Today, it is claimed, around 2 billion people speak English, at least to a survival level of competence, and the number is growing. For most of these speakers English is not their mother tongue, but a ‘lingua franca’ which makes communication possible between speakers of different languages. However, the rapid growth of the phenomenon over the last couple of decades has generated a number of controversies: Is English a threat to other languages? Does it promote linguistic imperialism and cultural hegemony? Are native speaker models still useful in an EFL context? And who does the English language belong to anyway?

Some of these issues are likely to be addressed during today’s event, which grew out of a research project promoted by the Faculty of Languages and carried on by the newly created Interdepartmental School in International Relations, focussing on communication strategies in an ELF environment. It involved a year of field research at the Venice International University (VIU), a linguistic as well as a geographical island in the centre of the Venetian lagoon; the results of the project will be presented in the afternoon. Other ongoing research in ELF from colleagues in other universities will also be presented, and the day will close with the case for a test in English Lingua Franca in a European academic context.

In the morning session, however, we are fortunate to have distinguished speakers from the world of international diplomacy (the British ambassador to Italy) and an international organisation (the Director of UNESCO in Venice), as well as the Director of the Humanities programme at the Venice International, who will give their personal accounts of how English is used in their professional work environments, in Europe and beyond, how it can foster or prevent international communication and, indeed, whether or not the world needs a ‘lingua franca’.

The keynote address will be given by Professor Barbara Seidlhofer of the University of Vienna, the foremost authority in English as a Lingua Franca, and director of the VOICE corpus project, ‘a computer-readable corpus of English as it is spoken by this non-native speaking majority of users in different contexts’, the first such corpus to be established. The morning session closes with a case study, in which UN legal advisor Dr Federico Prato will talk about the war against international drug trafficking, and the role of the lingua franca in the ongoing struggle.
MORNING SESSION

10.00 Welcome and Introduction to the proceedings

   Prof. Carlo Carraro
   President, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice

   Prof. Flavio Gregori
   Director, Department of Comparative Linguistic and Cultural Studies

   Chair: David Newbold

10.30 Keynote address

   Prof. Barbara Seidlhofer
   University of Vienna

   Perspectives from diplomacy and international organizations

11.00 Christopher Prentice
   British Ambassador to Italy

11.20 Dr. Engelbert Ruoss
   Director of UNESCO Venice Office

11.40 Prof. Luca Pes
   Director, School of Humanities, Venice International University

12.00 Guest lecture

   Dr. Federico Prato
   Counsellor for Legal Affairs, Permanent Mission to the UN, Vienna

   An effective implementation of the United Nations Convention against corruption
   a case study in ELF

12.30 Questions and concluding remarks

12.45 Lunch break

AFTERNOON SESSION

Chair: Geraldine Ludbrook

14.00 Nadine Basso
   Ca’ Foscari University of Venice
   Presentation of research project: ELF strategies at Venice International University

15.00 Franca Poppi
   University of Modena
   ELF as an instrument to convey local identity:
   a case study focusing on companies’ websites

15.20 Valeria Franceschi
   University of Verona
   Non-native speakers in participatory culture:
   attitudes in intelligibility of L2 speech in fan-produced audiovisuals

15.40 Paola Vettorel
   University of Verona
   Blogging ELFers

16.00 Questions

16.15 Coffee break

Chair: Daniela Cesiri

16.30 Roberta Cimarosti
   Ca’ Foscari University of Venice
   Help for the ELF world. A postcolonial contribution

16.50 Enrico Grazzi
   University of Roma 3
   New affordances for the English classroom:
   ELF and social networking

17.10 Geraldine Ludbrook, Maria Rees, David Newbold
   Ca’ Foscari University of Venice
   TEEUS: Towards a test of ELF for European University Students

18.00 Questions and concluding remarks