In late 2016, a number of researchers and policymakers were asked by the Language Policy Division (LPD) of the Council of Europe (CoE) in Strasbourg to compare views on language competence development in educational settings. On this occasion, the LPD – known for charting multilingualism through the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) – focused on language competence growth in relation to school subjects. In doing so, the CoE was reacting to demands to increase literacy levels so as to meet OCDE targets in all EU Member States (see CoE Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)5). To this end, the LPD had hitherto been pursuing a full description of subject languages to gain new insights into the development of disciplinary literacy under the label of “Languages of Schooling”.

The interest in languages of schooling arose as a result of research which had showed that the language of the disciplines (maths, history, etc.) had become the chief factor in the evolution of literacy rates. Therefore, the scaffolding of language at schools and the language difficulties identified and addressed while students learned school content proved to have a greater influence on language consolidation than extracurricular factors like family background or socioeconomic status.

Literacy, the ultimate raison d’être of schools, is currently under threat from a number of social factors that have become widespread in Europe, such as mobility, multimodal communication, and multilevel language competence of newcomers. Significantly enough, in some countries there is a fear that for the first time ever a new generation will be incapable of achieving the literacy levels of their parents, hence the general concern in Europe.

This state of affairs encouraged the volume editors to start to compile papers on languages of schooling, an idea that was welcomed by the European Journal of
Applied Linguistics. The submission of such a large number of papers mainly – but not exclusively – from Europe called for a second volume, with the journal editors yet again kindly accepting the proposal. Although the main topic is similar to that of the first volume, i.e. languages of schooling, a different angle has been taken. While the former placed greater emphasis on language policies, the latter takes a closer look at the role of languages of schooling in educational success. Moreover, the papers making up the second volume share a common ground, namely, that the language faculty is an underlying trait that encompasses all the languages of the repertoire of individuals, be it a first, second or nth-language. The study of the interface of language and content – which is the basic goal of languages of schooling – covers paradigms like multilingual education in bilingual programmes (also known now as CLIL), literacy for migrants and, obviously, first language academic literacy. Keeping this wide perspective was of great importance to the volume editors.

The volume starts with a paper by Christiane Dalton-Puffer and her associates. The main purpose of their contribution is to report on steps taken towards an empirical validation of cognitive discourse functions as they appear at school. A total of four smaller-scale studies, each focusing on the classroom discourse as regards one subject (biology, physics, economics, and history), are surveyed in order to find an answer to the question of whether cognitive discourse functions – the crux of content and language in languages of schooling – actually occur in classroom interaction and, if so, how and to what extent.

This is followed by a paper by Piet Van der Craen, Jill Surmont, Esly Struys and Marcel Stroughmayer on bilingual learning of the disciplines. The authors have made a name for themselves by describing bilingual learning in mathematics at school. This time, they extend this description to the discussion of implicit learning and how it is fostered in bilingual programmes (aka CLIL). They also provide national examples of positive outcomes of integrated language and content learning in their multilingual national context, viz. Belgium.

The remaining four papers depict actual interventions which have increased literacy rates by bringing language to the surface in the disciplines. They all take language competence as a cross-curricular issue and provide examples as to how to arrange language goals across the curriculum. The first of these is by the Australian author David Rose. In the past, he has set the basis of school genre-based programmes, a curriculum organization principle that has had a decisive influence around the world. Rose’s paper frames this research within the model of language and pedagogy informing it, before going on to describe a system of literacy teaching activities that have been designed using the genre-based methodology Reading to Learn.
Whittaker and Parejo, both highly influenced by this textual approach, describe the operationalization of genre-based methodologies in five European countries. The scope of their study (a TEL4EL project funded by Comenius) is impressive as to both the pan-European research context and the length of the survey – a four year period of teacher training, implementation, and results.

Following this, Pavón and Pérez describe the implementation of whole-school, cross-curricular language programmes in Spain. Their paper surveys the national language patchwork, with multilingual regions, monolingual ones which now incorporate bilingual-CLIL programmes, and communities with a growing multilingual population due to immigration. In this context, the authors offer a detailed description of a whole-school language plan (proyecto lingüístico de centro) in Andalusia, a monolingual region, and in the Basque Country, a multilingual region with an ancient linguistic heritage.

Finally, Hufeisen reports on a model for the systematic curricular introduction of several languages in order to implement real multilingualism at school. In his paper, he analyses a kind of curricular multilingualism that has hitherto been tested in only one pilot project in Germany, before presenting the outcomes.

In short, this volume presents a number of new approaches to multilingual literacies in Europe and how some particular models can help to orchestrate language development and educational success. We would like to express our gratitude to the European Journal of Applied Linguistics for supporting our proposal, as well as to the journal’s production team and editorial staff. Our profound thanks also go to María del Pilar García Mayo for her diligent support and sheer determination to see the whole editorial process through. Professor García Mayo has a talent for enhancing her colleagues’ ideas, and Spanish – and also European – academia is always glad to be able to rely on her assistance and expertise. Finally, some of the authors and editors have benefited from the funding of an official project supported by Spanish Ministry of Economy, Industry and Competitiveness, entitled BIMAP (Cognitive map of bilingual learning, 2016–2020).1