. Together, these perspectives challenge the native-speaker paradigm and reveal the inherent creativity and systematicity that underpin multilingual communication outside of monolingual norms. Empirical data from ELF and translanguaging elucidate patterns such as phonological reduction, morphosyntactic flexibility, pragmatic negotiation strategies, and code-meshing phenomena that should be understood as signs of linguistic innovation, not deviation. These insights urge a re-evaluation of foundational constructs within linguistic theory, including the competence-performance distinction, the universal grammar hypothesis, and modularist models of bilingual cognition. By foregrounding authentic multilingual practices over idealized monolingual grammars, ELF and translanguaging approaches bridge the divide between core theoretical linguistics and applied concerns, providing methodological advancements for investigating language change, cognitive processing, and the real-time evolution of linguistic norms. This integrated paradigm calls for theoretical models capable of accounting for how vast populations creatively deploy their full linguistic repertoires.

Visit [Nicos Sifakis keynote page](#) to learn more