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**Phonopragmatic Dimensions of ELF in Specialized  
Immigration Contexts**

Silvia Sperti



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## **Introduction: a phonopragmatic approach to the analysis of ELF cross-cultural communication**

The pragmatic dimensions involved in cross-cultural communication, with reference to immigration contexts, are at the basis of this ethnomethodological research.

The increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers (not simply ‘economic migrants’), escaping from their countries of origin to Italy and, as a consequence, to the European States, represents an additional reason for a focus on intercultural pragmatics with reference to cross-cultural linguistic mediation processes in specialized domains.

Actually, the interactional processes here analysed are those that occur especially within professional domains where non-native speakers of English – namely Western experts and non-Western migrants, refugees and asylum seekers – interact by means of ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) variations in multicultural specialized contexts, more precisely, in centres for legal advice in ‘gatekeeping’ situations (Guido 2008).

The use of ELF in situations of ‘unequal encounters’ between non-Western participants (i.e., immigrants and asylum seekers) and Western experts (i.e., Italian/European mediators), is here explored both in the production and in the perception processes by means of a new *phonopragmatic* approach.

Specifically, the *phonopragmatic* approach is here introduced to explore the possible prosodic and auditory dynamics and processes involved in cross-cultural communication, with a particular focus on both illocutionary intentions and perlocutionary effects (Levinson 1983; Searle 1969, 1983) in intercultural interactions, as participants adopt ELF prosodic strategies of: (i) marked speech segmentation in pragmatic acts, (ii) prosodic segmentation of these acts into intonation units, and (iii) acoustic variations in their use of syntactical, lexical and pragmatic features, especially if related to socio-cultural backgrounds and L1 interferences (cf. Guido 2008).

The objective of this approach is to describe, on the one hand, the close relationship between prosody and pragmatics, and, on the other, the role played by prosody in the conveyance of the speakers’ intentions in conversational interactions as they perform speech acts.

More specifically, *phonopragmatics* is a pragmatically-oriented phonological exploration of speaker's illocutionary acts in ELF cross-cultural communication. Therefore the aim of this approach is to identify (i) possible cases or areas of miscommunication in cross-cultural specialized settings; (ii) processes of intercultural mediation in the production and perception of speech acts through the agency of specialized intercultural mediators.

In this sense, the research attempts to explore the employment of prosodic strategies in intercultural communication to give insight into more comprehensive and complete theories of ELF variations, based on "the existence of more than one ELF variety, depending on the particular groups of speakers from different L1 backgrounds who 'authenticate' English according to their own diverse native cognitive-semantic, syntactic, pragmatic and specialized discourse parameters" (Guido 2008: 25).

Nonetheless, L1 phonological patterns transferred to the use of the ELF variations by speakers belonging to different speech-communities may be misinterpreted. Therefore, misunderstandings may arise whenever a phonological or prosodic correlate is not properly interpreted by listeners belonging to speech communities that do not share the same communicative role and meaning of for instance pauses or certain tonal patterns.

Seen from this perspective, the crucial concept of 'schema' (Carrell 1983) – here applied – refers not only to extralinguistic influences due to native background knowledge (in terms of sociocultural filters, experiences, conceptual understanding, and attitudes) but also to L1 paralinguistic variations that activate in the organization, comprehension and storing of information which make sense of a message.

For this purpose, an appropriate *phonopragmatic* analysis is crucial for the understanding, by means of a qualitative research method, of (i) how prosody and phonology are affected by pragmatics and how they in turn affect the perception and interpretation of the message, and (ii) how native-language prosodic, syntactic and stylistic structures are transferred to the use of ELF varieties, and to which extent they influence its production and perception and, as a consequence, enhance cross-cultural communication. Actually, the following analysis will specifically investigate (i) how existing L1 prosodic contrasts (e.g. in terms of length, stress, and tone) can be redefined to acquire novel prosodic contrasts in ELF variations, and (ii) how pragmatically influential are the resulting L1 phonological transfers into the ELF variety, i.e. the nature of L1 phonological phrasing, with reference to the syntactic and morphological elements, and its effects on the ELF variations.

The ultimate aim of this approach is to investigate, by means of an ethnographic method (Hymes 1996), the socio-cultural factors and illocutionary goals that affect intercultural communication, as well as the

perlocutionary effects – in terms of cognitive accessibility, socio-cultural and ethical acceptability and specialized intertextuality (cf. de Beaugrande & Dressler 1981) – produced by cross-cultural interactions on participants from both Western and non-Western speech communities.

In this sense, special attention will be paid to the possibility of transferring the conclusions, derived from the *phonopragmatic* approach and analysis, to everyday mediation contexts with the aim of providing European intercultural mediators with linguistic suggestions that may help them to be aware of the fact that even the use of certain prosodic features and behaviour facilitate, or even influence, the process of meaning construction (and mediation) and then of mutual comprehension from both communicative sides.

Actually, experts in intercultural communication should be aware of the processes at the basis of discourse construction in multicultural encounters and, consequently, of interpreting, and translation as well, which should not be a literal and automatic transferring of L1 semantic structures to ELF. Rather they should be involved into a cross-cultural mediation process by which all speakers' socio-cultural and individual identities are equally respected and properly communicated.

To fulfil these goals, the research is subdivided into three parts: Section 1 will carry out a comprehensive outline of the theoretical assumptions underlying the research hypothesis and objectives; Section 2 will provide a thorough exposure of the *phonopragmatic* model of analysis, thereby focusing on its rationale and multidisciplinary methodological approaches; Section 3 will deal with the *phonopragmatic* analysis applied to five case-studies of naturally-occurred cross-cultural encounters in specialized immigration contexts.

## 1. Theoretical Background: Focus on ELF Variations

The *phonopragmatic* model described and applied in the present research is grounded on theoretical views that justify its research focus and methodological approach. At the basis of the research rationale, a multidimensional correlation of scientific approaches is set, especially regarding: (i) the interaction between intercultural pragmatics and other components of linguistics, with particular reference to the theory of speech acts and illocutionary intentions (Searle 1969, 1983); (ii) the study of phonology with special attention to the adoption of prosodic strategies of speech segmentation and acoustic variations, and paralinguistic devices in the use of ELF; (iii) the analysis of cross-cultural communication with a careful consideration for specialized-genre conventions and socio-cultural

implications in specialized immigration contexts (Guido 2004b; 2006; 2008) where different sociocultural and pragmalinguistic backgrounds interact.

Therefore, in the following section a paradigmatic view of the actual state of the art in the fields of (i) ELF research, (ii) phonology and intonational prosody, and (iii) cross-cultural pragmatics, is provided in order to define the main theoretical grounds upon which the *phonopragmatic* model has been developed.

### **1.1. Changing perspectives in English as a Global Language**

In the last decades a growing attention has been given by the scientific research community to the continuing spread of English worldwide and its ever increasing importance as a tool of cross-cultural communication and human interaction.

It is obviously true that neither the spread of English, which began with the migration of native English speakers to America and Australia at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and continued with the colonization of Africa and Asia, nor the use of a language as ‘a lingua franca’ are new phenomena, but the actual spread of English in terms of scale and degree, socio-linguistic and socio-cultural effects is arguably unprecedented (e.g. Fishman 1987; Graddol 1997; Crystal 2003).

As a consequence, the spread of English as a language for international communication in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has added to the difficulty of describing ‘world Englishes’ and describing differences between the national ‘standard’ variations of English and the emergence of new varieties of English, especially in cross-cultural socio-linguistic settings where English is used as a contact language between non-native speakers of English of different L1 backgrounds (Seidlhofer 2001; Jenkins 2004; Dröschel 2011).

From a linguistic point of view, the spread of global English and its use by speakers of diverse L1s results in an increasing development of English varieties. Therefore, with the increase in the number of different L1 speakers involved in ELF interactions, even the amount and the nature of linguistic differences among their ‘Englishes’ is also inevitably bound to increase.

It is also true that English has spread worldwide because it has been appropriated to fulfil the social and communicative needs and purposes of communities of speakers beyond those belonging to what are known as the Inner or even the Outer Circles (Kachru 1992).

Nonetheless, Kachru’s famous categorization of English into three Circles (with the native speakers in the ‘Inner’ one; the non-native speakers of the countries which were colonized by native English ones in the ‘Outer’ one; and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) speakers of the countries where English is learnt and spoken but does not serve institutional purposes, in the

‘Expanding Circle’) needs to be reconsidered or even reformulated, due to the fact that the non-native speakers now outnumber the native speakers of English which, in the Expanding Circle, has become ELF managed by users able to appropriate the language and adapt it to their needs.

Moreover, the concept of ‘Expanding Circle English’ as involving communicative situations and contexts predominantly among NNSs (non-native speakers), rather than between NSs (native speakers) and NNSs, has become widely known if not widely encouraged. Actually, during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the term ELF has been eventually employed in a number of publications by ELF researchers (e.g. Knapp & Meierkord 2002; Mauranen 2003; Seidlhofer 2004). As a result, the term has begun to be increasingly used in publications even by scholars who are not directly engaged in ELF research, and has even achieved a sufficient acknowledgement to deserve to be included in the encyclopedia of language teaching and learning (Byram 2004).

Jenkins (2000: 10) claims that, as far as the term ‘EFL’ (English as a Foreign Language) is concerned, it does “not express the principal purpose of learning English today”, and even though it is widely “used to describe native/non-native interactions, the word ‘foreign’ carries a number of negative implications” as well. Moreover, according to Gika (1996: 15), English is taught to prevent communicative incomprehensibility among speakers, to “talk to each other without linguistic and even cultural boundaries, understand each other better [...] to bring people closer”, and therefore the term ‘foreign’ becomes evidently contradictory or even awkward, because something ‘foreign’ cannot be also “international, since people all over the world communicate using English” (Gika 1996: 15).

Therefore, Jenkins (2000: 11) suggests a possible alternative to EFL simply changing the second letter with the third one to obtain ‘ELF’. She also points out how this new term would be convenient and effective: first of all, because “ELF emphasizes the role of English in communication between speakers from different L1s”. Moreover, this new term “suggests the idea of community” instead of the quite unfriendly ‘foreignness’ of EFL, and underlines that instead “people have something in common rather than their differences”. Jenkins (2000: 11) underlines how ELF “implies that ‘mixing’ languages is acceptable and thus that there is nothing wrong in preserving certain features of the L1”. Even the employment of the Latin expression ‘lingua franca’ could contribute to draw attention on a radical shift in terms of considering the “ownership of English”, which as far as ELF is concerned clearly could not be assigned to the Anglo-Saxons.

Hence, ELF became the selected term for a new manifestation of English, which is a very different concept from both English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as Foreign Language (EFL). Unlike ESL varieties (proper of the Outer Circle), ELF cannot be considered as a contact

language within national groups but between and for them. And unlike EFL (proper of the Expanding Circle), it is not primarily a language of communication between its NSs and NNSs, but mainly among its NNSs.

However, the main differences between EFL and ELF should be carefully analysed and as much as possible categorized, since they consist of a number of elements and factors, such as their diverse (i) *linguacultural norms*: which, in the case of EFL, are appropriated in the teaching and learning process, while, in the case of ELF, norms and standards are constantly negotiated and reinvented; (ii) *objectives*: EFL serves as a socio-cultural integration tool and contributes to membership acquisition in a NS community, while ELF becomes a fundamental communication means in NNS or mixed NNS-NS interactions and seems not to be involved, at least in the majority of cases, in purposes of socio-cultural inclusion; (iii) *processes*: EFL implies processes of imitation and adoption of the standard ENL norms, while ELF shows and always produces evident signals of communicative accommodation and signs of linguistic adaptation processes.

With regards to this, Bamgbose (1998: 3-5) suggests a checklist of five parameters which could be generally used to prove whether an innovative linguistic form or habit could be considered normative. These are: demographical expansion, geographical spread, codification, authoritativeness, and acceptability. Of these five requirements, Bamgbose considers ‘codification’ and ‘acceptability’ as the two most important ones because “without them”, as often happens, “innovations will continue to be” regularly disregarded and dismissed as “errors” (Bamgbose 1998: 3-5).

In support of this new perspective, Widdowson (1997) rightly points out that rather than being adopted by its traditional native speakers, nowadays English has been spreading and adapting to suit its new uses as an international lingua franca. Therefore, ELF may be considered as the natural communicative consequence of the current and widespread phenomenon called ‘globalization’, and whoever attempts to prevent or arrest it actually reveals an anachronistic and unequal attitude towards the present age and its global communicative needs.

For most ELF researchers, then, ELF and EFL are two very different realities. ELF belongs to the global Englishes field where all English varieties are not considered as attempts to adopt a native speaker version of English, whereas EFL belongs to the modern foreign language system, according to which the teaching and learning of English are not different from those applied to any other foreign language, with the ultimate goal of learning an English version as close as possible to the standard variety spoken by the native speakers of the language.

Nonetheless, even though it is still often observed that English has become a global language, and that the majority of its non-native speakers (NNSs) use it as a lingua franca among themselves rather than as a ‘foreign’

language to communicate with its NSs, so far these important research achievements have not had an acceptable impact on English language attitudes and, above all, on English language teaching (ELT): the debate among users of English, NNS and NS, teachers, learners, English scholars is still lively and compelling, mostly because it seems particularly challenging to realize the conceptual bound needed in order to allow ELF variations to acquire an appropriate place on the same level as the Englishes of the three traditional Circles.

## **1.2. Changing perspectives in defining English as a Lingua Franca**

In the light of the previous preliminary considerations, it is crucial to consider what Seidlhofer (2011) suggests about defining and describing languages and language varieties. She is convinced that the concept of ‘variety’ itself has changed, as shown by recent linguistic analyses. Moreover, the elevated mobility of the contemporary communicative dimension and the unlimited extension of interactions, above all thanks to the social network revolution, crucially challenge the concept of ‘community’ as an autonomous system of social encounters. In her words, “what it means to be communicatively competent in English can no longer be described with reference to norms of linguistic knowledge and behaviour that are relevant only to particular native-speaker communities” (Seidlhofer 2011: 92). Recent studies on the spread and use of English have shown how “conformity to these norms is neither necessary nor sufficient to meet the international requests for the effective use of English as a lingua franca”. Thus ELF users are not only less and less dependent on native-speaker norms, but also often capable of cooperatively elaborating norms and models of their own.

Therefore, the emergence of ELF as a global linguistic phenomenon without precedence has required a scientific reconsideration of some established concepts and assumptions, especially those related to ‘variety’, ‘community’, and ‘competence’.

Moreover, what is extraordinary and new about ELF is the interdependence with the unique and new socio-economic, political, and technological achievements in the globalized world so much that ELF seems to be both reason and effect of the new communicative dynamics, processes and requirements.

According to Jenkins (2011: 3) a good definition of ELF is available on the website of the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE): ELF is “an additionally acquired language system which serves as a common means of communication for speakers of different first

languages”. Seen from this perspective, it could be claimed that native English speakers are not excluded from ELF, but they are supposed to use it – like non-native speakers – as “an additionally acquired language system”. This could mean that native speakers should become familiar with it as well, since ELF is not the same as ENL, when they need to communicate in ELF international settings, rather than playing in cross-cultural interactions “their traditional role as norm providers” (Jenkins 2011: 3).

Moreover, Seidlhofer (2004) adds that the definition of ELF does not exclude NSs of English, but generally they may not be included in data collection, and should not deserve a special point of reference when they are participants in ELF interactions.

On the other hand, House (1999: 74) defines ELF interactions as being “between members of two or more different linguacultures in English, for none of whom English is the mother tongue”. Which is in line with Firth’s (1996) definition of ELF in which it is considered as “a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth 1996: 240) – that is to say that native English speakers would be excluded from ELF communication because English is not a ‘foreign language of communication’ for them.

It is also true that Firth (1996) aims at establishing to what extent English may be used as a lingua franca by low-skilled speakers as well, in spite of the “anomalies and infelicities” often “recognized by native-speaker assessments” and condemned as ‘errors’ (Firth 1996: 239), rather than discussing whether native speakers of English may share ELF with NNSs or not.

In line with the other researchers, Dröschel (2011: 40) assures that “the distinction between English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and Lingua Franca English (LFE) would solve the problem many ELF researchers have encountered in defining lingua franca communication”, especially as far as the question of native speakers is concerned. According to her perspective, it is evident that LFE, either as a single variety or as a range of different varieties, “is an additionally acquired form of English, even for native speakers of British or American English”, and therefore could not have native speakers. It is therefore necessary to redefine the concept of ‘ELF’ considering the nature of the speakers who very often employ it and for whom English may also not necessarily be their foreign or second language and whose degree of proficiency may vary from high to very low linguistic competence.

Moreover, since any definition of Lingua Franca English should also include its typical pragmatic nature of serving a number of varied communicative purposes by sociolinguistically heterogeneous speakers, Dröschel (2011) suggests that, in order not to focus the definition of lingua

franca communication only onto the question of interactions between native or non-native speakers, it would be more convenient to “redefine the term ‘lingua franca’ as an additionally acquired language system that serves as a means of communication between speakers of different first languages. Lingua franca English, then, can be understood as a contact language used by native and non-native speakers alike but which functions as an independent system which as such has no real native speakers”.

On the other hand, other scholars, such as James (2000), consider Lingua Franca as an autonomous variety, which mainly derives from a mixture of a reduced standard English structures interfered with speakers’ L1 varieties.

Actually, Dröschel (2011: 42) also adds that ELF may not be compared even with pidgins, in spite of certain formal similarities, since they are used as lingua franca for restricted communicative purposes and are linguistically very simplified varieties of the source language which cannot be compared with ELF. On the other hand, “Lingua Franca English (LFE) affects a large variety of domains, such as international relations, trade, tourism, banking, and so on, and covers a range of more or less simplified varieties, depending on the sociolinguistic background of its speakers” (Dröschel 2011: 42).

As Seidlhofer (2011) points out, the new term ‘ELF’ should be preferred, but not only because most ‘lingua franca’ definitions restrict it to communication among NNSs, rather because within this acronym it is much better signalled the NNS autonomous responsibility for the authorship and the growing of ELF worldwide among speakers involved in global communication. That is, ‘ELF’, more than any of the other alternatives, underlines that it is NNSs rather than NSs who are leading linguistic and communicative innovation and change all over the world throughout the original lingua franca English.

Seen from this perspective, it seems evident that formal differences from native English may be arguably considered as legitimate ‘variations’ according to ELF, but they always remain ‘errors’ according to EFL. It is also true that ELF speakers are very often still learners or have just ceased learning; but the crucial point for Jenkins (2011: 4) is that there is a need for a sociolinguistic and pragmatic distinction between “ELF learners’ errors and the innovations of proficient ELF users, even though the two sometimes result in the same forms”. Concerning this aspect, she provides the example of ELF metaphors which are a result of “language contact and evolution”, unlike EFL metaphors are an outcome of “interference and fossilization”. Again, code-mixing and code-switching may be considered as “bilinguals’ pragmatic strategies” in ELF, while in EFL they are “evidence of gaps in knowledge” (Jenkins 2011: 4).

Moreover, it is important to stress that the main aim of an ELF speaker is to communicate with other non-native speakers whereas EFL, which is still typically learned at school, takes the native speaker as a target and includes components of English native-speaker language and culture. According to this conceptualization, indeed, it is possible for a speaker to be in the position of an ELF user at one moment and of an EFL user at another moment, depending on who s/he is speaking to and for what purpose.

Actually, research data confirm that ELF speakers with a high level of English proficiency are able to change and modify the English variety learnt at school, employing also a number of multilingual resources and code-switching or mixing in order to achieve and guarantee mutual comprehension with their interlocutors. Moreover, as shown by Jenkins (2011), ELF communication process occurs in a successful attempt to preserve cultural identity despite the extensive use of the accommodation strategies. That is to say, this use of ELF seems to respond perfectly and adapt easily to different communicative settings and according to the interlocutor's requirements.

As it will be demonstrated later on, speakers regularly change their language in different settings in order to accommodate to their interlocutors and to facilitate intelligibility. According to Seidlhofer (2011: 81), "in ELF situations, speakers of any kind of English variety, from EFL, ENL and ESL contexts, need to modify accordingly to the requirements of intercultural communication", often adapting their communicative outcome and switching from ELF to EFL or ESL, according to a number of different pragmatic purposes or reasons.

Moreover, ELF scholars have always underlined that if English is likely to fulfil its role as the world's international 'lingua franca', it is obvious that it should be able to achieve 'mutual intelligibility' among speakers and writers from all first language backgrounds who wish to communicate in ELF, otherwise communication failure and breakdown occur. The main obstacle to such mutual intelligibility is indeed 'identity', as actually pointed out by Crystal (2003), who claims that the need for intelligibility and the need for identity often walk in opposing directions. However, he also argues that they could successfully coexist considering a world of linguistic diversity – where identity is preserved – continuing to exist within a world united by a common communicative tool, namely ELF.

To achieve comprehensibility, ELF should be – Jenkins (2000) claimed – constantly in a certain pursuit of mutual intelligibility among its speakers, which depends on a decrease in phonological differences among speakers from different L1 backgrounds. This, however, does not necessarily involve supporting L2 learners to imitate a native-speaker accent. Indeed, such attempts have often failed, because accent and intonation are closely related to idiolectal and sociolectal attitudes and

feelings related to community identity, which implies that people tend to resist such attempts of emulation, whether consciously or not. On the contrary, it usually happens that either they try to preserve their mother-tongue accent in their L2 English or they simply do not identify, through mimicking an L1 English accent, with native speakers of the second language. And in the case of EIL (English as an International Language)<sup>1</sup>, and even more for ELF, this is particularly true since there is a strong socio-linguistic motivation for not conforming to the accent of a native-speaker group. The EIL community indeed is by definition international rather than associated with any national speech community, contrary to what very often still happens in the Outer Circle with the phenomenon of ‘acculturation’ (Schumann 1978). In this case speakers wish to drop their local-English accent to acquire an ENL pronunciation in order to be socio-culturally accepted by NSs.

Besides, while ELF is usually seen as a global development, in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century a new scientific trend has begun to study it from a local or regional perspective. One good example is English used as a lingua franca in Europe (cf. e.g. James 2000; Jenkins and Seidlhofer 2001; Jenkins *et al.* 2001; Mollin 2006).

These studies aim at investigating and establishing whether it is possible to claim that the English lingua franca commonly used in European communication settings is a new and autonomous variety of English, typically European, which is called therefore ‘Euro-English’. Actually, Jenkins *et al.* (2001) suggested and demonstrated that a variety of European English is emerging as a linguistic reality with its own autonomous and peculiar features, and its development may be arguably compared to that of New Englishes of the Outer Circle. Jenkins (2003: 42) assumes that “the linguistic outcome of European political and economic developments is predicted by some scholars to be a nativised hybrid variety of English. In effect, European English contains a number of grammatical, lexical, phonological and discourse features found in individual mainland European languages along with some items common to many of these languages, but not to standard British or American English” (on the debate about Euro-English e.g. Berns 1995; House 2001; Cheshire 2002; Phillipson 2003).

However, despite very important scientific achievements and improvements, ‘English as a lingua franca’ seems that it has not entered speakers’ and sometimes scholars’ consciousness as a new and alternative reality to traditional EFL, or EIL, at least at a theoretical level. Therefore,

<sup>1</sup> In Jenkins (2000) the Author decides to continue to use the more widely, at that time, acknowledged term ‘EIL’ instead of ‘ELF’, although actually she intended to discuss the phonology of English used as a ‘lingua franca’, rather than as an international language as such.

Seidlhofer (2011:14) calls this acknowledgment vacuum a “conceptual gap”.

Indeed, the general scientific scenario still suffers from a controversial debate in which a missing ELF acknowledgment derives and is fuelled by anachronistic attitudes towards native-oriented perspectives and norms, which hinder the realization of the fact that – as Brumfit (2001: 116) argues – “the ownership of any language in effect rests with the people who use it.” On the contrary, so far in ELF research it is often defended and applied a rooted and established model based on the native-speaker influence and perspective.

For the theoretical baseline of the present research, what is most important to realize, and which is clearly inferable by the previous complex outline of different positions and voices in defining ELF, is that English as a lingua franca is a concept that needs to be included in the theoretical repertoire as an addition to other Englishes, either ENL, ESL, or EFL, either local or global.

In other words, English as a Lingua Franca should be intended as a means of intercultural communication not tied to particular countries or speech community, or depending on an ENL context. Indeed, ELF seems to be a linguistic pragmatic resource that should not or may not be enclosed in, or restricted into the common attitude of traditionally intending ‘language’.

It is also true that in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars using terms such as ‘lingua franca English’ and ‘non-native/non-native speaker’ were not considering ELF in the sense in which it is nowadays conceived and understood by most current ELF researchers. Actually, the current ELF research tends to investigate the phenomenon in its own dynamics and not by comparison with ENL.

Indeed, apart from the debate about definitions and acronyms, what is relevant about ELF research is the considerable scientific strength it has recently gained, with a prevailing research focus on three main areas: (1) mutual intelligibility between ELF interlocutors; (2) analysis of lexical, grammatical, and phonetic features that may distinguish ELF from ‘English as a native language’ (ENL); and (3) pragmatic features of successful ELF communication.

### **1.3. Needs for ELF codification and the future of ELF Studies**

In the last decade, moved by her enduring research on the phonology of ELF and its effects, Jenkins (2000) perceived the need for a sort of international core for phonological intelligibility in ELF, namely a series of unifying features which could guarantee that ELF pronunciation do not hinder successful communication in ELF settings.

The following section will provide an in-depth comparative analysis between ENL phonological structures and the recent conceptualization of ELF phonological profile. Anyway, a worth theoretical outline of the scientific achievements in ELF research cannot overlook the debate around the idea of an ELF core developed from the consideration that – according to Jenkins – participants in ELF need to be able to accommodate their accents and adjust both their phonological production and their perceptive expectations according to the communicative situation, with the consequence that the phonological features cannot be the same as those of their L1 or L2 variety of English.

The pronunciation model, described by Jenkins (2000), defined which English pronunciation features are core and non-core for non-native speakers of English. This pronunciation model, including the elements that emerged as necessary for intelligibility for ELF, is called the Lingua Franca Core (LFC).<sup>2</sup>

Actually, according to Jenkins (2000: 234) so far, “no pronunciation books gives learners practise in adjusting their pronunciation to suit the needs of different interlocutors or speech situations, or even discusses the need for them to do so. And nowhere are there publications addressing L1 speakers of English and the productive and receptive adjustments they too could be making to facilitate international communication” in ELF. In the USA especially, the attitude persists that if L2 speakers on English wish to succeed in securing and retaining employment, then they must “adjust their accent” and assimilate it to a certain ‘native-likeness’” (Jenkins 2000).

However, negative reactions to the LFC (and to ELF in general) from both NNSs and NSs often seemed to involve strong attitudes towards NNS English. In particular, according to Jenkins (2007) negative criticism towards LFC implies the enduring existence of deep-rooted attitudes towards issues such as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ levels of proficiency in English pronunciation, and moreover, a prejudice that NNSs own a poor English accent, and that NSs of English have special rights over the language, even when it is used in ELF contexts.

Some scholars have noticed that, until not long ago, the corpus research which, implemented by computer technology, may considerably help linguists to gather and analyse increased amounts of conversational and other linguistic data, has largely withdrawn the growing spread of ELF

<sup>2</sup> Jenkins (2000) gathered data from different situations of communication breakdown in ELF among speakers of different L1s. She deduced that, although there may have been other reasons of non-comprehension and misunderstanding, most communication failure in ELF is caused by pronunciation errors, considered as the result of the transfer of L1 phonological patterns, rather than evidence of low proficiency in English. Moreover, she concluded that in ILT (English Language Teaching) speakers tend to reduce the use of L1 phonological transfer only when they manage to do so and particularly when intelligibility for their interlocutors is particularly easy.

around the world (Firth 1996; Firth & Wagner 1997; James 2000; Seidlhofer 2001). However, very important ELF corpus projects have currently been developed in Europe (James 2000; Seidlhofer 2001; Mauranen 2003). Such corpus data help provide empirical evidence on some important and interesting findings about characterising syntactical or lexical features of ELF, such as, for instance, loss of third person -s (Jenkins *et al.* 2001) and phonological ones, e.g. the tendency towards non-reduction of unstressed syllables (Alexander 1999; Jenkins 2000).

So far, ELF research has focused chiefly on spoken interactions, and while earlier ELF research focused mainly on surface linguistic features, more recent ELF research has shifted its attention to the participant's pragmatic skills and strategies that underlie these features. Therefore the crucial role of accommodation, which is emerging as the most important pragmatic tendency in ELF communication, was identified even in the earliest research about ELF phonology (Jenkins 2000; Cogo 2009).

Jenkins *et al.* (2001), for example, explored a number of characteristics of ELF that have been identified in empirical research. However most of their findings are gathered from a restricted area of researches carried out in formal and informal academic settings, thus their research focus is concentrated mainly on ELF communication contexts occurring in the European university field whose participants often share also an amount of common socio-cultural background knowledge.

On the other hand, at the level of lexico-grammatical and morphological features ELF is revealing some interesting phenomena as well, which have involved the special research focus of Seidlhofer. For this purpose, she and her colleagues have been compiling a corpus of interactions in English among fairly fluent speakers from a variety of first-language backgrounds. This corpus, available online as a free resource, is called Vienna-Oxford ELF Corpus (VOICE) and is compiled by a research team of the University of Vienna.<sup>3</sup>

VOICE data confirm a number of innovative forms at the lexical and morphological level. More precisely findings reveal that ELF speakers create new words and collocations such as 'space time' and 'severe criminals'; they are also able to assign a new meaning to the so-called 'false friends' which may be different from the traditional meaning attributed by

<sup>3</sup> VOICE is a corpus of over one million of words collected from naturally occurring, face-to-face interactions via ELF, in different communicative settings (educational, leisure, and professional, with the latter subdivided into business, organizational, and research-science). The recorded interactions range from various types of speech events, conversation, interview, meeting, panel, press conference, question-answer session, service encounter, and workshop discussion. The speakers involved come from almost fifty different first-language backgrounds and include also a small percentage of English native speakers of English. All the transcribed ELF events are supplied with detailed descriptions of both the kinds of the speech acts and interactions, as well as about the participants involved.

native speakers of English (e.g. ‘actually’ meaning ‘currently’ rather than ‘in fact’, since Hülmbauer (2007) suggests to call them “true friends”); and that they make original use of morphemes, devising forms such as ‘boringdom’, ‘discriminization’, ‘forsify’, ‘levelize’ and so on (Björkman 2008).

Another frequent finding in lexico-grammatical research is that ELF speakers tend to change uncountable nouns into countable ones, such as ‘informations’, ‘softwares’, ‘fundings’, ‘evidences’, ‘feedbacks’. And perhaps the most frequently reported feature is zero marking of 3rd person singular -s in the present tense. Concerning this aspect, Dewey (2007) demonstrates that the ‘omission’ of 3rd person -s cannot be attributed to a lack of proficiency. Actually, he also proves that when ELF students encounter a native English lecturer, they tend to replace the omitted -s. In other words, their communicative new habit among themselves is zero marking, but since they are aware that its use is still dismissed and stigmatized by native English speakers, they tend to activate a process of pragmatic self-regulation which enables them not to choose the ‘new form’ in native vs. non-native interactions, particularly if the native speaker belongs to a socio-linguistic higher position.

Even if they are not directly involved in the research focus, it is important to notice that – as extensively pointed out by Jenkins *et al.* (2011) – huge research effort is currently devoted to the investigation of ELF used in academic and business settings as significantly demonstrated by (i) the ELFA corpus (English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings)<sup>4</sup>, consisting of data collected specifically in higher education settings, which have enabled its researchers to deduce interesting considerations (cf. e.g. Metsä-Ketelä 2006; Ranta 2006; Cogo 2007, 2009; Klimpfinger 2009; Mauranen 2009; Jenkins 2011); and (ii) the exploration of business ELF (BELF) as corporate language (cf. e.g. Ehrenreich 2010; Kankaanranta & Planken 2010; Koester 2010).

The aspects, emerging from data collected in formal ELFA settings, raise awareness of the particular pragmatics of ELF, since the various use of these features demonstrates and confirms the speakers’ consciousness of ELF potential to achieve particular communicative goals according to different interactions, even though they are still not aware of ELF status as a variety deserving scientific acknowledgment. As a result, ELF research, in the last decade and in the meantime, has shifted its attention from a descriptive approach to a deeper pragmatic investigation enabling researchers to analyse the employment and the effects of some particular

<sup>4</sup> ELFA website: [www.eng.helsinki.fi/elfa/](http://www.eng.helsinki.fi/elfa/).

structures and uses in ELF and to define better the dynamics of intercultural communication in different settings.

For example, in her analyses, Seidlhofer (2007a and b; 2008; 2009; 2011) shows that in a variety of interactions, ranging from casual interactions to formal academic discourse, speakers are able to exploit a wide amount of language resources and creative possibility. In those cases, she notes that no important breakdowns or miscommunication occur, even when speakers repeat certain grammatical ‘errors’, such as: (i) using the same form for all present tense verbs; (ii) not putting a definite or indefinite article in front of nouns; (iii) treating “who” and “which” as interchangeable relative pronouns; (iv) using just the verb stem in constructions where conjugation in tense and aspect is required; (v) using “isn’t it?” as a universal question tag.

These characteristics are described by Seidlhofer in a ‘neutral’ and unconditioned analysis, but obviously this is not the way these ‘mistakes’ are usually treated in English classrooms and assessments around Europe. It is well-known that EFL teachers’ effort spent during their lessons on such features as the “third person –s”, the correct use of articles and verbal aspect is often considerable, and nevertheless many learners still fail to use them ‘correctly’ after years of learning, especially in spontaneous speech.

Indeed, Seidlhofer (2011: 108) claims that speakers in ELF communication are “not just calling up elements of a foreign language as they were learnt at school and force them into use as ‘correctly’ as possible in a successful error-free language. Rather participants are making use of their multi-faceted multilingual repertoires influenced by the communicative purpose and the interpersonal dynamics of the interaction. In many speech events, boundaries between languages also seem to be perceived as flexible or even irrelevant, as if speakers were reinventing their languages”.

Furthermore, seen from this perspective, it would be self-evident that the most important consequence of the global spread of English will naturally affect the teaching of English, above all because there is an urgent need to establish to what extent ELF has recently challenged the native speakers’ ‘ownership of English’, as pointed out by Brumfit (2001) and Widdowson (1994, 2003).

Seidlhofer (2011: 12) rightly claims that “changes in the perception of the role of English in the world have significantly influenced thinking about approaches to teaching and led to an increased socio-political and intercultural awareness”, as it also testified by the amount of studies and research about issues and effects of EIL on ELT and on intercultural awareness in the last decades (e.g. Brumfit 2001; Kramsch 1993; Canagarajah 2007; Gnutzmann 1999; McKay 2002), which, according to

Seidlhofer (2011: 12) anyway suggest idea and approaches still determined and influenced by “native-speaker models”.

Cauldwell (2006) states that even if British and American native speakers and British and American accents have become the standard points of reference for proficiency in pronunciation and speaking, recently the ownership of these points has been challenged. The NNSs are often expert communicators as well as or even better than many native speakers, while preserving and defending an important part of their personal, social and cultural identity. Nonetheless Jenkins (2007: 238) asserts that it is “too early to talk of ‘teaching ELF’ as such. Before this can happen” – she recommends – “we need comprehensive, reliable descriptions of the ways in which proficient ELF users speak among themselves, as the basis for a codification”.<sup>5</sup>

However, Jenkins (2007: 252) also optimistically concludes that only if ELF is properly codified and “its status as a legitimate and effective means of communication is acknowledged, then it could be also possible to talk about Teaching English *of* Speakers of Other Languages” (as suggested by Howatt & Widdowson 2004: 363); which will mean a teaching of ELF used by speakers with high level of ELF ‘proficiency’ as well.

According to Jenkins (2007: 252), “if ELF will be established and recognized in this way, it is reasonable to suppose that the majority of English users in the Expanding Circle would rethink their attitudes and identities, and choose to learn and use this kind of English” because of its communicative and pragmatic opportunities and resources, as it is already well documented in a number of researchers of the last decade (e.g. Crystal 2003, 2004; Jenkins 2003; Graddol 2006; Kachru *et al.* 2006; Seidlhofer 2011).

Seidlhofer (2011: 24), on the other hand, fixes the points for the future research effort. Firstly, because she is convinced that “there is the need to accept that ELF is not a kind of fossilized interlanguage used by learners failing to conform to the conventions of Inner Circle native norms, but a legitimate use of English”, which should be considered as an unavoidable outcome of the globalized expansion of English. Secondly, according to Seidlhofer (2011: 24), “there is a need for descriptions of the functions and forms of ELF”, which may be then applied to the teaching of ELF as well. And in order to achieve this goal, all the essential and significant research achievements should be applied, using approaches and

<sup>5</sup> Actually, concerning this aspect a certain linguistic insecurity, indeed, is still perceived and testified by the many worldwide adverts for NS teachers, which may include: minimum qualifications of ‘Native English Speaker’, ‘English Native Speakers standard only’, ‘qualified native English teachers only’ (for instance, in Japan where no teaching experience or qualifications are required, but only to be ‘a NS English graduate’ – Kirkpatrick 2006).

methods at the same level of those traditionally employed for describing and analyzing ENL.

Nonetheless, she also points out that a new and native language-independent perspective is required, and since the employment of ELF by non-native speakers of English for communicative purposes is already evident and doubtless, “it would seem reasonable and uncontroversial that they should be accorded the right to take an active role in the development of the language, and to be taken seriously as legitimate users, not just learners or speakers of an interlanguage in the need of improvement towards the norms of a standard native variety” (Seidlhofer 2011: 9).

However Jenkins (2007) supposes and wishes that some still enduring negative reactions to ELF may reveal attitudes, prejudices, ideologies, and identity conflicts which may (and perhaps must) be undisclosed and acknowledged. This could enable researchers to be inclined to consider ELF, one day, as an appreciable pedagogic alternative to traditional EFL teaching.

For the present research, however, as it will be shown later on, the debate on ELT processes and the future of teaching and learning English and its emerging varieties is interesting as far as it could be of hint and impulse for better defining and describing the education and training system of ELF intercultural mediators, who are responsible for much of the communicative process and outcome in cross-cultural encounters, especially the unequal and unbalanced ones which are very frequent in migration contexts and borderlands.

#### **1.4. Toward a Pragmatics of Intercultural Communication in ELF**

Besides, the complex and heterogeneous scientific debate concerning the definition and the possible codification of ELF and its teaching and learning processes, further considerations may concern the communicative and pragmatic purposes involving ELF, from the simplest utterances to the highly elaborate arguments especially in cross-cultural settings.

More recently, the focus of research, above all on ELF intelligibility, has tended to move from the speaker’s perspective towards the listener’s one, and to consider also the contribution of factors such as the listener’s socio-cultural background and processing skills.

For example, Bamgose (1998: 11) defines intelligibility as “a complex of factors comprising recognizing an expression, knowing its meaning, and knowing what that meaning signifies in the sociocultural context”. In this sense ‘intelligibility’ is used to imply a number of actions carried out both by speakers and listeners, meaning that in the interaction,

both contribute to “the speech act and its interpretation” (Bamgose 1998: 11).

On the other hand, Jenkins (2000) suggests that ‘intelligibility’ should concern particularly, not only the production and recognition of the different properties of words and utterances, but first of all a certain competence in dealing with the phonological structure both in production and in perception. Obviously, the recognition and perception of a phonological form is not a simple and unproblematic process. Actually, the pragmatic negotiation of meaning implies “a two-way process involving both speaker and listener at every stage of the interaction” (Jenkins 2000: 78). Speakers and listeners of ELF are forced to evaluate constantly “the extent to which their phonological output appears to be comprehensible to their interlocutors, and make adjustments and corrections as they judge necessary” (Jenkins 2000: 79).

Therefore, most ‘ELF intelligibility’ research has analysed ELF interactions in terms of what could avoid or cause problems in understanding, especially with regard to pronunciation and vocabulary use, collecting data from different professional settings, such as language classrooms (Jenkins 2001), conferences (House 1999; Deterding & Kirkpatrick 2006), and professional training courses (Meeuwis 1994). So far, however, such research has been mainly centred in Europe, although Deterding & Kirkpatrick (2006) have analysed intelligibility issues for ELF speakers in Southeast Asia.

Thus, as already noted, pronunciation has taken central place in ELF intelligibility research, due mainly to the extensive work of Jenkins (among others 1998; 2001; 2002). She regularly observes students and teachers from different language backgrounds engaging in classroom conversations, information exchange activities, and problem-solving tasks, and she analyses the possible reasons for comprehension problems in their use of ELF (e.g. Jenkins 2001).

However, of greatest relevance to the current study it is also a growing number of more pragmatics-related studies on ELF. Again, most of this research has taken place in a variety of European communicative settings, though with participants from most regions of the world. Researchers have analysed data including international phone calls between northern European, Middle Eastern, and South Asian businesspeople (Firth 1990; 1996; Wagner & Firth 1997; Haegeman 2002); interactions among attendees at international meetings in Europe (House 1999; Lesznyák 2002; Knapp 2002); conversations among international students across the dinner table at a British hall of residence (Meierkord 2002); and encounters from a range of other educational (House 2002; Pözl & Seidlhofer 2006; Mauranen 2006), business (Suh 2002; Pitzl 2005) and domestic (Pözl 2003) situations.

This part of ELF research has investigated numerous aspects of pragmatics, including turn-taking (Pözl & Seidlhofer 2006) and topic management (Lesznyák 2002). These data have shown, for example, that ELF interlocutors often use long pauses to indicate topic changes or their desire to end a conversation, whereas native English speakers tend to use verbal patterns for these purposes (Wagner & Firth 1997). In addition, Meierkord (2002) and Lesznyák (2002) have noted that ELF speakers frequently use laughter as an innovative backchannel, something that it is not common in standard English discourse. On the other hand, Böhringer (2009) provides an insight into the potential functions of silent and filled pauses in ELF, showing that apart from serving as a means of gaining time for speech encoding, pauses may also play a role in the interactive creation of meaning or even act as structural markers of the speech event.

Other researchers, meanwhile, have highlighted a wider range of factors in ELF intelligibility just beyond accommodation strategies, underlining that communication failure may occur as well, and which strategies may be applied to solve it.

One of these research approaches in studying ELF pragmatics in the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is represented by the conceptualization of “communication strategies” (CS): “a mutual attempt of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where meaning structures do not seem to be shared” (Tarone 1980: 419). According to this theoretical position, ELF speakers use a range of strategies to solve problems in understanding, and this generally prevents communication breakdowns and even communication conflict (Meeuwis 1994). Lesznyák (2002) reports that in cases of miscommunication in student conference data, participants directly cooperate to overcome these problems, and more competent NNSs readapt unsuccessful linguistic outcomes of less competent speakers in a more effective form. This kind of cooperative process among ELF speakers, which would enable participants to avoid embarrassing reactions, is also noted by House (2002) and Firth (1990).

Other scholars have produced findings in ELF pragmatics research on different aspects of successful communication, which may include strategies to deal with lack of shared meaning (Tarone 1980; Long 1983; Bremer & Simonot 1996b), as well as new patterns used by speakers to facilitate the ongoing conversation and directly or indirectly support their conversational purposes (Edmondson 1981; Long 1983; Bremer & Simonot 1996a; Mauranen 2006) avoiding communicative problems.

Moreover, Deterding & Kirkpatrick (2006), for example, note a number of cases where lexis rather than pronunciation cause problems in understanding. Meeuwis (1994) and House (2002), instead, highlight other pragmatic causes for miscommunication, such as disfluencies in question-answering norms (Meeuwis 1994) and a lack of pragmatic ability in turn-

taking, which leads ELF users even to interact in an unequal ‘parallel talk’, without taking care of their receivers (House 1999). On the other hand, Pitzl (2005) investigates non-understanding in ELF, arguing that through cooperative behaviour and negotiation of meaning lingua franca speakers are capable of using the linguistic means creatively to solve problematic situations.

Throughout the previous research outline one common factor emerged, which confirms that in ELF interactions English is viewed as being quite suitable as a means of intercultural communication. This would allow researchers to study and analyse the most fundamental aspects of language contact and change, and of cross-cultural communicative interactions in which standard sociolinguistic rules or habits may very often be challenged, as noticed also by Mauranen (2005).

Actually, with ever more changing lexical forms and syntactical patterns employed by ELF speakers for varying purposes and cross-cultural communicative situations, ELF seems constantly dynamic, constantly under construction. Therefore, the investigation of ELF has shown to involve not only the features of linguistic development concerning the English language, but also socio-linguistic aspects of intercultural competences and performances. Conducting ELF research on communication, then, is important to go “beyond the specifics of English” (Mauranen 2005: 270).

As Seidlhofer (2009: 240) claims, on the one hand codification is still considered fundamental as is proved by “descriptions of certain observed regularities”. But on the other hand, the typical fluidity and instability of ELF, which contribute to hindering a proper normative codification, cannot be dismissed. Actually, ELF users seem to be mainly focused on the purpose of talk and on their interlocutors, often applying a pragmatic negotiation of meaning which enables them to use elements of the foreign language they learnt at school and adapt them pragmatically as correctly as possible to other linguistic features derived from L1, or even L2, backgrounds.

Some scholars indeed make similar considerations about the fluidity of ELF, like Pennycook (2009: 195) who explains how ELF research confirms the use of English “under negotiation” and in the attempt to “address precisely the gap left” by World Englishes system. Similarly, Canagarajah (2007: 926) argues that ELF is “intersubjectively constructed in each specific context of interaction” by speakers according to each kind of communicative purposes.

Therefore, empirical research demonstrates how ELF involves not only the frequent and systematic use of new forms that are not found in native English, but also the speaker employment of a number of pragmatic processes determined by socio-cultural and idiolectal forms or attitudes to be exploited in any given interaction.

Seen from this perspective and from the previous discussion of ELF definition and need for codification, ELF varieties change according to speakers' L1 backgrounds and cultures, but also according to specific contextual factors which may affect accommodative and intelligible behaviours.

Hence, according to Seidlhofer (2011: 101), all the accommodation strategies identified “can be understood also in social-psychological terms as a strategy ‘whereby individuals adapt to each other’s communicative behaviours using a wide range of linguistic/prosodic/non-vocal features’ (Giles & Coupland 1991: 63) to make them more able to communicate efficiently and in order to achieve their interlocutors’ approval”.

Thus Jenkins (2011) claims that for English the traditional nation-specific view of language varieties and speech communities is no longer acceptable and an alternative view is needed to replace it with the acknowledgement that a great number of ELF users skilfully adapt English for their own purposes, as a shared communicative resource within which they have the freedom to accommodate to each other, code-switch, and create innovative forms that differ from the native norms and do not require the approval of native English speakers. This means that as far as intercultural communication is concerned, a skilled ELF user is not only or not necessarily someone who has acquired a proficient knowledge of the forms and structures of a particular native variety of English, but someone who has acquired the pragmatic skills needed to adapt their English use in line with the needs of the current lingua franca context, and his/her communicative goals.

However, it is also to be underlined that the investigation of ELF has revealed that it could not be regarded as a fixed suitable means of communication in any kind of situation and encounter. Actually, language users have at their disposal a multi-faceted linguistic repertoire and very often select the most effective form and variety for their particular purposes, and according to the communicative circumstances, ranging from flexible ELF to any other code or variety that enables the mutual understanding.

Therefore, seen in terms of a process within a wider communicative universe rather than as a linguistic result, ELF plays a special role in promoting the raising of intercultural awareness in communication and the importance of strategies like linguistic accommodation and negotiation of meaning, giving more prominence to mutual understanding, especially in particular professional settings involving unequal encounters or gate-keeping situations.

That is why some scholars have talked about a “paradigm shift” (Carson 2003: 110; Lüdi 2002: 22) in studying ELF, which consists of (i) intercultural awareness of the culture-specific interdependency of beliefs and attitudes; (ii) shared knowledge of general socio-cultural parameters

and schemata derived from culture-specific religious or gender policy; (iii) “interpersonal sensitivity”, that is the ability to properly understand a person; (iv) “cognitive flexibility”, namely the capability to be open-minded towards innovations and new trends; (v) “behavioural flexibility”, seen as the ability to change one’s own behavioural inclination (Gnutzmann 2000: 358).

Actually, Seidlhofer (2004; 2007a) recognizes a certain “interpersonal sensitivity” and “cognitive flexibility” that ELF users can achieve by means of different processes of cooperation, accommodation and simplification strategies, along with the ability to signal communicative breakdown, lingua-cultural awareness and identity, and openness towards new linguistic flexibility rather than standard linguistic rules.

Therefore, “it is the purpose of ELF research” – and interculturally oriented research in general, as the present study – “to raise awareness of these codes of communication also in the context of language teaching” (Hülmbauer *et al.* 2008: 9).

According to Brown (1995: 232-233), interlocutors share a number of background information which allows them to communicate on “a structure of mutual beliefs”. Therefore, communication and comprehensibility occur because speakers naturally build and interpret utterances according to attitudes, beliefs and even prejudices derived from the other’s degree of knowledge. Besides, Brown claimed that speakers mutually assign to each other the communicative purposes which they “would expect to experience in uttering the utterance just heard in that particular context” (Brown 1995).

However this would imply that interlocutors always are “playing the same game” in interaction (Brown 1995). Actually it will be demonstrated that is not a common rule and it would be interesting to find out how this happens and how this may not happen, especially in intercultural communication domains.

It is obviously true that successful communication involves not only an accommodation process towards the ELF phonological and linguistic outcome, but also a considerable degree of shared knowledge from a socio-cultural perspective. Actually, socialization processes activated through a persistent contact with a certain community enable fluent speakers of the target language to develop automatic mechanisms gathering data from a knowledge repertoire acquired through experience and interpreting of communicative behaviours and habits in each specific context in that community.

Moreover, Seidlhofer (2011: 109) optimistically argues that studies on ELF users reveal a powerful and productive “resource that enables communication across linguacultural and geographic boundaries. Empirical research into such complex and sophisticated interactions further confirms the need to question the traditional terms ‘community’ and ‘variety’ and to

reject the idea that there is a precise definition of ‘competence’ in a language that speakers either acquire, possess and perform or the don’t”. In other words, “ELF speakers can clearly be communicatively competent in English without conforming to norms of ENL competence” (Seidlhofer 2011: 109).

Research confirms ELF hybridity, dynamism, fluidity and flexibility in its performances and creative realizations, according to context, purpose, speakers and their linguacultural backgrounds. ELF participants, indeed, are able to speak and defend their identity by using different underlying resources and devices, while adjusting and accommodating them for their interlocutors’ advantage, even though there are cases in which this may not happen and it is necessary to understand how and why they occur.

Actually, the interactions recorded in the VOICE corpus or in the ELFA one occur basically in a communicative context of mutual understanding and successful agreement, where participants aim at cooperating and co-building conversational events at the same pragmatic level. Seidlhofer (2011: 107) assures that the nature of the VOICE corpus enables researchers to establish and evaluate “who the interlocutors are, why they meet, what they are talking about, and so on, and this makes it possible to a certain degree to look at the interactions from the participants’ perspective. This in turn makes it easier to go beyond the description of the forms themselves to develop some understanding of what may have led speakers to use particular forms in the creative processes of communication”.

However, there are occasions where such optimistic willingness of mutual comprehension is absent and where the use of ELF turns out to have controversial effects (cf. Guido 2008; Provenzano 2008). In these cases encounters are unequal because there is an evident inequality of participant status between, e.g. migrants, or asylum seekers and refugees and their interrogators, and as a result it must be admitted that a mutual, successful understanding is not always guaranteed. This means that ELF has also its problematic features and there is a need for a deeper description of cases in which Outer Circle and Expanding Circle speakers may contrast.

As shown later on, ELF encounters in specific professional contexts, occur without the speakers’ common linguacultural background that facilitates the achievement of the pragmatic goals of the communicative process. And this is a crucial point to avoid severe cases of communication failure: to facilitate a successful encounter, it would be necessary to extend the amount of shared background, which may include shared historical, socio-cultural and even ethno-semiotic background knowledge. Since this could not be obviously an automatic and self-regulating process, a proper ELF intercultural mediation may represent a good chance to achieve this goal as a bridging point between two or more ELF entities.

## **1.5. Conclusion**

The previous outline and discussion of the most recent achievements in the research on such a wide and complex area as ELF is revealing to be, have been necessary and fundamental for the objectives of the present study. Because of its unprecedented dimensions and domains, ELF feeds opinions, ideas and perspectives on a worldwide scale that may be interesting, if not in certain cases fundamental and inspiring. Moreover, the research outcomes may trigger further investigation. One of these is a deeper and extensive analysis of cases in which ELF is not a means of cooperation and mutual intelligibility, but of unequal encounters and miscommunication with pragmatically negative consequences for (all or part of) the participants in the interactions.

Actually, the objective of this research is concerned with the investigation of these ELF encounters, seen from both phonological and pragmatic perspectives, in order to understand how this may happen, which phonopragmatic reasons and interferences they derive from, and whether and how they can be avoided, above all with the intervention of intercultural mediators.

However, in order to properly define the theoretical background of this research and its aims, it is essential to provide a correlation among (i) the latest ELF research achievements, (ii) those in the phonology of English and (iii) those in intercultural pragmatics, in order to make clear and demonstrate how ELF can interlace pragmatics and phonology in the *phonopragmatic* approach.

## **2. Theoretical Background: Focus on ELF Phonology**

### **2.1. The Science of Speech and the Phonology of ELF**

As already pointed out, this research is deeply rooted into the empirical study of phonology and in particular into the relationship between intercultural pragmatics and the use of phonological means in ELF spoken discourse.

At the basis of the different interdisciplinary objectives and subjects under investigation from a *phonopragmatic* perspective, there are, firstly, several constructs, models, contributions and advances coming from different areas of research in English phonology in the last decades, which will reveal all their relevant importance for the present research focus and which are here briefly outlined.

It is generally recognized that the science of speech and sounds is based on a special interface between: *phonetics*, the study of the articulatory, auditory and acoustic nature of human speech sounds (in terms of vowels and consonants); and *phonology*, the study of processes and methods through which speakers organize and store the knowledge of the sounds of their own language, which enable them to use it appropriately on all occasions. Phonology, then, is the study of the relationship between all the linguistic components and the phonetic systems of any given language, specifically when sounds represent differences of meaning in a language (i.e., in a standard, segmental view, segments as ‘phonemes’ have distinctive power in meaning, e.g. *get* vs. *let*).

Nevertheless, the relationship between phonetics and phonology cannot be considered so obvious and well-defined, and it is, especially in the last decades, under a deeper scientific investigation which may give new insights for better understanding and observing this particular relation.

It is also true that the traditional approach to phonetics and phonology represents speech as a sequence of segments, considered as individual sounds, consonants and vowels (those more closely associated with SPE (Chomsky & Halle 1968)). On this model the International Phonetic Association (IPA) alphabet was established in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which is still in use today. Since then different segmental approaches to the study of phonemes and segmentation of speech have been developed. Nonetheless, according to some scholars (e.g. Odden 2005; Nasukawa & Backley 2008; Backley & Nasukawa 2009a and b; Backley 2011), the traditional standard approach to phonology does not reflect how speakers’ perception of their own phonological system works, and needs to be revised in some of its original assumptions, often considered wrong or outdated. More precisely, what has been condemned in the very last insights into the subject, is the use of binary features to describe phonemes (e.g. [ $\pm$ cont], [ $\pm$ ant], [ $\pm$ lab], and so on), which appear to be problematic in two aspects: (i) they are mostly based on articulation, and moreover are speaker-related, regardless of the receiver’s perspective; (ii) since they are based on a binary system, using two values (+/ -) for marking the presence/absence of a property, the [-] sign may lead to incorrect or ambiguous predictions about the nature of segments.

On the other hand, segmental phonetics has enabled and justified the establishment of a traditional segmental phonology, which however is not capable of catching all the interesting and crucial aspects of real speech, though, as Lodge (2009: 97) with reason points out, “segmentation is also supported by the long tradition of alphabetic writing in many languages, and indeed transcriptions in the IPA alphabet”.

Hence, some linguists are introducing a scientific revision to the standard theories and are proposing new interesting approaches to the study

of phonology, like Backley (2011), who present *elements* as an alternative to traditional features.

His ‘Element Theory’ (ET) employs a set of six ‘elements’ (which divide into a vowel set |I U A| and a consonant set |H N ?|) which represent the internal structure of segment. The ‘elements’ represent phonological categories, which are based on the phonological information that is transferred between speaker and listener by means of the speech signal, which is here defined in acoustic terms. Thus, elements are primarily abstract units of phonological structure, but they also relate directly to some linguistically relevant properties of the acoustic signal. *Elements* are monovalent and represent only positive segmental properties.

Indeed, the most important innovation achieved by this approach is the acoustic perspective and relevance given to the signal which, according to Backley (2011), may help to account for certain segmental patterns that, on the contrary, appear arbitrary when they are described in feature and segmental terms. This means that phonology is free to operate on a single level and that enables researchers to study it in relation to the kinds of contrasts which elements produce, the kinds of consonant and vowel systems they create in different languages, and the kinds of phonological processes and patterns they are involved in.

Other scholars, such as Lodge (2009 a and b), questioning some fundamental assumptions of the traditional phonology (e.g. segmentation, abstractness, monosystemicity), deal with some phonological aspects which have been often disregarded in the past literature. Lodge (2009 a and b), in an attempt to describe various recent developments across different phonological theories, explores a range of key issues which relate to the relationship between phonologists and phoneticians, who very often are the same researchers, since they deal with the phonetic continuum of the spoken language, analysed – on the one hand – from an articulatory and acoustic perspective, and – on the other hand – on the basis of a segmental transformation process of this continuum. This aspect is in a certain sense contradictory, also because very often no discussion is provided of how the two different kinds of approach can cooperate. Hence Lodge (2009a: viii) proposes that in order “to understand the nature of the relationship between the two, phonetic detail and phonological structure, then we need as much information as possible about the nature of spoken language from a physical point of view, as well as the continuing investigations into the psycholinguistic aspects of phonological knowledge”.

However, apart from the current scientific discussion and some revisionist movements, phonology cannot be dismissed in any good analytical approach to linguistics, since it represents its very starting point, and not taking into account its effects and mechanisms means denying the

other linguistic components (from syntax to pragmatics) a fundamental part of their nature.

Moreover, the present research originates partly from a special relationship between the area of phonology known as ‘suprasegmental phonology’ (with particular reference to some of its components, first of all prosody and intonation), and the use of ELF.

In her work Jenkins (2000), as already mentioned, tried to give a systematic synthesis of the changing patterns in the use of English, especially in EFL and in EIL. She rightly observes that English varieties are experiencing phonological variations, both from a segmental perspective and from a suprasegmental one. According to her view, these variations are causing problems and effects in interlanguage talk, such as misunderstandings and intelligibility difficulties, as well as in the pedagogical approaches to pronunciation and phonology of EIL.

She is able to attribute this amount of new challenging issues to an L1 phonological transfer which may be considered as a such complex process that its investigation is a very difficult and complicated task.

Jenkins (2000) reports cases in which both RP (Received Pronunciation) and GA (General American), the most commonly taught English accents, have been found empirically to cause intelligibility problems to NNSs than other NNS accents. Actually, different empirical research projects have been conducted on NNSs of English with different first languages, in a wide range of interaction contexts, such as educational, professional and social, with the aim of identifying which features of RP/GA are useful or even necessary for intelligibility in ELF communication, and which are useless or even compromising to intelligibility. Data generally reveal that intelligibility problems are commonly due to pronunciation problems. Seidlhofer (2005) also claims that the traditional EFL model for ELT is not useful for all learners especially those who just want to use the English language as a *lingua franca*.

Therefore there is a mainly pedagogical reason at the basis of Jenkins’s idea of phonological core which could account for L1 phonological transfers, a new definition of errors and correctness, accommodation strategies and intelligibility, in order to give value to the ELF status as a variety.

The *Lingua Franca Core (LFC)* actually indicates to teachers which sounds to focus on when teaching pronunciation, in order to achieve effectively their pedagogical objectives. More precisely, Jenkins’s study of non-native speaker interactional data indicates that, for example, consonants are phonologically very important, except for the ‘th’ sounds and dark [ɪ] sound. In most instances, /θ/ and ð/ are replaced by plosives or fricatives, because the interdental fricatives are very difficult to produce for most non-

native speakers. Anyway this aspect does not cause the receiver misinterpretation of the message.

According to Jenkins (2000), replacement of the dark /ɪ/ by an /ʊ/ or a clear /i/ did not result in comprehension problems either. And as a result, Jenkins decided to exclude /θ/, ð/ and the preconsonantal and syllabic /l/ from the Lingua Franca Core.

Therefore the LFC is based on research into intelligibility between students from various international backgrounds, which enables Jenkins to suggest a list of some features of pronunciation which she considers important and essential for all students of English and especially for ELF intelligibility. The Core includes: (i) all the consonants, except /θ/ and ð/; (ii) initial consonant clusters, separated by the addition of vowels, as well as vowels added to consonants at the ends of words; (iii) vowel length distinctions (e.g. the difference in length between the vowel sounds in the words “live” and “leave”); (iv) the mid-central /ɜ:/ vowel; (v) nuclear stress placement and pitch variation.

Instead, the following features of pronunciation are considered idiosyncratic for individual variation, since they do not cause problems of intelligibility, so they can be omitted from the LFC: (i) /θ/ and ð/; (ii) final consonant clusters; (iii) vocalized /l/; (iv) individual vowel quality; reduced vowels; (v) lexical stress; (vi) intonational tones; (vii) rhythm.

As regards suprasegmental and intonational phonology, Jenkins (2000) underlies that most intonation habits in EFL or ELF consists of acquired stereotypical patterns of which L1 speakers are not even aware. Indeed, NNSs are rarely conscious of transferring their L1 patterns onto their English intonational outcome because intonation mainly works at a subconscious level.

Meanwhile, Gumperz (1982) reported the famous example of the NS ability to interpret meaning through intonational information often before the lexical one, and to perceive and react to NNS intonation ‘errors’, even though they cannot explain them. Indian and Pakistani waiters at a British airport were perceived as uncooperative only on the basis of their intonation patterns. For example, when they offered gravy, they pronounced the word ‘gravy’ with a falling tone instead of the rising tone normally used by English NSs when making offers. This was interpreted by the customers they served as a statement of fact, and so redundant in the context, and indicative of rude indifference rather than the engagement expected for an offer.

Another interesting factor regards English rigid word order. Actually speakers of ENL or EIL or ELF could not rely on prominence variation combined with salient words moved e.g. at the beginnings of utterances and clauses in order to emphasize them because of semantic and pragmatic importance. However, English allows free stress placement within the

intonation group which enables speakers to give any word, regardless of its syntactic position, the nuclear stress if they wish to focus receiver attention on it. This may happen moving nuclear stress by means of word order, or topic markers within the intonation group (e.g. in *What about YOU? I don't KNOW my lawyer*, moving nuclear stress and using different pitch range and contour speakers are able to convey meaning even though they cannot rely on flexible word order).

Therefore it is particularly interesting to consider, as some scholars have done in the last decades for ESL (e.g. Nash 1969; Lanham 1990; Wennerstrom 1994), what happens when NNSs transfer L1 intonation patterns onto their spoken ELF and the effects it has on their ability to use typical English nuclear stress and accentual isochrony, and consequently, on the intelligibility of their speech.

Moreover starting from LFC, Jenkins (2000) predicted that the pronunciation of ELFE would develop certain characteristics over time. For instance, the interdentalals  $\theta/$  and  $\delta/$  very probably will not become a feature of ELFE since nearly all European speakers of ELF have a problem in producing them.<sup>6</sup>

To sum up, one of the most interesting achievements in Jenkins's LFC is that it excludes some phonetic areas related above all to pronunciation which very often instead represent for teachers and learners pedagogical targets and objectives to which a lot of time and effort is dedicated, sometimes even in vain, such as the quality/quantity of vowel sounds, word stress, sentence stress or standard rhythm, with weak forms to be hardly perceived.

This is a very important acknowledgement of a perspective where speakers involved in ELF communication should be free to pronounce English with their own first language regional accent and all the other segmental and suprasegmental L1 transfers, without being disregarded as making pronunciation mistakes.

Anyway, since – as already seen – the debate on ELF is still lively and controversial, the LFC obviously has not been unanimously welcomed and accepted; on the contrary its issue is quite controversial, and very often it has received considerable opposition, so that Jenkins (2007 and 2009) – although she admits that very probably neither ELF nor the LFC have been well understood – provides a list of the most prominent reactions and

<sup>6</sup> What is not predictable yet is whether the ELFE substitute will be “s” and “z” or “t” and “d”, or whether there will be a regional variation. Since users of “s” and “z” outnumber users of “t” and “d”, however, Jenkins (2000) predicts that the former variant will become accepted in ELFE. Besides Jenkins & Seidlhofer (2001) presume that since many Europeans have difficulties with dark “l”, this sound will not be included in the ELFE inventory, but will probably be substituted with clear “l”. As regards the British-English distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants, instead, maybe they will maintain in ELFE since the lack of this distinction confirms to be a frequent reason for intelligibility problems.

misinterpretations of the LFC answering back with clear reasons and explanations.<sup>7</sup>

Anyway, it cannot be denied anymore that, as also Jenkins (2003) argues, differences among ELF varieties are evident, especially in spoken language and in oral communication, and even more in phonetic terms of accent and pronunciation, and of phonological profile than at the other linguistic levels, since it is on pronunciation that L1 transfers have their primary and more evident realization.

Moreover apart from important works and research conducted by Jenkins and her team of colleagues, though mainly restricted to the academic and pedagogical communication field, a great deal of effort and progress is still required in the area of the phonology of ELF, since its range and significance have a so large extent that deserve much more consideration in the study of global English as well as in a revisionist perspective of English phonology. However, as already seen in the previous sections, if ELF as a linguistic entity does not achieve a shared scientific acknowledgement, its phonological investigation too will find it difficult to increase and improve.

## **2.2. Prosody and Intonational Phonology**

Before understanding and investigating ELF phonology and especially its suprasegmental aspects, a general outline of the same concepts in standard English is required, in order to prepare the ground for the phonological investigation of ELF in cross-cultural immigration contexts which is the basis of the present research.

Since the traditional phonological approach – as previously considered – defines ‘segments’ as the basic unit of observation and analysis, both phoneticians and phonologists call ‘suprasegmental’ the aspects of speech (such as prosody, pitch, stress, duration, syllables, rhythm) which affect more than one segment in any given utterance, or act on the relationship between one segment and another.

<sup>7</sup> Briefly, Jenkins’ LFC has been accused of: (i) being a model for imitation (on the contrary Jenkins (*idibem*) answers that since accommodation plays such a crucial role in ELF, it is not advisable to give learners a single model as in EFL tradition); (ii) being a single accent variety (according to Jenkins, instead, there are as many ELF varieties as the number of ESL varieties); (iii) promoting errors, (rather it is necessary to separate ELF from EFL, which assesses pronunciation mistakes according to NS accent standards); (iv) underlying the intention of imposing ELF or the LFC to all learners of English, (but, instead, ELF researchers believe that learners should be free to choose which variety or varieties of English they want to learn and use according to their communicative needs and purposes); (v) aiming at making English learning easier, (Jenkins argues that simply LFC is based on intelligibility with a consequent decrease of pronunciation features); (vi) being an artificial language rather than the result of empirical research (she argues instead that ELF is variety available to NSs too in international communication with no aim at damaging them).

‘Prosody’ can be described as a complex range of suprasegmental features which together represent what, from an acoustic perspective, is generally called ‘tone’ of voice. ‘Intonation’, conceived in terms of pitch variation, is just one component of this intricate universe that, along with a set of other elements, plays a fundamental role in conveying and interpreting language and above all meaning.

As will be seen later on, the prosodic features affect whole utterances or a large part of them. They influence syntax throughout spoken discourse and speech, and their function often determines the relationships between different parts of an utterance, especially those related to semantics and pragmatics.

Anyway, intonation too has experienced many scientific vicissitudes in terms of approaches and descriptions during the decades. The most extensive theoretical development began during the 1940s. The first intonational theory developed in the United States and was based on ‘pitch phonemes’ (Wells 1945; Pike 1945) where four contrastive pitch levels were established and intonation was described essentially in terms of a series of movements from one of these levels to another. On the other hand, in Britain the ‘tone-unit’ approach, begun in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was then developed by Kingdon (1958), O’Connor & Arnold (1962), and Halliday (1967). Since then, obviously, the two different theoretical approaches have been gradually elaborated. Nevertheless, since the 1970s it has become evident that such patterns and methods were inadequate for dealing with natural spontaneous speech. Especially in Britain, the most influential work concerning this new trend emerged, such as the work by Crystal (1969), Brown *et al.* (1980), Ladd (1996) and Cruttenden (1986, 1997), along with Ladefoged (2006) and Brazil and his colleagues (1980, 1981, 1985a and b).

Nonetheless, as Roach (2003: 133) points out, “no definition of intonation may be completely satisfactory, but any attempt at a definition recognises that the pitch of the voice plays the most important part. Only in very unusual situations do we speak with fixed, unvarying pitch, and when we speak normally the pitch of our voice is constantly changing. One of the most important tasks in studying and analysing intonation is thus to listen to the speaker’s pitch and recognise what he is doing”.

On the other hand, ‘pitch’ is generally described in terms of ‘low’ and ‘high’, even though it is also true that speakers may find it difficult to relate their acoustic and auditory analysis in hearing someone’s voice to a proper assignment of pitch degree onto a scale ranging from ‘low’ to ‘high’, which anyway are arbitrary choices for start- and end-points.

More precisely, ‘pitch’ is an auditory property of sounds which is conveyed to the utterance, and generally native speakers should be able to place the perceived sounds on a scale from ‘high’ to ‘low’. Pitch variations

produce the particular acoustic ‘tune’ of the words being spoken and consequently perceived.

There are basically two ways in which pitch may be used in world languages: (i) to act on a single word and thus differentiate meaning between individual words of a language; such languages are called ‘tone languages’, for instance, Mandarin Chinese. On the other hand, (ii) the pitch variations may operate over whole utterances and not be associated with particular words, as in English. The set of these language-specific patterns of pitch changes represents what is generally referred to as ‘intonation’.

From an articulatory and acoustic point of view, pitch variation and intonation can be described as the movements of the vocal cords which during vibration produce a series of variations in air pressure with some relatively regular peaks. Pitch can be measured in terms of the rate at which these peaks occur, i.e. in terms of numbers of complete cord opening and closing movements per second. This measurement is called ‘frequency’ and is measured in Hertz. The frequency with which the pattern of the vibrations is repeated is known as the ‘fundamental frequency’ or  $f_0$ : changes in  $f_0$  are what the receiver perceives as changes of pitch.

Obviously, even though all English speakers of the same speech community and variety, for instance, generally have the same intonational system, the actual pitches they employ to realize their utterances vary considerably (apart from anatomical differences), first of all from a sociolinguistic point of view. Actually, there is an important contribution of social convention and idiosyncratic influences affecting pitch ranges, which are automatically applied as considered appropriate for any given communicative occasion.

The different pitch patterns in English as well as in any other language convey the speaker’s attitudes or feelings at the moment of building his/her utterance. In other words, the main sentence stress, which is accompanied by a marked change of pitch, is called the ‘tonic stress’ and falls on the word of the sentence that is considered to be the focus of new information.

However, intonation and prosody are not restricted to stress and pitch, but represent a more complex set of correlates affecting the prosodic profile of any given utterance. Actually, in the most current models of intonation, attention is focused on (i) pitch and the way spoken language may be analysed into ‘phrases’ and (ii) the kind of nature of boundaries between them.

Intonation analysis is traditionally conducted by considering the various pitch movements occurring in any given utterance, associated with the searching for the prominent syllables. More specifically, in the English phonological analysis a number of different patterns of pitch movement is commonly used: *falls*, *rises*, *fall-rise* and *rise-falls*. These are often labelled

also as ‘tones’ or ‘nuclear tones’. Tones too have been variously represented graphically since the very beginning of the intonational research, as it has been for the transcription systems employed in segmental phonetics (e.g. the so-called ‘tadpole’ notation – cf. O’Connor & Arnold 1973).

Nevertheless, Pierrehumbert (1988) proposed a theoretical model for representing intonational contours which is now becoming the more widely used system to represent tones not only in English. In this new graphic proposal, also known as “autosegmental approach”<sup>8</sup> to intonational phonology, the different pitch movements are described, represented and labelled according to their pitch targets based on two levels – high and low. That is, for example, a rise in tone is represented as a sequence of two tones: L followed by H; while the pitch target associated with the stressed syllable is marked with a star (\*). Some years later, Pierrehumbert’s theory has been revised by a group of scholars who developed another transcription system for intonational contours and pitch movements, namely the ToBI (Tones and Break Indices) system (Silverman *et al.* 1992) which is now widely applied since it is able to mark not only tone evolution but also boundary density and intensity in different intonational systems.

Apart from different descriptive methods and models within the area of intonational phonology, it is commonly agreed that some intonation patterns convey certain general attitudinal meaning, at least in standard English. *Fall* tones usually indicate finality, assertion, definiteness; *rise* indicates general questions, listing, encouraging; *fall-rise* shows uncertainty, doubt, requesting; *rise-fall* signals surprise, being upset or amazed.

Another fundamental aspect of intonation also at the centre of the present investigation, is ‘phrasing’, that represent utterance segmentation into ‘tone units’ according to different linguistic reasons. Moreover, phrases are very often signalled prosodically through pauses, where the tone group boundary occurs. Identifying tone phrases and their boundaries in spoken interactions and conversation is quite challenging, whereas it is usually easy to identify them in a read text, where punctuation comes to speaker’s assistance in reading and properly assigning tone distribution.

Moreover, in any given utterance, also lexis plays a fundamental role in the relationship with intonation and phrasing. Actually, it is obvious that in a sentence some words are more important than others, or to say it linguistically, have more semantic weight. As a general tendency, so-called ‘content words’ (nouns, verbs, adjectives) tend to carry more semantic weight than others, which are commonly termed ‘function words’ (articles,

<sup>8</sup> Goldsmith (1979) firstly defined his “autosegmental phonology” as an innovative theory of generative phonology based on parallel tiers of “autosegments”, each representing a different language feature, such as segmental, timing, stress and tone ones. The theory was then revised by Pierrehumbert (1988).

auxiliaries, prepositions). Therefore, phonetically speaking, ‘content words’ are usually more prominent than ‘function words’, and this prominence is indicated by a combination of different prosodic correlates, such as loudness, length, pauses and pitch movements.

It is also true that in spontaneous speech, when speaking very quickly, participants sometimes de-stress some content words, while speaking in a slow, careful style and scripted speech gives time for more stressed syllables. Thus, syllabic ‘prominence’ interacts very closely with such prosodic features as rhythm as well as with lexis, syntax, and context.

Therefore, there is a crucial difference between ‘word-stress’ and ‘prominence’: ‘word-stress’, which can be defined as the emphasis of the salient syllables in polysyllabic words, is relatively stable. ‘Prominence’, on the other hand, is to a large extent a matter of the speakers’ pragmatic goals: it is an indication of what the speaker wants to make salient in the ongoing discourse, a reflection of how s/he views the “state of conversational play” (Brazil 1985: 68). Actually, speakers are able to underline intonationally and prosodically what they consider more prominent in interactions, according to context, pragmatic purposes and intentions, receivers, attitudes towards matter, and conversational subjects.

This interesting feature of prosody highlights the important and frequent use of intonation to communicate the speakers’ intentions and therefore perform illocutionary acts (as will be seen later). Generally, from an acoustic and auditory perspective, the greater the gap between the highest and lowest pitch levels in an utterance is, the more emotionally involved the speaker is assumed to be in conversation and in performing speech acts, indicating to his/her receivers, for instance, lack of interest, involvement or enthusiasm.

Obviously, what can be rightly considered extraordinary in the suprasegmental and paralinguistic outcome in spoken language, is the special and wide range of emotional involvement that may be conveyed through prosodic devices and strategies: anger, enthusiasm, nervousness, surprise, happiness and so on. Seen from this perspective, the present research focus, based on a *phonopragmatic* approach, shows all its challenging character especially for its objective of recognizing and indentifying what happens to the production and the perception of this inventory of prosodic tools in ELF interactions, above all from a pragmatic perspective.

To simply and easily understand the pragmatic importance of prosody in every kind of communication, it could be useful to imagine speech in which every syllable was said on the same level pitch, with no pauses and no changes in speed or loudness, in other terms without intonation and prosody. This is arguably the sort of speech that would be produced by a mechanical speech device that build strings of sentences and meaning by

putting together recordings of isolated words in their merely phonetic production.

On the contrary, prosody, not only makes it easier for a listener to understand what a speaker is trying to communicate semantically, but also it enables them to transfer to each other a whole set of pragmatic information which by far go beyond semantic meaning and segmental events.

In Crystal (1987) some important and easily recognizable functions of intonation are listed: (i) *emotional*: intonation enables speakers to express emotions and attitudes as they speak, and this conveys a particular nuance to spoken language. This is often called the ‘attitudinal function’ of intonation (expressing attitudinal meanings such as excitement, surprise, reserve, etc.); (ii) *grammatical*: marking grammatical categories, such as parsing into clauses and sentences, or contrasts between questions and statements, enabling the listener to better recognise the grammar and syntactic structure of what is said by using the information contained in the intonation profile: for example, the placement of syntactic boundaries between phrases, utterances and sentences; or the difference between questions and exclamations. To better understand the grammatical function of intonation, it is also useful to consider the ‘garden-path sentences’ which when written are ambiguous and confusing because they contain some lexical clusters which appear to be compatible with more than one syntactic analysis, and whose ambiguity can only be removed by using differences of intonation and parsing (e.g. in “*flying planes can be exciting*”); (iii) *textual*: looking at the act of speaking in a broader way, intonation can signal to the listener what is to be considered as “new” and what is already “given” in the information structure; (iv) *accentual*: intonation reproduces the effects of prominent syllables onto the receiver who perceives their stress. In particular, the placing of tonic stress signals what is most relevant in the tone-unit; (v) *psychological*: in terms of semantic organization of discourse into units that enable the receivers to perceive, understand and memorize information more easily; (vi) *indexical*: as marker of idiolectal and idiosyncratic identity and of sociolectal belonging.

It is clearly evident that these functions could not be considered as separate: for example, the placement of tonic stress is closely linked to the presentation of “new” information, while the question/statement distinction seems to be equally important in grammar as well as discourse structure. Functions which are common to accentual, grammatical and discourse ones are generally referred to as ‘syntagmatic functions’, since by means of intonation, they represent the relationship between linguistic elements and the context in which they occur (Crystal 1987).

On the other hand, as it has already been pointed out, it is commonly accepted that intonation is used to convey feelings and attitudes towards both communicative content and context: for example, the same sentence

can be said in different ways, which might be labelled “angry”, “happy”, “grateful”, “bored”, and so on, according to the speaker’s attitudes and feelings at the moment of speaking. It has also been observed that the form of intonation is different in different languages. Actually, it is not unusual that in the traditional ELT it is claimed that learners of EFL need to learn English intonation; and those with high levels of proficiency in L2 knowledge are even able to assign the appropriate use of intonation in any given situation, especially to avoid to get misunderstood or unintentionally give offence. Moreover, many languages have the possibility of changing a statement into a question simply by changing the falling-tone form to a rising one. So it is fairly clear that understanding the use of intonation profiles by speakers of different L1s may be particularly important in cross-cultural communication contexts where a series of prosodic transfers, along with the linguistic ones, occur using ELF.

Scholars are generally interested in investigating and exploring the ‘attitudinal’ function of intonation. Roach (2003), for instance, rightly suggests that one possibility to analyse this particular function is to produce a large amount of utterances and try to convey to them different intonation patterns (in terms of pitch variation and tone). This would enable researchers to note and define what attitude is assumed to correspond to the intonation in each case. Obviously, this method of analysis and its results are very subjective, and in a certain sense artificial because are based on prosodic performance that cannot be compared to such intonational achievements realized in conversational speech. Otherwise, Roach (2003) proposes a perceptive alternative that enables the analyst to present the same utterances to a group of listeners and ask them to assign at each sentence realization the attitude they assume to be expressed. Nonetheless, this case, again, represents a laboratory abstraction which makes both speakers and listeners avoid a vast range of adjectives available for defining attitudes, or the latter would probably produce a very large number of labels for each attitude leaving the analyst with the methodological problem of analysing and categorizing his/her data.

It is quite obvious that the most effective and realistic approach in studying prosody and its multitude of realizations is to record spontaneous speech and try to make generalisations about attitudes, meanings and communicative goals analysing it. Actually, it is always advisable that to get new insights and advances in studying intonation, researchers should insist on the analysis of spontaneous speech, of what people actually say rather than inventing examples of what they may say.

Moreover, an emotion may be expressed involuntarily or voluntarily. On the other hand, an attitude that is conveyed could be an attitude towards the listener, towards what is being said or towards some external event or situation, it could also depend on socio-cultural background and knowledge;

all elements and variables which cannot be reproduced in experimental designs.

Roach (2003) defines three suprasegmental variables of intonation to be taken into account: sequential, prosodic and paralinguistic. The first one represents the variable set of pre-heads, heads, tonic syllables and tails, along with pauses, and tone-unit boundaries and their relations to pitch variations. The prosodic variable of intonation is defined according to the quantitative and qualitative consistence and amount of pitch range, loudness, intensity, speech rate and voice quality. Obviously these features are idiolectal and possible contrasts among prosodic correlates should be considered as speaker-specific, depending on his/her phonological “background”. From a paralinguistic point of view, instead, intonation is related to body language which is obviously relevant to the act of speaking but could not in themselves properly be regarded as components of speech (e.g. facial expressions, gestures and body movements actually are generally labelled as extralinguistic features).

On the other hand, a still widely-used description of English intonation is that provided by O’Connor & Arnold (1973). They attempted to correlate syntactic forms with certain tone contours and assign specific speaker attitudes to these combinations. More precisely, they observed that usually a falling tone (i) makes utterances “categoric, weighty, judicial, considered” (O’Connor & Arnold 1973: 48); whereas the same tone may also be used to (ii) “give weight to expressions of both approval and disapproval, of both enthusiasm and impatience” (O’Connor & Arnold 1973: 49).

Instead, Brazil (1985, 1997) suggested another model of ‘meaning’ for tone contours in British English. His proposal was particularly important because for the first time it focused on the communicative relevance and objective of intonation, defined as a communicative stage where discourse and meaning are negotiated moment by moment by speakers and listeners.

Therefore, seen from this perspective, again it is easily inferable that in order to make interaction possible, some “common ground” between the interlocutors is required. As rightly pointed out by Brazil *et al.* (1980: 15), “common ground” does not just represent “shared knowledge” or “something already mentioned”, but it means “what knowledge speakers (think they) share about the world, about each other’s experience, attitudes and emotions”.

Actually, it is what is shared and what is not that determines all speaker’s linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic choices and this aspect is of central importance for the present research.

Brazil’s model, actually, is mainly based on this kind of special and tacit negotiation of common ground among participants in interaction. He even argues that his intonational system may have important consequences

in social terms. Thus aiming at defining and showing the importance and influence of social roles and relationships in the speaker choices of tone and other prosodic correlates, Brazil *et al.* (1980) introduced the terms *referring* (r) for fall-rise tones and *proclaiming* (p) for fall tones. Moreover, speakers have two choices each for referring and proclaiming tones, namely fall-rise and rise (r+) for *referring*; and fall and rise-fall (p+) for *proclaiming*.

In order to better define their theoretical assumptions, Brazil and his colleagues (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Sinclair & Brazil 1982; Brazil 1985 and 1997) analysed different cases of so-called non-symmetrical verbal encounters where unequal participants, namely “dominant and non-dominant”, interact in different communicative contexts, such as formal school lessons and doctor-patient interactions. They were able to establish that in such unbalanced encounters the non-dominant parties, such as pupils and patients, only use (r) and (p) tones, while dominant parties, such as teacher and doctor, typically choose between (r) and (r+), and (p) and (p+). This could signal the very relevant role and contribution of intonation and provide interesting information about how the role of unequal relationships is perceived by interlocutors. Moreover, it indicates which speakers have, or attempt to achieve, dominance over the others. “Dominance” is actually the technical term used by Brazil to indicate how much control a speaker may perform over the dynamics and evolution of discourse. This control may concern decisions about to whom, what about and how interlocutors speak.

The choice of certain prosodic correlations therefore can be considered as an important factor in mediating and transmitting social relationships, including both those of power and cooperation.

In general, then, Brazil’s model of “dominance” in unequal encounters, seen as a certain speaker’s self-regulation of linguistic choices, represents a good example to understand the powerful pragmatic significance of intonation in discourse.

Indeed, a crucial point about the way intonation functions in discourse is that it is one of the most important means by which interlocutors negotiate their mutual relationship and background knowledge. Moreover, during the interaction, intonation enables participants to control and verify this common ground moment by moment in order to fulfil, in most cases, conversational cooperation and understanding, if not agreement.

However, this is not always true. It is therefore interesting to study and analyse occasions when misunderstandings or even offence can be attributed to a (sometimes involuntary) ‘wrong’ use of intonation and all its correlates, even more in cross-cultural communication settings. Moreover, even though within the area of prosodic components most generalisations tend to appear very obvious, it should be verified above all in non-native communicative contexts, such as ELF ones, if wider pitch range tends to be used in excited or enthusiastic speaking, or in slower speech rate which is

typical of the speakers who are tired or bored, and so on. The attitudinal use of intonation is something that should be analysed or acquired through spontaneous and natural interactions with the actual speakers of any given language or variety. Only this may enable researchers and learners to spot dynamics and innovations, uses and pragmatic implications in prosodic patterns which are traditionally considered stable and generally fixed, especially in their standard variety.

Moreover, another point should be taken into account and highlighted for scientific investigation purposes. While speaking, participants usually apply variations in loudness and speech rate and different voice qualities for different attitudes. They also use pitch range in different ways between high and low scale. It is very frequent that they also use different facial expressions and even gestures and body movements. These extralinguistic factors are all of great importance in conveying attitudes and emotions, and yet even the traditional textbooks on ELT and English pronunciation learning have almost completely ignored or disregarded them.

Actually, neither extralinguistic nor paralinguistic features are irrelevant to linguistic interests and investigation, since they represent a fundamental component through which linguistic realizations, meaning and pragmatics can achieve their perceptual targets.

Obviously, if the role of these factors is accepted and acknowledged, it becomes necessary to consider how they are related to intonation, meaning conveyance and pragmatic context, and what may happen to their functioning especially in second language acquisition and in cross-cultural communication.

### ***2.3. The Pragmatics of Intonation in Discourse and Conversation***

From the previous discussion, it has emerged that utterances represent the most important realization of a certain speech act which may be at the basis of a conversational interaction between two speakers. Moreover, utterances have been described as bearers of several references that imply a certain amount of shared knowledge among interlocutors, and in some cases understanding the meaning of a sentence depends only on the correct interpretation of the utterance according to this common knowledge.

Therefore, considering how intonation may be studied in relation to discourse, and particularly to its pragmatic relevance, Roach (2003) suggests that the research focus should be concentrated in identifying: (i) the use of intonation to attract the listener's attention on pragmatic aspects of the utterance, and (ii) the intonational and prosodic regulation of conversational behaviour.

Actually, he claims that “the study of sequences of tone-units in the speech of one speaker can reveal information carried by intonation which would not have been recognised if intonation was analysed only at the level of individual tone-units” (Roach 2003: 178). That is to say that intonation should be investigated in relation to the conversational interaction of two or more speakers. On the contrary, usually research on this subject has been conducted on laboratory reproduction or analysis of scripted conversational interactions of a rather restricted area, and most of them, as already seen, deal with formal unequal encounters between doctor and patient, teacher and pupil or between the various participants in court cases. These case-studies, even though representing a certain scientific and methodological importance, describe a prosodic material where it is quite easy to identify what each speaker is actually doing in speaking, so that intentionality and speech acts come to seem rather obvious, if not trivial.

Therefore, there are other kinds of encounters, which anyway are more consistent both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view, that need to be analysed and described in their spontaneous occurrence. In those cases, it would be clear that speakers use various prosodic components to indicate to their interlocutors, that they have finished speaking, or that they want to start, that another person is supposed to speak, that a particular type of response is required or expected, and so on.

Besides, although speakers are not usually aware of it in their daily interactions, spoken discourse is an extremely complex phenomenon whereby meaning is negotiated or challenged in the process of interaction. It immediately becomes clear thus that the study of this phenomenon implies that language should be considered as a social process, and an adequate and satisfactory analysis of its entity and variables involves an unavoidable interdisciplinary contribution, which may range from textual, discourse and conversational analysis to psycholinguistics and ethnolinguistics.

Actually, different studies show that this kind of approach could be successful in determining important scientific achievements about conversational interaction and the different roles assumed by participants in a conversation and turn-taking, thus considering language, and above all spoken discourse, as a social activity as well as all the other ones, from everyday conversation, to business encounters, university lectures, and cross-cultural encounters as well.

According to Hymes (1972), it is possible to consider and analyse every speech event taking into account a range of factors, such as: its setting (in terms of time and space), its participants (senders and receivers), its content, its channel, and obviously its pragmatic purpose. These components are commonly interrelated in complex ways, particularly in spoken discourse.

In addition, analysing the transcription of a speech event may be inferred an unbelievable amount of data, especially from the prosodic features employed, such as tone unit boundaries, pitch movements, and pauses, both when people speak one by one and when they overlap their utterances at the same time. This methodological approach indeed is the best to investigate and observe how prosody can act and mediate between the linguistic form and the communicative context.

However, the interface between intonation, pragmatics and discourse analysis is a research area which still suffers of a lack of acknowledgement or even interest. Their interrelation has been largely dismissed, despite its fundamental importance for the study of meaning and interpretation of spoken interactions and communicative processes. In the last decades, actually, most intonation research has focused its attention and interest on intonational representation and its relation with grammar rather than its functions and usage. Consequently, the most important and acclaimed works on intonational phonology, not only in English, deal with phonological correlates at or below the level of syntactic speech units (e.g. Cruttenden 1986, 1997; Ladd 1996).

However, a clear tendency in considering intonation as a wider component of discourse has also emerged. More specifically, two main approaches to the subject can be identified. The first one, well represented by Grosz & Hirschberg (1992) and Swerts & Geluykens (1993), investigates intonation mainly from an experimental and instrumental perspective, and in reference to spoken monologue or pre-established dialogues realized according to controlled goals and conditions. The second approach, represented e.g. by Couper-Kuhlen & Selting (1996), focuses on an auditory and descriptive method of analysis of informal conversations and interactions, within the area of Conversation Analysis.

Wichmann (2000) tries to bridge the gap between these two approaches, both in the analytical method and in the kind of data she uses, proposing an approach which makes use of “both auditory and instrumental analysis, thus taking into account what the listener hears and what the computer can measure” (Wichmann 2000: 2).

Moreover, considering the wider field of prosody, a scientific awareness of its great importance in signalling meaning and intentionality in spoken interactions is not at all recent. Rather since the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Brewer 1912), the important role of prosody in structuring spoken discourse was taken into account in different works which analysed speech phenomena in terms of prosodic or suprasegmental features, such as speed, pausing, loudness and melody (later referred to as intonation).

Nowadays, instead, especially experimental research employs complex and developed technological means of storing speech data and

analysing the speech signal, along with a more elaborate theoretical and methodological framework, which enables researchers to analyse suprasegmental phenomena also taking into account recent contributions of text-linguistics and discourse analysis.

It is also true that in the linguistic research many insights and achievements can of course derive from the analyst's introspection and accidental observation of phenomena. In phonological investigation this is particularly frequent since listening to how people interact and convey meaning often generates many good intuitions about how intonation works, which are to be verified. Therefore, corpus data is usually employed to test these intuitions, even though in the analytic phase data provide an amount of new insights which go beyond intuition and can be later or further tested in controlled experimental procedures, in a cyclical process in which probably no single method or experiment can provide all the proper, satisfactory and complete answers.

This particular nature of linguistic and paralinguistic data is due to the fact that verbal exchanges are managed in a very complex way. Dalton & Seidlhofer (1994: 52) provide a series of factors which participants, as speakers and as listeners, adopt and manipulate in a conversation. Their list includes: (i) "prominence", as the ability of expressing the important points of the message; (ii) "topic management", as the ability to indicate and perceive when one topic ends and a new one starts; (iii) "information status": to signal shared knowledge as opposed to the non-shared information; (iv) "turn-taking", as the speakers' ability of understanding when it is the moment to speak or not, and how and when to "yield the floor to somebody else" or not; (v) "social meanings and roles", concerning social status and its establishment towards interlocutors, according to relationships of "dominance/authority, politeness, solidarity/separateness"; (vi) "degree of involvement", as the speaker's capacity of conveying attitudes, emotions, and so on to his/her interlocutors.

These factors obviously represent only a synthetic abstraction of all the possible ways in which speakers can manage their verbal communication also according to their degree of involvement. Actually, in real conversations the different tools participants may activate in interactions are not of course so definite and distinct, since they may operate at the same time and sometimes even a precise and adequate analysis could not make the researcher identify them.

Nonetheless, the list provided by Dalton & Seidlhofer (1994) enables to observe that in managing conversation speakers move onto a double ground. The first one deals with the linguistic content of the utterances, in terms of relevance and topic management; while the second one is related to a wider dimension which involves social meaning and pragmatic context of communication, associated with socio-cultural background an participant

social roles and status. Moreover, as Dalton & Seidlhofer (1994: 53) claim, “information status and turn-taking, the two aspects in the middle of the list, combine ‘content’ elements and ‘relationship’ elements in a particular impressive way”. Seen from this perspective “discourses may be geared more towards conducting business or towards ‘lubricating’ social relationships”, which they label as “transaction and interaction”, even though they may not be distinguished since acting simultaneously within a speech encounter (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994).

Another particular aspect, involving prosody and pragmatics, to take into account for the objectives of the present research and which deserves more attention, is ‘turn-taking’: the way in which speakers “hold or pass the floor of conversation” (Dalton & Seidlhofer 1994; Bygate 1987; Cook 1989). Research shows that if speakers are sufficiently able and competent they can fulfil good turn-taking tasks, in terms of timing and other factors, such as syntax and lexical choices, extralinguistic and paralinguistic features at the same time, as it is also confirmed by the fact that turn-taking properly functions also when eye-contact among participants is not guaranteed, thus underlining how important and fundamental are some paralinguistic factors such as pitch variation and perceived intensity to the successful transmission of the message.

Intonational turn-taking is also analysed to determine, for instance, cues for the speaker’s attitudes towards his/her willingness to continue or interrupt the conversation or the turn. Furthermore, Cutler & Pearson (1986) have noticed that in conversation, non-low pitch is normally a signal for wanting to establish and continue a turn, and low pitch for giving it up. Whereas Brown *et al.* (1980) have observed that intonational signals can prevail onto the syntactic ones in turn-taking, when speakers use non-low pitch at the end of an utterance to indicate that they want to continue a turn even though the sentence seems syntactically finished. Otherwise when speakers use back-channels and interjections, the employment of high pitch value may be ambiguous since receivers expect a low one for this kind of cooperation signal, in order not to indicate that they are claiming for a turn, but rather that they are listening and comprehending, or even agreeing with what their interlocutors are saying.

Therefore, intonation signals content and topic distribution as well as manages conversational mechanisms. This may happen because intonational and prosodic choices, in general, underlie some socio-semiotic roles that participants play in interactions, which are variably perceived and acknowledged by their receivers. This becomes particularly important when the focus is on how tone, or pitch movements, operates in spoken language conversation where unequal encounters occur in cross-cultural immigration domains and in gate-keeping situations.

That is why to better understand how intonation works in conversations and interactions in general it should be analysed also in reference to its effects on the interactive context. Indeed, some scholars have proposed an innovative approach which associates the study of intonation to the theory of Conversation Analysis (e.g. Ochs *et al.* 1996; Couper-Kuhlen & Selting 1996)

This kind of approach to the analysis of conversation goes beyond a formal analysis of interaction, and takes into account interactional and pragmatic needs underlying the wider context in which speakers interact, using language and prosody to convey also contextual features, such as social class, region of origin, ethnicity, idiosyncrasies and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Actually, as Wichmann (2000: 124) rightly points out, “the role of intonation in this wider sense of interactive meaning has so far over the years been relegated to the unsatisfactory category of the so-called ‘attitudinal intonation’”.

However, works in this sense are still based on a formal, grammatical approach, which is supported by an experimental and highly technological research environment, mainly under controlled conditions. Nowadays studies on phonology make use of both instrumental and auditory analysis and methods which also have their limits, since some data cannot be recognized and observed in instrumental analysis, and obviously computer is not able to distinguish what is linguistically and paralinguistically significant or not, thus requiring the analyst’s intervention.

Ochs *et al.* (1996: 26) instead suggest an innovative approach to the analysis of language, since they believe that interactional and pragmatic needs “play a primary and formative role, rather than a residual one, in the organisation of talk” and thus grammar should be “revisualised as interactional structures that have their own interactional morphology and syntax within and across turns”.

Indeed, the scientific debate about new approaches in considering and studying intonation, and phonology in general, shows that there is a current theoretical perspective which defines intonational phonology as secondary and depending on an underlying syntax-related ‘grammar’ of intonation, which is variably exploited for interactional purposes, and which experiences mere contextual and textual ‘interference’ in its phonological, and thus prosodic, realization.

On the other hand, the theories of Conversation Analysts and Discourse Analysis consider intonation as the main linguistic device applied to fulfil interactional needs and meaning negotiation in spoken interaction. In other words, the method of Conversation Analysis accomplishes the task of determining the various conversational rules and dynamics, such as turn-

taking management and rules, which prosodic and intonational variations largely contribute to convey.

Nevertheless, the various approaches are still restricted to an analysis of interactional mechanisms which often relies basically on the investigation of the interpersonal meaning without considering intonation at all. Actually, the intonational influence on meaning construction still is defined as 'paralinguistic' or 'attitudinal' function which evidently is not sufficient anymore.

This is particularly clear when grammatical, pragmatic and prosodic boundaries may or may not coincide. Nakajima & Allen (1993), for instance, provide quantitative evidence about the contribution of pitch variation in indicating the relations between different utterances, thus assisting the listener in understanding when an utterance is continuing the same topic, or its elaboration or a new topic begins. They collected their data from telephone conversations which yet were simulated under controlled conditions and covered very restricted topic areas. The data were then divided into units according to different factors: grammatical, pragmatic, conversational and prosodic ones. Then the various boundaries between utterances were classified according to the semantic relationship between them: topic shift, topic continuation, elaboration and speech act continuation. These classes also revealed the correlation of different pitch positions and measurements, depending on pitch placed at the beginning, at the highest point and at the end of the utterance.

Other studies, such as Douglas-Cowie & Cowie (1997), make an important attempt to define and observe the correlation between utterances and intonation acting on larger units of conversation. These authors, for example, suggested that, according to their data on conversation moves in business telephone conversations, pitch range variation is widely exploited to signal speaker's level of involvement in the message and toward his/her listeners.

These studies on conversation confirm that speakers involved in a conversation act cooperatively, often using highly structured conventions. One of the most investigated conventions in this sense is turn-taking. This function requires that participants realize when they may hold or take a turn or not. In order to achieve this, they may rely onto a number of different linguistic and extralinguistic factors. First of all they usually are aware of certain behavioural conventions that indicate how reacting to a question or a statement, or a greeting. Then they can rely onto other available tools which enable intonation to combine with semantic and syntactic goals and signals.

Actually, since the latest part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some scholars, such as Yngve (1970), Duncan (1972), Cutler & Person (1986), Couper-Kuhlen (1986), Local (1996), provided interesting studies on the relationship

between intonation and turn taking with reference to semantic and syntactic signals in different communicative interactions and contexts.

Data show that in some cases the choice of intonational contour can influence the evolution of interaction since pitch effects variably convey closing or continuing sense to the listeners, and this appears to be particularly interesting across turns. Moreover, other works show important elements about the role of rhythm in turn-taking (e.g. Couper-Kuhlen 1993) and the role of non-lexical backchannels and their effects (e.g. Müller 1996).

However, Wichmann (2000: 144) admits a certain lack of research effort in studying and investigating “how these (intonational) resources are used to achieve communicative goals beyond conveying propositional meaning and maintaining the conversation itself”. Moreover, since “one of the most important and richest aspect of intonation in conversation is its ‘attitudinal’ function [...] there is a long and honourable tradition in intonation research of providing attitudinal labels to explain the perceived, imagined or predicted effect of intonational features used in a particular context” (Wichmann 2000: 144). She suggests that considering ‘attitude’ as an overlapping synonymous of ‘emotion’ represents a mistake which often has led researchers to misinterpretation errors. Couper-Kuhlen (1986) too tried to solve this terminological problem suggesting a possible distinction between emotion and attitude where ‘emotion’ represents all that can be related to the speaker state and ‘attitude’ to his/her behaviour. Since the time of her terminological and approach innovation, prosodic description of emotions and attitudes has changed and developed, even though studies on perceived attitudes still suffer from a scientific and systematic descriptive lack.

Actually, the most problematic behavioural attitudes are represented by opinions, beliefs or knowledge which often appear to have little in common with ‘behaviour’. These are attitudes which Leech (1983: 106) defines as “psychological attitude(s) towards a state of affairs”.

Therefore, Wichmann (2000) suggests labelling as ‘expressive’ intonation all the intonational realizations which help participants to convey and perceive emotions, also those arising from beliefs, knowledge and opinion. On the contrary ‘attitudinal’ intonation, in her view, refers to any intonational component which contributes to convey in any given context information about the speaker’s behaviour to his/her receivers. This is where prosody meets pragmatics in order to enable researchers to understand and define the role of intonation in interactional encounters.

This new perspective in considering intonation and its role is also confirmed by Knowles (1987: 205-206), reported by Wichmann (2000), who rightly suggests that “it is extremely unlikely that there are any attitudes which are conveyed uniquely by intonation [...]. It is possible that

intonation patterns that are regarded as attitudinally marked use the intonation system in an unexpected way, and possibly in conjunction with other linguistic patterns”.

The pragmatic approach to meaning transmission and perception has been already applied particularly when there is no perceived conformity and coherence between the content of an utterance and the context in which it is realized, for example between the intonational profile and the message, or between the intonational correlates and the communicative context. For instance, in her study about intonational contribution to speakers' meaning management in uncooperative (in a Gricean sense) cases, Thomas (1996: 1) claims that “people do not always or even usually say what they mean. Speakers frequently mean much more than their words actually say”. This can explain why and how much communication is challenging even though is almost always possible. To understand how and in which forms and effects this may happen, linguistic pragmatics should be applied to the study of intonation as well as to any other component of the linguistic system, given its paramount importance in speaker meaning building and conveyance.

Moreover, assumed that conversational rules and behaviours are in a certain sense culture-specific, it is particularly interesting for the present work to investigate whether uncooperativeness perception and production in conversation may be subjected to cross-cultural variations.

Therefore, if a proper pragmatic analysis is applied to a number of speaker ‘attitudes’ in conversation, the investigation of the intonation role in co-operative or uncooperative behaviours may be reconsidered from a more systematic and less approximate perspective. This would enable researchers to establish how miscommunication occurs and above all if it is due to voluntary or involuntary intonational mismatches, or to violation of shared principles, to uncooperative misbehaviours, to speaker different inferences depending on beliefs, prejudices, presuppositions and expectations.

At the present state of art, literature still suggests that a lot of effort should still be dedicated to the pragmatolinguistic investigation of prosody in interactions. As Wichmann (2000: 148) and other scholars rightly claim, “it would be far more useful to concentrate research efforts on looking for correlates of more systematically definable contextual factors, such as those dictated by participant roles and activity types, which explain the interpretation by participants, rather than looking for correlates of the interpretations themselves”.

Special objective of the present research to take into account all the lively background acquired from the recent debate and discussion among scholars in the current phonology area, and to concentrate research investigation of the relationship between the phonological and prosodic correlates and pragmatics, and possible cues for their culture-specificity,

considering ELF and other varieties and/or languages, especially in cross-cultural immigration contexts which so far have been often disregarded and lack of a systematic scientific investigation.

Before presenting aims and objectives of the *phonopragmatic* model here applied to the investigation of ELF communication in cross-cultural immigration domain, a last theoretical piece of this background outline deserves attention, namely that regarding the science of context, pragmatics, here especially related to the theory of speech acts, intentionality and ethnolinguistics.

Actually, as already pointed out, the new phonopragmatic approach, which will be analysed in detail in the following section, aims to interlace the prosodic and phonological dimension of intercultural communication in ELF to the pragmatic setting of cross-cultural encounters, with particular reference to specialized immigration domains.

Therefore, a preliminary outline of the last scientific achievements and research advances in this area is needed to better perceive the importance of the interdisciplinary perspective at the basis of the phonopragmatic model applied to the study of ELF in cross-cultural immigration settings.

#### **2.4. The Pragmatic paradigm: between Pragmalinguistics and Socio-pragmatics**

Pragmatics is the study of the relation between the linguistic structure and its usage in context, and, together with semantics (which studies the relationship between linguistic signs and what they actually represent), generally is considered to be the fundamental part of the theory of ‘meaning’. Within this theory, pragmatics is especially concerned also with communicative inference and what is implicitly meant in utterances.

The use of the term ‘pragmatics’ derives from the philosophical work of Peirce and Carnap (1942, 1956), reinterpreted in Morris’s (1938, 1964) description of semiotics, the science of sign systems, in which three main linguistic areas are taken into account: (i) *syntax*, which investigates the relations among signs; (ii) *semantics*, which investigates the relation of signs to the entities they refer to, and (iii) *pragmatics*, which studies the relation of signs with meaning, context and users. Since then, pragmatics has been mostly and variably employed in sociolinguistic research and in discourse and conversational analysis.

Actually, in contemporary linguistics, pragmatics is often applied to the study of relations between meaning and context. According to this perspective, Levinson (1983), aiming to give a systematic description of the pragmatic research, scope and theories until then, defined different levels of pragmatic analysis, i.e. deixis, presupposition, speech acts, implicature, and

conversational inference, which are particularly relevant also for the present research.

For instance, the use of presuppositions which concern the way in which utterances – already presumed in a discourse context – are usually not stated or questioned, but implied, is crucial in cross-cultural conversation since may easily cause misunderstandings and misinterpretation of meaning.

Nonetheless, Levinson (1983: XI) also questioned “can a pragmatic theory accurately predict just what kind of pragmatic constraints on what kinds of syntactic processes are likely to occur?”. Actually, it is also true that languages have complex systems and strategies for handling, foregrounding and backgrounding information and meaning. Thus the existence of presuppositions, implicatures, inferences and deixis clearly implies that languages are built not just as abstract and idealized systems, but as tools for human communication, as confirmed by the complexity of sentence types (e.g. exclamatives, hortatives, imprecatives, warnings, together with the basic ones, such as statements, questions and imperatives) languages exploit to arrange and communicate meaning and intentionality, according to given contexts and interlocutors.

Therefore, in the last decades pragmatics has come to play a fundamental role in general linguistics firstly because it enables explanations for a number of very important linguistic phenomena. Actually, in the present research it becomes part of an interdisciplinary perspective, which aims to explain, describe and account for different linguistic behaviours in ELF intercultural communication.

The main assumption here is to interface pragmatics with the use of ELF in cross-cultural encounters from a socio-linguistic perspective focused on the phonological outcome of utterances in conversations and interactions. These aspects are distinct but also strictly connected. Pragmatics focuses on the use of language by its users, while sociolinguistics studies language according to its social use. Intercultural communication instead aims at describing processes and dynamics involved in different cultural and linguistic encounters from an ethnographic perspective. The intercultural aspect of studying pragmatics and sociolinguistics contributes to the scientific awareness of various cultural, pragmatic and communicative factors that affect speakers’ behaviour and attitudes towards communication, especially in ELF contexts. This is particularly evident in cross-cultural communication, as confirmed by different conversational rules, pragmalinguistic and prosodic structures, understanding and misunderstanding processes, different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, especially in oral conversation and interaction.

Therefore, the phonopragmatic model aims to define the prosodic and intonational behaviour of intercultural speech acts in ELF starting from

Searle's theory (1969) and a pragmalinguistic perspective, which combines speech act performance (in terms of meaning knowledge and handling, and interpersonal exchange) and the communicative competence which includes not only grammar rules and behaviours but also socio-cultural parameters and factors.

In this sense the new approach actually intends to provide a description and an explanation of how certain intonational patterns make a given speech act different in ELF, in terms of illocutionary and perlocutionary force in utterance according to certain L1-related factors activated both in production and in perception of speech acts in intercultural communication.

This entails that prosody – together with intonation – plays a crucial role in distinguishing the illocutionary force of utterances in intercultural communication. In other words, the prosodic/intonational contour (i.e., nucleus and accent placement, pitch range and pitch direction, silence, and phrasing) emerges as an important, if not fundamental tool signalling the illocutionary force of utterances, since conversational behaviour often reveals a strong degree of spontaneity in the utterance phrasing.

## **2.5. The Pragmatics of Conversation and Speech Acts**

Speech acts can be described as linguistic actions whereby the speaker not only sends a linguistic message to his/her interlocutor but also a communicative intention. This may happen in various morphological, syntactic and phonological forms and patterns, and according to different principles and degree of spontaneity and involvement.

Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory is based on the assumption that utterances may be 'constative' when they are used to describe or establish something, and 'performative' when they not only perform a speech act but also describe the speech act; besides each speech act can be considered from three different perspectives: *locutionary*, *illocutionary*, and *perlocutionary* acts.

A locutionary act "includes the utterance of certain noises, the utterance of certain words in a certain construction and the utterance of them with a certain 'meaning'" (Austin 1962: 94). That is to say, locutionary acts are those acts which convey literal meaning with the help of phrasing and of a given syntax and lexis (e.g., 'Your first request was rejected').

An illocutionary act is viewed as the meaning force inherent in words or sentences of a locutionary act to convey intentionality (by telling an asylum seeker 'Your first request was rejected', his/her lawyer is actually informing and considering for the migrant an appeal to the court in charge).

The perlocutionary act means the consequential effect of the utterance on its receiver or the change in behaviour caused by the utterance (the asylum seeker asks about the appeal because of the lawyer's statement). Unlike illocutionary acts, perlocutionary acts have an external outcome to the act performance, e.g., inspiring, convincing, persuading or deterring.

Based on Austin's Speech Act Theory, Searle (1969) developed a 'linguistic theory' and proposes 'linguistic acts'. However, contrary to Austin, Searle focused his attention on production, interpretation and meaning of an utterance and of a speech act, and investigates what the speaker means, what the utterance wants to convey, what the hearer appreciates and interprets, and the rules governing these linguistic behaviours. Searle (1969) concluded that speech acts are the central linguistic unit of communication, considering them as the starting point for every analysis involving the study of language, meaning, and communication. He also proposes some specific terms that are commonly used, for instance, 'request', 'promise', 'apology', 'compliment', 'complain', or 'invitation', and associates these descriptive terms to different speakers' communicative intentions in producing utterances.

Actually, he defined five classes of speech acts including 'assertives', 'directives', 'commissives', 'expressives', and 'declarations'. In other words, he believed that pragmatics derives from the assumption that while speaking words are very much affected by the context (which implies a number and a range of diverse factors), the speaker and the listener involved in the interaction. Thus words alone do not have a simple fixed and communicative meaning.

More specifically, Searle's subclassification of speech acts distinguished: (i) *representatives* (speech acts that represent statements in varying degrees of truth with respect to the proposition, often signalled by verbs such as state, believe, conclude, deny, report); (ii) *commissives* (speech acts that commit the speaker– in varying degrees – to a future action as signalled by the propositional content by means of verbs such as 'promise', 'pledge', 'vow', 'swear', 'threat'); (iii) *directives* (speech acts which attempt to get the addressee to perform some action: e.g. commanding, insisting, daring, requesting, challenging, asking, requesting); (iv) *declaratives* (speech acts that aim to change a state of the external reality by phrasing the utterance, e.g. marrying, naming, blessing, arresting); and (v) *expressives* (speech acts that indicate the speaker's psychological state and feeling or mental attitude towards/about a state or an action, often signalled by verbs such as 'welcome', 'deplore', 'greet', 'thank', 'congratulate', 'apologize').

In addition, in the light of his idea of 'intentionality' (defined as the ability of minds to represent and interpret realities, properties and states) applied to Speech Act Theory, Searle (1975, 1983) further proposed

‘indirect speech acts’ and suggested that formulating and understanding the indirectness of an utterance implies the speaker’s and hearer’s mutually shared knowledge, along with the hearer’s ability of inference. The use of indirect speech acts, which is also linked with politeness reasons, can help or hinder interlocutors to achieve an effective and successful communication, especially when knowledge and meaning are not mutually shared by interlocutors.

Based on Austin’s and Searle’s Speech Act Theory, some relevant consequent theories have been developed in the last decades, such as Grice’s Theory of Conversational Implicature and Cooperative Principles (1989), Lakoff’s Politeness Rules (1973) and Leech’s Politeness Principles (1983).

The philosopher H. P. Grice (1975) notes that there are different ways in which meaning can be communicated, all of which derive from background assumptions about how language should be used. Therefore, he formulates a set of maxims of conversation, with related submaxims: the maxim of Quality (‘Say what you believe to be true’), the maxim of Relevance (‘Make what you say relevant and timely’), the maxim of Quantity (‘Don’t say more or less than is required’), and the maxim of Manner (‘Be brief and clear’).

Therefore, the Gricean Cooperative Principle (CP), defined as “conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange” (Grice 1975: 45), along with the conversational maxims, accounts for conversational implicatures, whereby speakers assume that their interlocutor is being cooperative and following the four maxims, enabling him/her to make implicatures about what is said.

Lakoff (1973) also added two rules of pragmatic competence: “be clear” and “be polite” (Lakoff 1973: 298) and three rules of politeness which may vary from culture to culture: *formality* (distance, impersonality), *deference* (giving option, hesitancy), *camaraderie* (informality, being friendly and showing sympathy).

While, Leech (1983) builds his pragmatic theory overtaking the Politeness Principles which he considered to “minimize (all things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs; maximize (all things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs” (Leech 1983: 81). Actually, Leech assumed that in conversation participants should follow the politeness principles: (i) Tact, (ii) Generosity, (iii) Approbation, (iv) Modesty, (v) Agreement, (vi) Sympathy; providing also a new perspective on the interpersonal role of the cooperative principle and introducing the ‘tact maxim’ as a kind of politeness principle in the interpersonal rhetoric construction.

Although modern versions of ‘implicature theory’ use somewhat different ‘maxims’, they accept Grice’s idea that the background principles

of language, if properly used and applied by speakers, can generate many inferences that may be suggested by what is said. Actually, there are two main perspectives in the contemporary theories derived from Grice. One, following a cognitive approach, assumes that these background principles are innate cognitive mechanisms of information processing (cf. the ‘Relevance theory’ by Sperber & Wilson 1987, 2004). The other approach follows Grice more closely, and suggests that these principles derive from natural characteristics of communication. The former approach is more generally concerned with the nature of inference in communication, while the second “Neo-Gricean” line has been developed especially to give explanations of linguistic events and establishes new principles and versions of quantity, manner and relevance maxims (cf. Levinson 2000; Horn 2004).

## **2.6. The Pragmatics of Intercultural Communication**

From the previous theoretical profile about pragmatics, it is easily predictable the assumption that communication is, by its very beginning and by its own nature, culturally relative. This means that meaning and experience are communicated, especially in oral conversation, as acquired in the specific speech community which the speaker tends to socially identify with. That is to say, speakers in different communities have different ways of using linguistic tools and strategies to communicate goals and intentions, and these ways of communicating, generally, like other cultural patterns, delimit them as a community. Nonetheless communication often reveals that this definition is not so clear-cut, especially when speakers show not to have exactly the same communicative behaviour and background. In other words, all communication can be considered cross-cultural, since it is affected by idiolectal and idiosyncratic peculiarities, before than cultural one. Therefore, it becomes clear that understanding and co-constructing cross-cultural communication not only means comprehending language, but also ‘perceiving’ cultures, people and all their world of experience and meaning.

In addition, a pragmatic perspective may be applied to many other phenomena, for example register, style, and other socio-linguistic variations, also involved in cross-cultural communication, such as code-switching and mixing, politeness and other social constraints. The investigation of all these and previous factors reveals some important relations between socio-semiotic systems and their contexts of use in intercultural communication. Firstly, any sign or linguacultural system is actually coded in culture-bound linguistic expressions and behaviours, which however are not the only contributors to the constructing and transferring of meaning in context, since they are further adapted and employed according to certain degree of

spontaneity, intentionality and other aspects also related to the use of a lingua franca system of communication.

Actually, independently from different degrees of proficiency and exposure to the English language, cross-cultural communication in ELF often reveals different pragmatic behaviours in producing various speech acts that may reduce or hinder the communicative intent and process. In other words, in ELF a well-constructed speech act in the L1 culture may be rendered into another in a way that potentially could result inappropriate or odd, causing misunderstanding or communication breakdown, or even offence during an intercultural conversation. Hence, it becomes evident how it could be crucial for successful communication between linguaculturally different interlocutors the use and knowledge of proper speech acts, if not the idea of a theory of ELF speech acts in specialized communication contexts.

Considerable research shows to what extent all the previous theories and assumptions have made great contributions to the study of language used in intercultural communication (e.g. Cohen & Olshtain 1981; Scollon & Scollon 2001; Bowe & Martin 2007). Speech Act Theory, thus, may be adequately applied to the investigation of language in communication and the description of the linguistic construction of utterances and meaning.

The theoretical contribution to the conception of politeness are of crucial importance, also for the present research, since it tends to vary across cultures, thus causing different ways of building and performing speech acts which may result in pragmatic failure in cross-cultural settings. In other words, understanding and facing these differences becomes fundamental in performing and assuring effective and successful intercultural communication.

It is also true that understanding the connections between culture and communication is essential to the improvements of intercultural interactions as well. Successful communication not only involves the participants' mutual understanding but also the polite and proper verbal exchanges. Evidence shows that people with different cultural backgrounds find it particularly difficult to communicate with each other (Fielding 2006); moreover, interactions involving speakers from different cultures using a lingua franca may experience misconstructions and misunderstandings more easily than those who share the same linguacultural background, also because meaning and understanding in some utterances are associated with culturally specific implicit conventions, presuppositions and implicatures. This means that, especially in ELF, a pragmatic and communicative flexibility is very important for the speakers to comprehend the implied meanings behind speech acts to achieve a satisfactory communication between culturally different interlocutors, even more in specialized domains (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz 1982).

Different authors claimed the importance of ‘flexibility’ as an indispensable component of communication competence (e.g. Parks 1994; Sullivan 2002; Chen & Starosta 2008; Wardhaugh 2009). Actually, in the intercultural interaction settings, ELF competent communicators should be able to adapt their communicative knowledge, strategies and behaviours to deal with different situations, with the most effective and appropriate tactics and results. Evidence will show that the lack of such flexibility may cause severe cases of communication breakdown in some intercultural interactions in ELF since culturally different speakers tend to depend very heavily on their own cultural background when telling, explaining or interpreting reality through speech. It should be therefore advisable to consider that potential ELF learners and mediators need to develop their communicative flexibility, the ability to cross and bridge cultural boundaries.

Actually, some linguists such as Allan (1986) and Van Ek (1975), investigating the use of ELF in Chinese immigration contexts, claimed that in intercultural communication, any illocutionary speech act is produced according to L1 illocutionary force, and, when translated into the target language or in ELF, hearers’ perlocutionary attitude and inclination may be of various kinds and thus affect the utterance interpretations. To explain this aspect, Van Ek (1975) reports the example of greetings between native speakers of English (e.g. ‘Good morning’, ‘Hello, how are you’) and the Chinese context, where two very common greetings could be translated to ‘Have you eaten?’ and ‘Where are you going?’. It seems obviously clear that if such utterances are performed towards native speakers of English or even ELF ones (unaware of these intercultural dynamics) as a greeting, they might be felt as inquiring or even be misinterpreted as an invitation (Gass & Neu 1996).

Thus, misunderstanding between two interlocutors who do not share the same culture can easily occur because of discrepancies not only in the illocutionary and perlocutionary force of an utterance, but also due to the disparity of interpretation in conveying this force in ELF. Actually Pearce (1994) confirms that speakers with different cultural backgrounds may appreciate a performative speech act in different ways.

Therefore, important differences related to speech acts should be taken into account, especially for the scope of the present research, by language mediators who operate using ELF. Those differences include differences in the range of speech acts that speakers derive from their L1 pragmalinguistic background, in the interlinguistic diversity of speech acts, in rules and processes of performing speech acts, in the conveyance/acceptance of new meaning and in attitudes and feelings to the conversation matter and issues, often implying power asymmetries and personal or social distance.

A language mediator needs to handle these differences so as to develop the ability of performing appropriate speech acts in different contexts and understanding those of his/her interlocutor using ELF.

However, identifying the illocutionary force of speech acts is rather difficult and challenging. For instance, Olshtain & Cohen (1983) specifically introduce a 'speech act set' which refers to the common ways in which a certain speech act can be patterned. They suggested that speech acts should be considered as sets of formulas which act according to the same aim and intention. Considering the speech act of apology, Olshtain & Cohen (1983) propose five strategies in performing an apology, including an expression ('I am really sorry'), an admission of responsibility ('it is my fault'), an excuse/explanation ('I couldn't catch the bus'), an offer to repair ('I will buy another container') and a promise of non-recurrence ('I will never do it again'). According to those strategies, Gass & Neu (1996) assumed that if speakers can control the speech act sets for a certain speech act in the language used for intercultural conversation and interactions, they will be more likely to become successful speech acts users.

Moreover, different cultures, even different communities in the same culture, may have different rules in producing speech acts, so it is very important for a mediator to know and understand the sets of formulas associated with the speech acts in intercultural communication. Besides understanding the cultural differences between the source language and the target language, foreign language and ELF learners need not only to acquire speech act knowledge as a fundamental tool both of communicative performance and of language acquisition, but also to understand the sets of L1 constraints transferred to the target language or the variety used to achieve successful communication (e.g. Canale & Swain 1980; Flor & Juan 2010; Yalden 1987).

In other words, although speech acts have been often considered universal, linguistic research reveals that they can vary across languages and cultures. This cross-cultural difference suggests further socio-cultural differences at the basis of language used interculturally and it is at this level that communication breakdown and failure find their origin.

Cross-cultural studies on speech acts have been carried out since the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (e.g. Blum-Kulka *et al.* 1989; Olshtain & Cohen 1989; Holmes 1990; Suszczyńska 1999). Olshtain & Cohen (1989) precisely compared apologies in four different languages using a discourse completion test (DCT). They found common uses and tendencies in the speech act of apologising according to different communicative settings. On the other hand, Suszczyńska (1999) analysed data drawn from a small corpus of English, Hungarian, and Polish, created from written responses to DCTs. In her analysis she focused her attention on the differences in the

realisation of apologies in answering not only in the selection and sequential arrangement of strategies, but also in the linguistic form.

Other authors, such as Trosborg (1987), investigated the importance of sociolinguistic competence. She analysed data from a corpus of 300 conversations realized by means of role-plays constructed on anticipated illocutionary acts of complaints and apologies. She concluded that 'sociopragmatic strategies are transferred from one language to another' (Trosborg 1987: 153). Lipson (1994) analysed apology strategies in American English and compared them with the Italian version using the framework developed by Owen (1983) for the analysis of remedial strategies and also Olshtain and Cohen's semantic formulas (Olshtain & Cohen 1983). Lipson (1994) uses an American television sitcom as instrument for data collection showing it to ten Italian students who had to rewrite the respective apology episode for an appropriate Italian audience. In the cross-analysis of the original script and the student's versions, she finds some similarities in the responses of both groups but also some cultural differences in the use of formulas – according to Owen's (1983) framework. She provided evidence for the predominance of forgiveness requests in Italian utterances contrary to the strategies preferred in English, where expressions of regret and the minimizing of an offence by means of jokes and irony are predominant. Therefore, Lipson (1994) suggested that in an Italian context the expression of self-reproach is preferred in situations when the offence is perceived as very hard by the apologizer and reproach is expected. She also concluded that the speakers' cultural assumptions, interpretations, attitudes and expectations play an important role in their apology communication processes and strategies.

Palma-Fahey (2005) compares data collected from an Irish soap opera and a Chilean one by means of a qualitative and quantitative analysis. She investigates differences in socio-pragmatic implications for meaning and intercultural communication starting from extracts of data containing the speech act of apologising.

Márquez (2000) also realizes an important cross-cultural investigation of apologies. She compared British and Uruguayan contexts using role-plays to determine similarities and/or differences in the realisation patterns of apologies (and requests). Her findings confirmed Blum-Kulka *et al.* (1989) who claimed that common forms of apology and strategies of expressing responsibility are both employed in different degrees across all communicative contexts in both languages.

Moreover, Meier (1998) analyses findings concerning apology behaviour in English. She compares her data according to distribution of strategies, degree of mitigation, severity and type of offence, effect of gender and of interlocutor relationship. She concludes that the differences reported in her case-studies are dependent on the kind of strategies, speakers

and the methods of data collection. Meier (1998) reports a lack of attention and definite focus on the relation between culture and language in the study of speech acts, apart from the important empirical investigation and analysis of apologies in cross-cultural communication. A relation which she considers of great importance since it permits to establish “values and beliefs as they inform perceptions of linguistic appropriateness” (Meier 1998: 227).

Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993) suggests that Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) may be considered a subsection of pragmatics as the study of “non-native speakers’ use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language” (Kasper & Blum-Kulka 1993: 3). Different works by scholars such as Gumperz (1982), Tannen (1985), Clyne (1979), Cline *et al.* (1991), Blum-Kulka (1991), Blum-Kulka & Sheffer (1993), demonstrate a new scientific interest towards cross-cultural communication, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatic behaviour of immigrant communities.

In the last decades, communication strategies often have been studied from a psycholinguistic perspective while interlanguage pragmatics has derived from empirical observation of cross-cultural communication, focusing on illocutionary and politeness aspects of speech act production and performance. Carrell (1979), for instance, shows that L2 speakers are able to manage conversational implicatures and make use of inference in the production and perception of indirect speech acts. Bouton (1988), on the other hand, tries to study the comprehension process of indirect answers and the influence of the speakers’ L1 socio-cultural background, especially among native speakers of American English and Asian immigrants.

Moreover research has focused its interest and effort on the investigation of “negative” transfer, i.e. the influence of L1 pragmatic competence on the interlanguage pragmatic knowledge, precisely analyzing status relationships, apologies, refusals, compliments, invitations, politeness management in cross-cultural communication (e.g. Olshtain 1983; House 1988; Wolfson 1989; Beebe *et al.* 1990; Robinson 1992; Eisenstein & Bodman 1993). Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993: 11) however underlined that “negative pragmatic transfer does not necessarily reflect lack of competence in the pragmatics of the target community” and rather in a cross-cultural communication context “the desirable goal for the high-proficiency second language speaker, be it in contexts of immigration or in the use of L2 in cross-cultural communication, may well be that of disidentification, rather than absolute convergence” (Kasper & Blum-Kulka 1993: 11).

Other studies in interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Erickson & Shultz 1982; Gumperz 1982; Tannen 1981, 1985; Scollon & Scollon 1983) have contributed to the research on miscommunication deriving from speakers’ different pragmatic use of convention and style in cross-cultural interactions especially in gate-keeping situations.

In the study of pragmatic failure, Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993) distinguish three main approaches to be considered. Firstly, the micro-sociolinguistics that applied a qualitative analysis to encounters taking into account diverse factors, from prosody to lexis and syntax, which however is not able to give reason for the origin of differences in the speakers' conversational style. Secondly, the contrastive pragmatics focused on the cross-cultural comparison of speech act patterns which however was not able to go beyond a descriptive approach. On the other hand, based on Selinker's (1972) research, interlanguage pragmatics was developed in the very last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the aim of accounting for transfer and communication conflicts arising in cross-cultural communication among speakers of different languages in America, Asia, Australia and Europe (cf. Clyne 1979; Fraser *et al.* 1980; Kasper 1981; Blum-Kulka 1982; Erickson & Shultz 1982; Schmidt 1983; Tannen 1985; Eisenstein & Bodman 1986; Knapp *et al.* 1987; Olshtain & Cohen 1989) with particular reference to cognitive approaches to interlanguage pragmatics, speech act realization, and discourse processes in a socio-political perspective.

So far fundamental contributions and advances in the pragmatic research and theories of the last decades have been introduced as a background application to the phonopragmatic model of intercultural communication in ELF performed by speakers of different socio-cultural and pragmalinguistic backgrounds.

The last achievements in the field of speech act theories, intentionality and meaning transfer applied to the intercultural communication and interlanguage pragmatic competence shall be here investigated from an interdisciplinary perspective aimed to give new insights into the methodology of intercultural language mediation in immigration contexts.

### **3. The Phonopragmatic Model and the Research Method**

#### **3.1. *Phonopragmatic Dimensions of ELF in Immigration Domains***

A great interest in the pragmatic dimensions involved in cross-cultural communication through ELF, with particular reference to immigration contexts, is at the basis of this ethnomethodological research.

Based on the previous theoretical background regarding the latest advances in the study of ELF and its variations, as well as the recent achievements both in the phonology of intonation and prosody, and in intercultural pragmatics, the Phonopragmatic Model of ELF is applied to a specialized migration fieldwork with the ultimate objective of developing

frames to enhance mediators' intercultural communication competences in ELF.

Actually, the increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers constantly moving to the Italian and European territories feeds the need to fill in the lack of attention for intercultural pragmatics with particular reference to cross-cultural linguistic mediation processes in specialized discourse employing ELF variations.

Hence the interactional processes here analysed are those that occur within specialized domains where non-native speakers of English, namely Western professionals (such as legal advisors, intercultural mediators and welfare officers) and non-Western immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, interact through the use of ELF variations for specialized and professional purposes.

More precisely, the use of ELF in situations of unequal encounters (Guido 2008) between non-Western participants (i.e., immigrants and asylum seekers) and Western experts (i.e., Italian/European mediators), is here explored both in the production and in the perception process by means of a new phonopragmatic perspective.

In other words, the phonopragmatic approach aims at exploring prosodic and auditory processes involved in cross-cultural communication, with particular attention to both illocutionary intentions and perlocutionary effects (Levinson 1983; Searle 1969, 1983) of the speakers in intercultural interactions as they adopt ELF prosodic strategies of: (i) marked speech segmentation in pragmatic acts, (ii) prosodic segmentation of these acts into intonation units, and (iii) acoustic variations in their use of syntactic, lexical and pragmatic features, especially if related to socio-cultural backgrounds and L1 interferences (cf. Guido 2008).

Guido (2008) applies Carrell's (1983) Schema Theory of second language comprehension to cross-cultural communication and provides a particularly interesting categorization of L1 schemata, meant as "background knowledge of culturally-determined linguistic and social behaviours" (Guido 2008: 22) which speakers possess and inevitably transfer – together with their semantic and pragmatic values – to their cross-cultural interactions in ELF, in everyday spoken conversations as well as in specialized encounters.

These aspects are particularly significant for the phonopragmatic paradigm which therefore attempts to describe, on the one hand, the close relationship between prosody and pragmatics, and, on the other, the role played by prosody and intonational correlates in the transfer of L1 socio-cultural 'schemata' in cross-cultural conversational interactions as speakers perform speech acts and fulfil different levels of intentionality in specialized domains.

More specifically, phonopragmatics is a pragmatic-oriented phonological exploration of the speaker's illocutionary acts in ELF cross-cultural communication. Hence the aim of this approach is to identify (i) possible cases or areas of miscommunication in cross-cultural specialized settings; (ii) processes of intercultural mediation in the production and perception of speech acts through the agency of specialized intercultural mediators.

Therefore, for an appropriate phonopragmatic analysis it is crucial to understand (i) how prosody and phonology are affected by pragmatics and how they in turn affect the perception and interpretation of the message, and (ii) how native-language syntactic and stylistic structures are transferred to the use of ELF varieties and to which extent they influence its production and perception and, as a consequence, enhance cross-cultural communication.

The ultimate intention of this approach is to investigate, by means of an ethnographic fieldwork (Hymes 1996), the socio-cultural factors that affect intercultural communication, as well as the perlocutionary effects – in terms of cognitive accessibility, socio-cultural, ethical and religious acceptability (de Beaugrande & Dressler 1981) – produced by cross-cultural interactions involving participants from both Western and non-Western speech communities.

In this perspective, phonopragmatics aims also at exploring the employment and the influence of prosodic strategies in an attempt to develop more comprehensive insight into ELF variations and its uses, which, as already seen, to date are based almost exclusively on a monolingualistic perspective.

Besides, in order to understand the reasons which lead or can lead to intercultural miscommunication in specialized contexts, this approach attempts to define how prosody – and phonology in general – are affected by pragmatics and how they affect syntax, lexis, style and consequently the perception of the message.

Ultimately, special attention will be paid to the possibility of transferring the conclusions, derived from the phonopragmatic approach and analysis, to everyday mediation contexts with the aim of providing European intercultural mediators with linguistic, non-linguistic and paralinguistic suggestions that may help them to become aware of the fact that even the use of certain prosodic features and behaviour facilitate, or even influence, the successful process of meaning construction and then of mutual comprehension from both interacting sides.

Actually, experts in intercultural communication should be aware of the processes at the basis of discourse construction in multicultural encounters, where interpreting, and translation as well, cannot be a literal and automatic transferring of L1 semantic structures onto the ELF

variations. Rather, they should be involved in a cross-cultural mediation process by which all speakers' socio-cultural and individual identities, as well as pragmatic aims and intentionality, are respected and properly communicated.

Therefore, in this research process, the phonopragmatic approach is applied to the use of ELF variations by experts, mediators and migrants in Italian welfare offices, and in reference to: (i) cross-cultural conversation analysis of speech acts in oral, spoken and spontaneous interactions; (ii) extralinguistic influences due to native sociocultural 'schemata' (such as background information; speaker's goals and attitudes towards a subject; audience and addressees); (iii) intercultural paralinguistics employed in mediation processes (in terms of suprasegmental and acoustic features, prosodic features, but also kinesics, and proxemics).

The objectives of this investigation are aimed at identifying possible acoustic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic patterns and behaviours hindering successful cross-cultural mediation in ELF variations used by participants, and at defining phonopragmatic mediation strategies to avoid miscommunication in intercultural communication and overcome possible sociocultural 'schema' boundaries and barriers.

As it will be examined in depth in the next chapter, the phonopragmatic approach employs a qualitative method of ethnographic data collection in intercultural migration contexts involving asylum-seekers, refugees, language mediators and legal advisors, by means of the audio recording and the subsequent acoustic analysis of the participants' conversations in naturalistic contexts.

More precisely, the unequal encounters under investigation are those taking place at legal advice centres, where intercultural mediators and mediation trainees operate together with professionals employing ELF and sometimes Italian Lingua-Franca as well.

It is therefore evident that the phonopragmatic approach attempts here to shed light to the analysis of specialized spoken interactions through ELF in immigration domains, which have been mostly neglected by recent research frameworks and are often characterized by 'gatekeeping' asymmetries between the participants in interactions, where achieving successful communication through mutual accommodation strategies appears rather challenging, if not sometimes problematic.

The phonopragmatic approach should reveal how ELF users, involved in intercultural encounters, differently appropriate the English language not only according to their own different native linguacultural 'schemata', but also to specific pragmalinguistic goals and processes. This crucial aspect will be pointed out by a range of prosodic and auditory behaviours activated in cross-cultural domains and entailing speakers' illocutionary and pragmatic intentions.

The cross-linguistic acoustic analysis applied by means of different levels of speech investigation (i.e. pitch, formant and intensity analysis, identification and discrimination tests, and speech manipulation) should disclose the use of prosodic strategies by ELF speakers from different L1 backgrounds, which will clarify (i) how existing L1 prosodic and acoustic variations (in terms of e.g. stress, intonation, speech rate, and disfluency) are redefined in the use of an ELF variation; (ii) to what extent the resulting L1 phonological transfers affect the ELF variations (in terms of phonological phrasing, syntactic and lexical choices); (iii) how meaning, experience and understanding are mediated and cross-culturally constructed in interactions through phonopragmatic strategies; and (iv) the role played by prosody and paralinguistics in the negotiation of speakers' attitudes, emotions, and socio-cultural 'schemata'.

Actually, intercultural communication means dealing with different cultures and speakers' own perceptions, beliefs, values and social customs which greatly affect their communicative attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, it is not surprising that cross-cultural interactions often reveal difficulties and challenging obstacles in understanding and successfully communicating with one another, especially in specialized, professional domains.

As Brown (1986) claims, communication is a "risky business" above all since it entails a process of thorough and multi-level interaction.

Therefore, phonopragmatics attempts to find patterns and pragmatic strategies applied to cross-cultural communication by means of intonational, prosodic and paralinguistic devices and variations, in addition to linguistic and segmental ones.

Case studies from professional intercultural communicative domains will demonstrate to what extent it is necessary to pay attention to several dynamics that govern expectations, values, social behaviour and cultural 'schemata', as well as conventional norms and etiquette. In cross-cultural communication through ELF variations, indeed, respecting etiquette and some degree of kindness and politeness is sometimes challenged, if not misunderstood, and not always do interlocutors involved in interaction feel comfortable and self-confident.

Studying intercultural communication and mediation processes entails an interdisciplinary empirical research which encompasses the very last advances both in interlanguage pragmatics (e.g. Leech 1983; Thomas 1983; Faerch & Kasper 1984; Kasper 1992, 1996) and in pragmatic transfer theory (Kasper & Dahl 1991; Kasper & Blum-Kulka 1993; Kasper & Schmidt 1996).

Kasper's classification of pragmatic transfer into pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic – derived from Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) – considers the former as a linguistic means of conveying intentionality and

illocutionary values, and the latter as a socially approved and culture-bound linguistic behaviour. Therefore, the investigation of different types of intercultural pragmatic transfer in migration contexts may reveal interesting evidence for pragmatic failure and communication breakdown due to misinterpreted L1 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic forms and structures used in ELF.

This obviously means that NNS and ELF mediators should be aware of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic similarities and differences between their source and target languages in order to understand and identify cues for pragmatic transfer and possible negative communicative outcomes while mediating in gatekeeping situations.

Seen from this perspective, phonopragmatics should account for different ways in which linguistic and non-linguistic transfer may influence the comprehension and the conveyance of meanings in a given unequal immigration context. Moreover, it should make clear linguistic, non-linguistic and paralinguistic conditions under which semantic and pragmatic transfers and possible miscommunication take place in ELF.

### ***3.2. Intonational and Prosodic Pragmatics of cross-cultural interactions***

Intercultural communication scholars such as Hill (2009), Chen (2010a and b) and Zhang (2010), mainly focused on Western vs. non-Western intercultural competence and ELT, have examined many dimensions of intercultural communication competence which often overlap and have been generally defined as: (a) Personal Attributes, (b) Communication Skills, (c) Psychological Adaptation, and (d) Cultural Awareness.

More specifically, with ‘personal attributes’ it is generally meant the ability to be self-confident in social interaction and the ability to be receptive and accommodating with others. On the other hand, ‘communication skills’ refer to all the abilities to send and receive messages along with the ability to demonstrate social skills. ‘Cultural awareness’ involves the understanding and acceptance of socio-cultural varieties and different parameters, while ‘psychological adaptation’ focuses on the ability to face and deal with problems related to intercultural processes such as frustration, disappointment, stress, cultural shock, alienation and ambiguity which are caused by the encounter and overlapping of cultural differences.

Based on these assumptions, recent studies have been mainly devoted to the failure of some international business encounters because of crucial and significant factors. Actually, research has revealed a lack of intercultural skills and competence, as well as inexperience to communicate

successfully at a global level, and to practice acceptable and correct social behaviours during business negotiations.

Therefore, the attention of research studies on intercultural communication has focused mostly on business and trade dynamics involving speakers of ELF from different countries, thus revealing the need for appreciating the importance of understanding cultures and values of the counterparts as well as developing a certain degree of intercultural communication sensitivity. This is the case of several studies which strongly recommend appropriate practices and acceptable attitudes and communicative behaviours involving, for instance English, German, and Japanese speakers during intercultural encounters in global business (e.g. Troyanovich 1972; Tinsley & Woloshin 1974; Morrison et al. 1994; Early 1997; Harper 1997; Axtell 1998; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi 1998; Brett 2001; Budhwar 2001; Cardon & Scott 2003; Mole 2003; Martin & Chaney 2006; Chaney & Martin 2007; Carte & Fox 2008; O'Rourke 2010). These studies often reveal that success in international globalized trade and business is affected by important intercultural communication skills acquired by participants in interaction to understand appropriate business behaviours, customs, and values needed to conduct successfully business processes among nations using ELF.

Nonetheless, as a number of authors have indicated, the attention is mainly focused on understanding cultural differences as well as intercultural communication competence activated during businesses to enable multinational and multicultural managers to bridge the communication gap among countries involved in international trade and business negotiations.

As a consequence, and in the light of the advantages and challenges of the globalized business operations in the twenty-first century, multinational organizations and companies have devoted important efforts to learn, understand, and appreciate different cultural habits and appropriate correct social behaviours, promoting training courses for managers aimed at conducting successful business transactions in order to establish lasting strategic relationships and business.

Although, on the other hand, research has mostly neglected scientific investigation in the development of intercultural competence, and multicultural sensitivity for the success of communicative practices, transactions, and negotiations among speakers involved in migration contexts concerning welfare.

Furthermore, so far, pragmatic cues of prosodic and intonational aspects of intercultural communication have been often neglected by the scientific investigation since speech signals appear quite difficult to be analysed and codified in spontaneous occurrences which inevitably are enormously different from the artificial laboratory settings mainly employed for the phonological research and experimentation.

Therefore, the phonopragmatic design applied to specialized migration contexts where ELF variations are employed aims at bridging the gap and the lack of attention for some crucial pragmatic and communicative aspects of spoken interactions involving the ongoing formation process of the Italian multicultural society.

Actually, studying and analysing spontaneous, unsupervised speech could lead to a totally different manner of considering and understanding how intercultural communication works, since spontaneous speech very often reveals sequences, structures and habits entailing pragmalinguistic and socio-cultural phenomena that could rarely be predicted.

In other words, speech may be represented as a complex continuum ranging from a total surveillance to an uncontrolled naturalness. For example, one can consider the so called “clear speech” (Bradlow & Bent 2002; Smiljanić & Bradlow 2009), used in L2 teaching contexts, which may appear more careful than the typical read speech used for experimental designs. On the other end, spontaneous and informal conversation among friends or at home with no microphone or recorder could also be characterized by unrestrained and unchecked utterances. Along this continuum, several types of speech at different levels of spontaneity may occur: careful or laboratory speech, read speech, non-read speech, structured speech, connected speech, spontaneous speech, and conversational speech.

Therefore, “natural speech” could be generally defined as the other end of this continuum, but researchers do not converge on the same meaning assigned to the term “natural” which hence is left rather unclear if not ambiguous.

This is the reason why researching on the spontaneous continuum of speech requires a great amount of effort and unpredictability and should take into account voice overlapping and several phonological phenomena and processes variably applied by speakers in conversation for diverse – often unconscious – pragmalinguistic goals and purposes.

More precisely, the phonopragmatic analysis of cross-cultural spoken interactions and mediation processes will be applied through the investigation of different spontaneously occurring prosodic and intonational parameters which would account for corresponding pragmatic behaviours and equivalent intentional attitudes during specialized encounters through ELF.

Acoustic variations and parameters of special value for the phonopragmatic approach are pitch falling, pitch acoustic and perceptive realization, intensity, left/right boundaries, vowel and word timing within intonation phrases, word and sentence stress, intonational phrasing in production and perception, contour typologies and patterns, pause and

silence timing and information, sentence information structure, rate of speech, and sentence length.

The phonopragmatic analysis applied to the acoustic and auditory investigation of spontaneous speech recorded during cross-cultural mediation encounters in specialized domains thus would account for lexical, syntactic and above all pragmatic choices performed by speakers involved in particularly stressful interactions when migrants, professionals and mediators differently fulfil their speech acts unconsciously applying L1 phonopragmatic structures and constraints to their use of ELF. This automatic and subtle mechanism ultimately would explain and justify misunderstandings and misinterpretations often resulting in severe communication breakdown.

### **3.3. Paralinguistic aspects of intercultural mediation processes**

Phonopragmatics interlaces pragmatic and prosodic behaviours to different paralinguistic dimensions of the intercultural communicative process as well.

Generally speaking, linguists and many speech researchers (e.g. Lindblad 1992; Roach *et al.* 1998; Traunmüller 2000 2001; Quast 2001; Carlson 2002) differentiate linguistic information, intended as the linguistic code used intentionally by the speaker for communication purposes on the one hand, and all other non-linguistic and non-verbal information on the other. Such information is as fundamental as the linguistic one since non-linguistic signals necessarily convey further meaning, which sometimes may be even opposite to the linguistic message. Such information varies according to the speaker, the listener(s) and the communicative situation, and in literature it is generally referred to as paralinguistic, extra-linguistic or non-linguistic (e.g. Traunmüller 2001).

It will be quite obvious to what extent understanding paralinguistic may appear crucial and problematic in cross-cultural communicative dimensions where a range of diverse L1-related paralinguistic, non-verbal and extralinguistic parameters and tactics are involved and activated.

Roach *et al.* (1998) distinguish paralinguistics – intended as the variety of features used intentionally by speakers in interactions – from non-linguistic features as those that cannot be used intentionally, such as age, sex, mood, health. Moreover they further classify non-linguistic features into (i) personal variations, due to the physiology (e.g. size, weight) and histology (age) of the vocal tract, which affect the phonological realization of speech, and (ii) reflexes, defined as involuntary and partially unconscious reactions to an emotional state, such as clearing the throat, sniffs, yawns, laughs, cries, and sighs.

Otherwise Mixdorff (2002) divides prosodic information in oral communication into three categories. Linguistic information includes lexical stress, tone, accent, sentence type, focus structure and segmentation, while paralinguistic information regards speaker attitude, intention, and sociolect, whereas non-linguistic cues account for emotions and mood, speaking style, intentionality and speech acts, attitude towards the object or the context of the conversation.

Since prosody is variably used to signal both linguistic and paralinguistic information, and it shares most of its correlates with paralinguistics, scholars have often regarded paralinguistic phonetics as a subset to prosody. The phonopragmatic approach will confirm this perspective in an attempt to account for different prosodic and paralinguistic phenomena occurring in the use of ELF variations.

### *3.3.1 Paralinguistic implications: kinesics*

Cross-cultural communication is a challenging process by which people not always are willing to convey their thoughts, feelings and ideas to a target audience as well as their messages with clarity without leaving room for any ambiguity.

Moreover, since communication takes place both verbally and non-verbally, it is of particular importance understanding nuances of body language, prosodic and proxemic dynamics and paralinguistic devices, especially in a cross-cultural context where unequal socio-cultural and role dynamics occur.

This is particularly evident when considering some cultural behaviours through which people hold their physical space with particular accuracy. In such situations, any transgression into the space of another can result in the sudden communication breakdown, which can have severe consequences in a cross-cultural specialized communicative context. This is particularly true for cross-cultural encounters involving professionals and asylum seekers and refugees who very often are particularly sensitive to these aspects since they have experienced tortures and violence which in many cases end up with persistent trauma.

This is the reason why one of the most important paralinguistic features involved in the phonopragmatic analysis is kinesics, meant as the investigation of the speaker's attitudes in relation to the space and time of the interaction.

Gesture and body language indeed communicate messages unwittingly conveyed by participants involved in the interaction through face, eye and bodily movements. It is particularly important in intercultural mediation processes during discussions, conferences and meetings.

Data will show to what extent kinesics affects and signals turn-taking and social behaviours in a group setting during cross-cultural interactions when one person or more usually speak at a time overlapping others after listening. Gestures and other bodily movements made by the participants in the interaction reveal a wide range of attitudes towards the communicative situation such as interest, disinterest, annoyance, and embarrassment, which are ruled by culture-specific and even unconscious norms which in cross-cultural communication may be often difficult to be properly decoded by interlocutors.

Actually, gestures and mimicry may be even misinterpreted in intercultural communication if not properly decoded by participants in interaction since very often they do not find equal qualitative and quantitative correspondence across cultures. Therefore, the phonopragmatic approach tries to identify and account for such linguistic, paralinguistic and suprasegmental events in ELF especially where ambiguity and misunderstanding arise.

Moreover, body movements and kinesics in general indicate the attitude towards the interlocutor and, for example, staying up straight and leaning towards the speaker may be very often perceived as intrusive or inopportune by an interlocutor who is not accustomed with other cultural paralinguistic behaviours, even more in specialized migration contexts. Actually, data also confirm that the use of paralinguistic features in cross-cultural communication often differs with gender and even age group.

### 3.3.2. *Paralinguistic implications: proxemics*

Another important paralinguistic aspect, here considered together with kinesic correlates, is proxemics which studies the role of distance maintained between two or more people during interactive encounters or casual conversations.

Indeed, the concept of proxemics refers to different perceptions and relations people have regarding physical space. The space between people in a room or in an open space has different meanings to people from different cultures and affects intercultural communication as well as linguistic and other non-linguistic parameters.

More precisely, proxemics has been generally defined as the study of the cultural, behavioural, and sociological aspects of spatial distances between individuals.

However, the lack of culture-specific non-verbal and paralinguistic awareness shows many levels of impact during mediation processes: from embarrassing communication breakdown to a lost mediation or transaction.

Therefore, nowadays a number of cross-cultural training courses have been developed according to different professional and communicative requirements, such as cross-cultural training for business and management, for human resources and international teams, cultural awareness training, selling and leading across cultures with the aim of developing global competence in intercultural communication and proxemics.

Nonetheless, cross-cultural training programmes should provide for a better understanding of the concept of proxemics and of the reasons for closer or less physical proximity in intercultural mediation process, since understanding proxemic dynamics will help mediators and officials to avoid cross-cultural communicative mistakes based on different perceptions of space.

Different studies in intercultural communication (e.g. Ma 1999; Gao 2000; Lustig & Koester 2006; Arasaratnam & Banerjee 2007; Tran 2009) have revealed the particular role of non-verbal messages and proxemics in the development of intercultural communication competence, seen as an ongoing and, in some contexts, changing process especially in new intercultural societies and communities and should deserve proper acknowledgment to improve and enhance intercultural relationships. In this sense mediators should be trained to understand cultural emphasis and paralinguistic rules that are conveyed in conversation in order to have positive and successful communication based on a proper nonverbal and paralinguistic interpretation of cues and signals.

The use of personal space is culture-specific and differs according to different pragmatic parameters such as context, addressees, intentionality, feelings and attitudes. When people who are accustomed to a large zone of personal space interact with people who are comfortable with a much smaller one, misgivings and misunderstandings are very likely to arise since one of them may perceive as an intrusion a closer spatial contact performed by the other.

In successful and effective intercultural mediation, communication does not merely convey a message with clarity, but it should also take into account the physical comfort zone of those who receive the message. Mediators especially should take care of the manner in which they approach a cross-cultural interaction and, even more, an intercultural mediation process. In these cases, keeping distance is also very important and may be perceived neither threatening nor evasive since different cultures have different norms of personal space during interactions. When involved in cross cultural mediation, understanding and respecting culture-specific conventions may become essential for conveying messages and consequently building successful cross-cultural communicative processes.

In the last decades, scholars have defined different kinds of spatial distances among interlocutors in intercultural communication, however Hall

(1966) firstly introduced the notions of spatial distance and proxemics, dividing the space surrounding people into 'personal space', 'social space' and 'public space'. 'Personal space' or 'intimate space' refers to that space surrounding a person which can only be entered by friends or close family members and includes touching, embracing or whispering. This space is used to convey emotional ideas and cues. In contrast, a person's 'public space or distance' is usually reserved for more impersonal and formal interactions where public speakers distance themselves from their audience.

The layer of space between an individual's personal and public space is often called 'social space or distance'. This is the physical space where everyday casual interactions take place.

Therefore, every culture – and each participant indeed - possesses a set of personal cultural rules which govern the physical space with respect to their interlocutors when communicating. Breaking any of these rules may be interpreted as impolite or even threatening in an asylum-seeking context, especially in a public professional domain, such as a legal office or a medical assistance service, where a certain degree of formality, caution and suspicion is often respected.

Spatial zones generally prevent speakers from being felt as intrusive on their interlocutors' own privacy and convey sense and meaning to roles and territory. Obviously, the space suitable for interaction is not the same in all countries and cultures. Knowing these differences and their meaning across cultures, together with a consequent appropriate behaviour, can help mediators, officers, professionals, and migrants as well, avoid misunderstandings and unpleasant mistakes in these sensitive and delicate communicative situations.

Proxemics and the use of appropriate space for mediation improve communicative cooperation among speakers, which is a crucial aspect in any migration context. Intercultural mediators' behaviour should be in conformity not only with the culture of the target audience, but also with the source one: the level of confidence should be aimed at developing a well-balanced and lasting communicative channel.

The space that mediators occupy during interactions conveys diverse nonverbal information about their personality and dispositions. For example, sitting around a table in gatekeeping situations with mediators allows for easy reading of nonverbal signals such as eye contact, gesture, kinesic information, facial expressions and other movements. Obviously, mediators should be aware of these aspects and be able to train their perception of these involuntarily conveyed signals. On the other hand, sometimes in migration contexts such an arrangement may be regarded as confrontational or embarrassing. It is therefore usually advisable for mediators to adopt a side by side collaborative seating composition or a sort of triangular communicative pattern, where mediators are equidistant both

from the Italian professional and the migrant people during an intercultural mediation process, avoiding any kind of suspicion, invasion or spatial violation.

Moreover, gender is one of the most important factors which affect communicative processes in cross-cultural specialized domains, according to culture-specific aspects and influences. The ‘comfort’ zones of men are generally different from those of women, especially in asylum seeking contexts where non-Western women very often share painful personal histories and prefer to sit side by side while they speak to Western experts and mediators, while non-Western men tend to choose face to face conversations, and to stand closer to female professionals and mediators when they talk with them.

It is therefore important to be familiar with all levels of personal space as they relate to intercultural communication so that mediators can operate effectively while respecting each other’s cultural differences and similarities in proxemics.

Generally, scholars in defining similarities and differences in cultural proxemics tend to divide groups into contact and non-contact cultures: “a contact culture is when there are cultural groups in which people tend to stand close together and touch frequently when they interact together. A noncontact culture is when cultural groups tend to maintain more space and often less touch than contact cultures” (Martin & Nakayama 2010: 274). Examples of contact cultures may regard areas such as South America, the Middle East and Southern Europe with the Middle East as the highest contact. Examples of ‘noncontact cultures’ include areas like Great Britain, the Far East, Japan and the United States with the Far East as the most noncontact.

Nonetheless, literature considers a number of communicative situations where interactions show some communication exceptions to their norm. This is the case of the Arabic countries in the Middle East. Although Arabic speakers generally tend to prefer contact and interaction while communicating, this behaviour depends on gender since women and men are not allowed to have contact with each other while communicating because of religious beliefs (even penalties and punishments are pursued if this type of contact occurs between men and women in the Islamic communities).

On the other hand, Indian young people are not used to maintain eye contact while speaking to an adult as a sign of respect and kindness while in a European communication context this behaviour could be misinterpreted as impolite or be perceived as a lack of interest for the interlocutor’s message, especially in professional contexts. Otherwise in the United States (which is mainly considered a noncontact culture) men and women often show publicly affection and relationship while communicating with each

other. In contrast, in China (another noncontact culture) male classmates often interact and hold hands while walking and speaking together which in Western cultures this may be interpreted as a homosexual behaviour (Martin & Nakayama 2010). On the contrary, North Americans and Latin Americans, for example, have fundamentally different proxemic systems. While North Americans usually prefer to stay at a distance from one another during conversations, Latin Americans move very close to each other.

These are all clear examples of how concepts and values like privacy, as well as personal and social space, may be different and culture-related.

Therefore, the relevance of proxemics, together with the complete range of paralinguistic devices, in mediator training is enormous. This is the reason why managing only the verbal system of a second language does not guarantee effective communication because the whole non-verbal system of paralinguistic signals is also essential, especially using a lingua franca. These verbal and nonverbal systems are connected, and considering one without the other might be at the origin of misunderstandings and communication breakdown.

Proxemics has also revealed all its importance and meaning in different studies dedicated to ESL teaching and learning. For those students whose own proxemic patterns are very different from the target culture's ones, it is essential to become aware of differences and similarities in paralinguistics. For instance, Arias (1996) gave the example of an Arab ESL student in the United States who inevitably ignores the difference between the United States and his/her own country's proxemic behaviours. This unconscious lack of knowledge very often may cause him/her serious communicative discomfort such as exclusion, alienation, or even the perception of physical abuse and violation. Indeed, in multicultural society teachers and trainers can help learners avoid such unpleasant misunderstandings by teaching the different aspects of proxemics. Knowing and using these cues, students can increase their comprehension and expression, feel self-confident and comfortable in maintaining their listener's attention, and be more successful in the communication process.

It will be evident later to what extent these aspects are particularly important and relevant in considering the same and other perceptual problems which may arise in migration contexts, especially in those involving victims of tortures and traumas like asylum seekers and refugees.

When studying intercultural communication and its relationship to proxemics it is thus of great importance the way certain cultures perceive other cultures' actions within a certain space. In this sense Hall (1966: 154) significantly claims that "pushing and shoving in public areas is characteristics of Middle Eastern culture. Yet, it is not entirely what Americans think it is (being pushy and rude) but stems from a different set of assumptions concerning not only the relations between people but how

one experiences the body as well. Paradoxically, Arabs consider northern Europeans and Americans pushy, too”.

Understanding these differences and perceptions, and properly associating them to a good interpretation of prosodic and intonational cues in ELF, should enable intercultural communicative encounters become more successful and less complicated.

The phonopragmatic analysis, thus, aims at finding correlates and correspondences among different parameters which involve both linguistic and non-linguistic messages. Actually prosodic and intonational behaviours are often associated, even unconsciously, to proxemic and kinesic ones, which in intercultural communication employing a ‘lingua franca’ may become extremely crucial for the successful process of conveyance, comprehension and mediation of meaning.

Seen from this perspective the phonopragmatic approach reveals precise research objectives (as the diagram below displays), i.e. (i) identifying, by means of a phonopragmatic conversational analysis of speech acts, recurring suprasegmental, paralinguistic and extralinguistic patterns and behaviours hindering successful cross-cultural mediation in ELF; (ii) recognizing possible native sociocultural and pragmalinguistic schemata (such as background information; speaker’s goals and attitudes toward subject; audience and addressees) affecting the use of ELF in migration contexts; (iii) defining phonopragmatic mediation strategies to avoid miscommunication in intercultural communication and overcome possible sociocultural schema-biased boundaries and barriers thus enabling successful mediation processes.

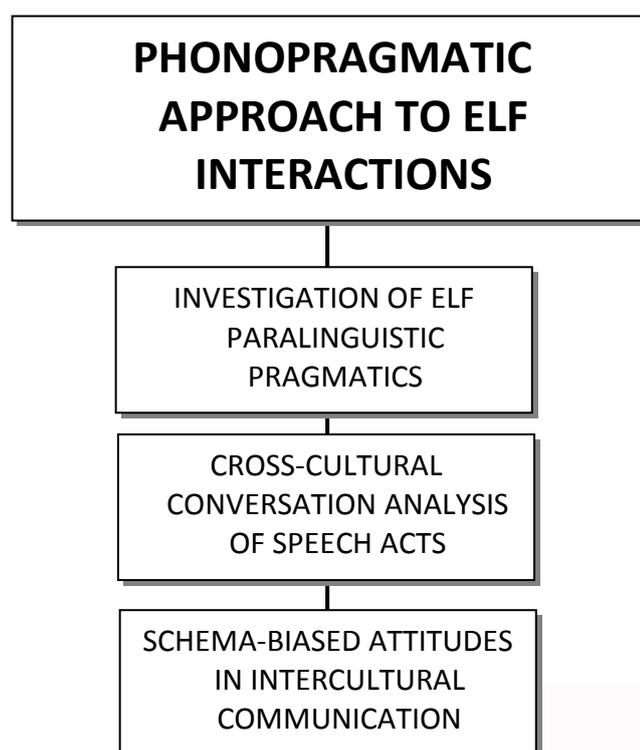


Diagram 1. The Phonopragmatic Model.

### 3.4. *Phonopragmatic Analysis: The Methodological Approach*

Firmly based on the previously outlined theoretical tenets, the Phonopragmatic Model involves a synergy of methodological approaches with the ultimate aim of providing crucial insights into the multifaceted pragmalinguistic mechanisms underlying intercultural spontaneous spoken discourse.

The following qualitative analysis therefore will be presented according to a case-study descriptive methodology based on a data-driven inductive approach.

Actually, data gathered during the ethnographic fieldwork in the course of intercultural encounters represent the observational basis for the ‘bottom-up’ reasoning, in the attempt to investigate common patterns (or non-patterns), and regularities (or irregularities), which may lead to the formulation of the hypotheses and conclusions, and at a later stage theories about speakers’ pragmalinguistic dynamics involving ELF intercultural communication in immigration domains.

This inductive design is hence carried out by means of an interdisciplinary descriptive approach derived from: (i) an autosegmental/metrical-integrated acoustic analysis; (ii) a conversation analysis of moves and acts; (iii) a text-linguistic register and discourse analysis.

#### 3.4.1. *The acoustic analysis*

The following acoustic analysis has been developed within the Autosegmental-Metrical descriptive framework. Autosegmental-Metrical (AM) is a term coined by Ladd (1996) to refer to the approaches to intonation which developed after the influential work of Pierrehumbert (1980).

These approaches generally consider the *intonational phrase* (IP) as part of the phonological hierarchy (Nespor&Vogel 1986). More precisely this phonological element groups together with segments into syllables, syllables into metrical feet, metrical feet into phonological words, phonological words into phonological phrases; phonological phrases are thus gathered into intonational phrases and intonational phrases into utterances.

Therefore, the phonological representation of *pitch* in the Autosegmental–Metrical Theory is linked to *tone* which refers to the

linguistic application of the “fundamental frequency” ( $f_0$ ), namely the frequencies derived from the glottal impulses. Hence pitch represents the perceptual outcome of these impulses (perceived variations of sounds in terms of their height).

As it will be further pointed out in the following chapter, variations of  $f_0$  are defined by the Intonational Phonology (Ladd 1996) as a sequence of intonational events: (i) pitch accents, and (ii) edge tones.

Utterances are then described as (i) “pitch accent” tonal event, associated with the nucleus of the syllables and therefore also called “nuclear accent” (in the analysis this tone is indicated by a star symbol (\*)) and they can be “monotonal” (H\*: high tone with nuclear accent), (L\*: low tone with nuclear accent) when formed by one tone or “bitones” when formed by a sequence of two tones (H\*+L: high low bitone), (L\*+H: low high bitone); and as (ii) “edge tones” tonal event, associated with the boundaries of the prosodic constituents since they are indicators of the relationship between prosody and syntax in the intonational phrasing (edge tones are indicated by the symbol (%): (L%: low boundary tone), (H%: high boundary tone)).

The auditory-perceptual and acoustic analysis is performed by means of computer tools designed for working with sounds and speech, namely GoldWave® (GoldWave Inc. 2014) and PRAAT (Boersma & Weenink 2014) software programmes used to analyse not only pitch contours, but also other acoustic properties of speech (such as intensity, duration, and pauses).

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### 3.4.2. Conversation analysis

The acoustic and perceptual analysis of spoken interaction may not be distinguished from a proper conversation analysis here applied to the following interethnic exchanges.

This part of the investigation is firstly based on the pragmatic assumptions underlying Austin’s (1962) Speech Act Theory (which has already been outlined in the first section) and Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle, which focuses on the participants’ cooperating contribution to conversation (realized through Gricean *Maxims of Conversation*: i.e. *quantity* – “be informative as required producing as much as possible strong statements”; *quality* – “be sincere and based on sufficient evidence”; *relation* – “be relevant and pertinent”; *manner* – “avoid obscurity and ambiguity as well as be concise and linguistically precise”).

Therefore, the following spoken discourse analysis is particularly concerned with the investigation of the participants’ socio-cultural attitudes, cooperative disposition and role relationships underling oral communication. Obviously, these rules and conventions reveal all their challenging value when interactants belong to different speech communities that do not share the same communicative rules.

To fulfill this objective, both the UK Conversation Model (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Coulthard & Montgomery 1981; Stubbs 1983; Coulthard & Brazil 1992), based on Halliday's Functional Grammar; and the Ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis (the so-called 'US Model': Firth 1957; Gumperz & Hymes 1964; Sachs *et al.* 1974) will be applied.

The former is particularly useful since its Conversation Frame enables analysts to define Acts and Moves in the discourse setting (even though they establish fixed and often predetermined interactional positions). The basic moves observed in the following analysis are: *Opening, Summoning, Backchannel, Eliciting, Answering, Informing, Focusing, Supporting, Challenging, Acknowledging, Repairing, Directing, Closing, Re-opening*.<sup>9</sup>

However, as pointed out by Guido (2004a: 346), this model of investigation in terms of acts and moves is useful to understand to what extent the speakers' socio-cultural 'schemata' intervene and affect conversation structure and power relationship (especially as asymmetric and unequal role disposition); yet spoken discourse cannot be represented as a mere and ordered sequence of moves and acts without taking into account their effects on the receivers and the social situation where they occur.

Therefore, following an interrelated methodology of approaches to the analysis of speech acts, the US model of Conversation Analysis is applied as well, which indeed is based on the sociolinguistic aspects related to environment and behaviours in which exchanges take place as socio-pragmatic and pragmalinguistic rules which participants use to interact.

In this perspective, language is strictly related to socio-semiotic dynamics, which – for the purpose of the present ethnographic investigation – represents the most important research objective: investigating how participants' 'schemata', and above all their effects on the unequal distribution of knowledge and intents, emerge within the conversation framework. Miscommunication and communicative interferences thus may be interpreted as unpredictable deviations from conventional power dimensions and socio-cultural asymmetries among groups and categories of participants (cf. Guido 2004a).

This is the reason why the following analysis will focus on the conversation rules outlined by the 'US Model', namely *turn-taking*, as the alternation of turns which may be shared by participant, but also violated and reinterpreted; and *adjacency pairs* (cf. Levinson 1983), defined as the universally admitted interchange of two dialogic cues, where the second utterance may be perceived as *preferred* (socio-culturally and

<sup>9</sup> The taxonomy applied in the phonopragmatic analysis derives from Guido's (2004a) adaptation to Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) Conversation Frame.

conventionally accepted and expected), or *dispreferred* (deviating and unusual within the socio-cultural contexts in which it occurs).

Therefore, the ethnomethodological framework applied to the conversation analysis accounts for the socio-cultural structure of the communicative dimension where the interaction takes place, and it has defined a series of ethnomethodological moves which are applied also to the following analysis: i.e. *continuer*, *downgrade*, *rejection finalizer*, and *upgrade*.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.4.3. Register analysis

The phonopragmatic investigation of ELF utterances and acts cannot neglect the pragmalinguistic strategies (in terms of lexical, syntactic, stylistic and textual variations) through which speakers perform their spoken speech acts. Therefore, the following exchanges are also investigated through a *Register analysis* aimed at integrating what the acoustic and conversational observation of data signals.

As variously claimed, the research is closely based on ‘Schema Theory’ (Carrell *et al.* 1988), considered as an enlightening approach to the mental processes that speakers activate in discourse (oral and written) interpretation when they interact with their interlocutors. The speaker’s own cultural ‘schemata’ actually influence comprehension by means of ‘bottom-up’ strategies (activated by the sender) as well as ‘top-down’ processing tactics (through which the receiver makes culture-bound hypothesis and inferences about the semantic and pragmatic meaning of the message). In other words, speakers communicate by “matching up the linguistic elements of the code with the schematic elements of the context” (Widdowson 1996: 63), and this enables them to highlight – through interpretative patterns – conceptual interferences and socio-cultural contrasts with their own experience and filters, especially in cross-cultural interactions.

The crucial value of the ‘Schema Theory’ will be highlighted when dealing with the results of the analysis where the influence of pragmalinguistic and socio-cultural schemata will clearly emerge in ELF specialized communication contexts concerning migrants, experts and language mediators.

Therefore, the register analysis intends to account for the presence and active role of schemata in the participants’ pragmalinguistic choices.

<sup>10</sup> *Continuer* move indicates the speaker’s invitation to his/her interlocutor to continue holding his/her turn, by means of non-lexical backchannels; *Downgrade* aims to mitigate or reduce a previous statement; *Rejection finalizer* signals the speaker’s acceptance of his/her interlocutor’s negative answer or denial; *Upgrade* move emphasizes with illocutionary force what the speaker has previously stated (Guido 2004a).

Moreover it draws on the assumptions derived from the Critical Discourse Analysis approach (Fairclough 1992, 1995; Van Dijk 1993) which aims at defining speakers' own opinion, prejudices and above all manipulative intents by means of spoken or written textual patterns.

This perspective, however, implies an interpretative textual model which is based on Halliday's (1994) functional approach to texts considered as socially constructed on their authors' worldview.

More precisely, Halliday's (1994) Systemic-Functional Model is applied as a methodological framework to understand to what extent ELF communication represents speakers' socio-semiotic structures as concurrence of *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *functional metafunctions*.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, in order to verify and attest how register and context cooperate (by means of the three Hallidayan variables of *field* – i.e. the communicative social domain in which the text is used; *tenor* – i.e. the role relationships between sender and implied receiver of the text reflected in his/her linguistic and paralinguistic choices; and *mode* – i.e. the channel features characterising the messages conveyed to receivers), functional interacting levels (i.e. *formality*, *politeness*, *impersonality*, *accessibility*, *spontaneity*, *participation*, *privateness*)<sup>12</sup> have been connected to de Beaugrande & Dressler's (1981) seven Standards of Textuality (i.e. *coherence*, *cohesion*, *intentionality*, *informativity*, *acceptability*, *intertextuality*, *situationality*).<sup>13</sup>

In this sense cross-cultural interactions in immigration contexts correspond to a communicative *domain* involving specialized legal-bureaucratic discourse through which semantic preferences reflect concepts and ideas fulfilling speakers' *ideational* and *interpersonal* functions by means of lexical, syntactic and textual strategies, as the following phonopragmatic investigation will reveal.

<sup>11</sup> Hallidayan metafunctions account for (i) logical and experiential organization of concepts and ideas through textual form; (ii) linguistic relations of concepts to establish interpersonal relations with the receiver; (iii) cohesive connections of sentences to mediate between the other two metafunctions and produce textual messages (Halliday 1994 [1985]).

<sup>12</sup> *Formality* signals the social distance between sender and receiver in terms of lexical and syntactic choices; *politeness* indicates horizontal and vertical distance among participants and their power relationships; *impersonality* marks the degree of reference to the sender and/or the receiver throughout the text; *accessibility* signals shared-knowledge assumptions about the conversation topic; *spontaneity* regards the degree of textual premeditation and planning; *participation* signals participants' mutual (verbal and non-verbal) feedback; *privateness* refers to the number of recipients for a text (Halliday 1978; Bell 1991).

<sup>13</sup> *Coherence* signals the writer' or speaker's organization of ideas into logical structures; *Cohesion* concerns linguistic markers and strategies to connect and condense textual components; *Intentionality* regards sender's manipulation of rhetorical devices for his/her communicative intents; *Informativity* signals the degree of receiver's accessibility to the given/new information; *Acceptability* involves social recognition and acceptance of concepts expressed; *Intertextuality* refers to traces and references to other texts (and therefore receiver's previous knowledge); *Situationality* signals the contextual dimension in which receiver's interpretation occurs (de Beaugrande & Dressler 1981).

Hence, particular attention is given to speaker's ELF pragmalinguistic tactics regarding: (i) specialized vs. popularized lexis; (ii) verbal choices (above all in terms of modality, aspect and tense deviations); (iii) textual markers (especially conjunctions underling paratactic and hypotactic expansion, as well as hedging strategies); applied to the argumentative construction of illocutionary acts (responding to the respective schemata which speakers try to impose on their receivers).

Moreover, the ELF register analysis of textual strategies takes into account important insights deriving from van Dijk's (1980) Cognitive Model of text linguistics and his pragmatic *macrostructures*, defined as cognitive processes of discourse simplification aimed at rendering a text essential in its semantic meaning, according to a series of rules (defined as *macrorules*, such as *deletion*, *generalization* and *construction*)<sup>14</sup> and Gotti's (2005) crucial multi-dimensional approach to specialized discourse with particular reference to the linguistic aspects of popularization.

Actually, in ELF specialized domains concerning the cross-cultural conveyance of legal and bureaucratic procedures it is particularly interesting to observe how and when popularization, which – as pointed out by Gotti (2005: 203) – “addresses not an expert group within the discipline but an audience of non-specialists”, is applied as a communicative strategy by Italian experts and language mediators drawing words from everyday and general language with the aim of being “informative rather than innovative or interpretative” (Gotti 2005: 208).

Another recurrent strategy in this kind of communicative setting is the employment of ‘epistemic hedging’ with illocutionary force (Lakoff 1972; Salager-Meyer 1994; Skelton 1997). Hedges are thus linguistic devices – in terms of prosodic, lexical, syntactic and stylistic strategies – used as rhetorical tools to mitigate or reinforce utterance content, or to exclude speaker's full commitment in his/her message.<sup>15</sup>

In the following chapter, the above described methodological approach will be applied to the analysis of five case-studies derived from naturally occurring spoken interactions in an Italian centre for legal advice addressed to asylum-seekers, international protection holders and refugees.

<sup>14</sup> *Deletion* rules enable the omission of what the speaker considers as irrelevant details; *Generalization* rules rebuild sentences condensing meaning by adding and deleting nothing new to the original semantic material; *Construction* rules group the semantic material into a single proposition as a result of joint interrelated micropropositions (van Dijk 1980).

<sup>15</sup> In this sense scholars like Cogo & Dewey (2006) argue that ELF speakers' language lacks in interactional features, such as hedges, while instead Mauranen (2003) notices that ELF users are particularly sensitive and collaborative since they are unfamiliar with their interlocutors' cultural rules and therefore tend to apply strategies such as hedges, in their face-to-face spoken interactions.

## 4. Phonopragmatic Analysis

### ***4.1. Investigating Specialized Intercultural Encounters: a Methodological Introduction***

Data presented in the following pages, in support of the phonopragmatic model here applied to the multimodal analysis of intercultural encounters, represent live and real exchanges, and correspond to individuals, lives and experiences, emotions, feelings and attitudes of an underestimated universe which moves in the new multicultural society and needs the serious and conscious attention from experts as well as from non-specialists.

Data were recorded in completely unconstrained, spontaneous and natural conditions, but obviously they have also been collected in a manner that preserves and safeguards the privacy of both participants and non-participants – aspect which, especially in workplaces involving refugees and asylum-seekers, is particularly important. Despite the privacy constraints, data allow for a complete and scientific investigation of different types of inferences that have emerged in turn from the analysis.

Deductions in an ethnographic research conducted by means of data-driven methodology are here particularly useful for studying the prosodic and paralinguistic features of spontaneous speech in intercultural exchanges across many subjects and over an extended period of time (in this case data were collected during a 14-month fieldwork). An ethnographic research thus always represents new challenges and opportunities in data collection, also exploiting and taking into account problems, disadvantages and vulnerabilities encountered by the researcher, who in return is able to define a resulting corpus of spontaneous and unconditioned exchanges revealing likewise the concrete use of ELF variations in Italian workplaces involving migrants, experts and mediators.

Actually, an ethnographic research investigates the behaviours (including linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours) of the members of a particular community or communicative setting (as in this case) by studying them, typically while they meet in daily communicative situations. The present research, therefore, involved prolonged and intensive fieldwork in the typical intercultural setting under study, which after an extended period of time allows the researcher to be felt and perceived as an essential part of that communicative setting, avoiding expected diffidence and suspicions, and building trust with the participants. In this way the ethnographic researcher may conduct his/her work and observe the phenomenon under investigation repeatedly so as to confirm or deny his/her starting ideas and hypothesis.

Actually, in this case the researcher (i.e. the author of this paper) operated in the fieldwork as language mediator and the participants in the

interaction stopped perceiving her as an external element in the workplace and after a short period of time probably they even forgot the reason why she was there.

There are several advantages to audio recording in ethnographic research. One advantage is the density of data that this kind of collecting method provides, first of all because it captures an amount of fundamental contextual data which note-taking cannot intercept. Obviously video recording would be even more productive and effective for the following analysis of collected data, but in this case a camcorder would be invasive and inevitably would create embarrassment and confusion invalidating spontaneity and naturalness of speech and communication.

However, note-taking was also applied to collect information about posture, gestures, kinesics, and proxemics, which in this case, as previously underlined, are particularly important for a multimodal analysis of the message since they inform about socio-cultural norms and attitudes. Gestures, facial expressions, and other visual interactional cues also provide important information both on the negotiation of meaning and the mediation of attitudes and emotions involving migrants as well as experts (sometimes also mediators). ELF speakers, especially those whose linguistic means are limited or inadequate, rely extensively on paralinguistic and extralinguistic means, which supply for insufficient linguistic instruments, to convey sense and disposition, as well as intentionality. Therefore, in spontaneous speech messages deliver thoughts and feelings that might be inferred by their addressee, as well as misinterpreted or neglected. For instance, data show how mediators often compensate for legal advisors' inability to detect migrants' emotions, often complex and unsaid, which sometimes convey tension and anxiety to the conversation.

The phonopragmatic model is here applied to a qualitative analysis of data chosen for its richness and precision. Actually, the aim of this qualitative investigation is a multi-modal and detailed description of data, based on research hypothesis and objectives. This also means that such a methodological approach makes no attempt to measure and classify frequencies in the observed linguistic features, and single and sporadic phenomena are considered as relevant and deserving attention as frequent and common phenomena.

Obviously, a qualitative approach to corpus analysis may have a quantitative follow-up as findings can be verified in wider samples of populations to attest whether they are statistically significant or casual. Quantitative analysis provides in effect statistically reliable and generalized results. It could be possible to investigate the same or an extended corpus of data by means of multi-method and interactive approaches which interlace qualitative and quantitative analyses and could be addressed to several investigative directions, such as statistical assessment among specific

communities or groups of ELF speakers or as a training tool for new language mediators.

The recorded data that represent the corpus for the present research have been classified and analysed according to a scheme established to preserve as much information as possible and allow inferences from conversations between participants, which also include prosodic and paralinguistic features. To protect the privacy of any interactant who came within the range of the microphone and whose acoustic information is saved and represent intelligible speech, proper nouns, places, cities, and villages which may be easily recognized, thus revealing precise information about the identity of any participant, have been concealed and signalled in the text with asterisks (i.e. four \*\*\*\* for places, five \*\*\*\*\* for names).

Participants in the interactions will be identified throughout the analysis according to their role in the exchange. Since investigating mediation processes in ELF is the main objective of the study, in a typical intercultural encounter involving specialized settings an operator (in this case a legal advisor, henceforth LA), a migrant (asylum-seeker, refugee or international protection holder, henceforth AS, RE and MI) and an intercultural mediator (henceforth IM, sometimes also MT as mediator trainee) are seated together. Data will show however that in most cases this is still a theoretical perspective in considering intercultural mediation while in practice this kind of encounter often occur in irregular communicative settings and modalities.

The LAs in the exchanges are all native speakers of Italian, living in the south of Italy, in an area around the city of Lecce. They are adult learners of English and their linguistic competence is quite basic.

ASs and refugees are African and Asian citizens, men and women; more precisely they come from Nigeria, Ghana and Iraq. Their linguistic competence of English is really varied. Some of them are native speakers of Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Ewe, Twi (all Niger-Congo languages) and Arabic, as well as ESL speakers (actually they consider English as their native language) and therefore are very competent; other speakers (mainly women) are illiterate and speak ELF to communicate with their own fellow countrymen and –women and with Italian people. Most part of ASs are ILF (Italian as a Lingua Franca) speakers and possess a basic knowledge of the Italian language, particularly influenced by the local and regional linguistic and suprasegmental features of the Italian variety spoken in the area where they live, work and dwell for an indefinite period of time.

IMs are Italian and ex-Yugoslavian speakers and are all graduates or postgraduates in foreign languages. Their proficiency of English is often academic but in some cases limited to basic levels of competence.

This assorted linguistic background as a starting point for investigating mediation dynamics is already particularly interesting as

indicative of the ongoing variety of approaches and attitudes in the use of the English language by non-native speakers of English worldwide.

Data will confirm the variety of linguistic behaviours mutually influenced by degrees of competence as well as strictly pragmatic and communicative reasons, also derived from L1 transfers.

Spontaneous speech is also full of unpredictable emotional cues. Here the peculiar nature of exchanges (i.e. the inevitable communicative situation of sharing personal and intimate experiences with strangers) leads to the consequence that the degree of possible misunderstandings in the perceived sensations and feelings is very high. This aspect makes the phonopragmatic analysis not only more complex but also more challenging and interesting. Each migrant, each mediator and each official or expert inevitably convey an intricate network of sense and meaning, often influenced by idiosyncratic as well as sociocultural 'schemata' derived from past events and world perception, often unconsciously, which are adapted to their speech acts and from time to time have different perlocutionary effects on the interlocutors. Prejudices, schemata, intentions, and filters: in intercultural communication all these elements are amplified and basically important. These idiosyncratic features, which apparently may represent an obstacle hindering the possibility of generalizing and categorizing exchanges and habits, are extremely important for the objectives of this research. Actually they can compose a sufficiently complete description of what may happen in intercultural encounters involving asylum-seekers and the Italian experts who try to give them assistance for a number of main personal services (e.g. health, accommodation, welfare, documents, school and education, job).

Data have been selected among more than 250 encounters occurred during intercultural exchanges lasted more than 100 hours. They are presented according to a pragmalinguistic perspective in five groups representing the communicative domains of the investigated intercultural mediation, i.e. asylum-seeking narratives, legal issues and immigration-advice, perception and interpretation of bureaucratic procedures, traumatic experiences and socio-cultural vulnerabilities, and integration processes and practices.

Five case-studies have been then selected and analysed by means of a phonopragmatic investigation which entails different steps of interpretation and discussion.

First of all the audio recordings were acoustically screened and transcribed according to the following linguistic and paralinguistic parameters:<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Transcriptions are not simple orthographic representation of speech. Indeed they need to prevent the loss of contextual and paralinguistic information. Here pausing, vowel prolongation, non-lexical items,

- Phonological and extralinguistic features (signalled in the transcriptions with bold green, capitals and black underlining)
- The use of modality and verbal choices (signalled in the transcriptions with bold blue)
- Key-textual structures (signalled in the transcriptions with bold pink)
- Stylistic tendencies (signalled in the transcriptions with bold red-purple)
- ELF accommodation strategies and code-mixing (signalled in the transcription with bold red for single lexical items and red underlining for ELF syntactical clusters).

In the following extracts some passages are often concealed (by means of [...] and {...}) since they are considered harmful for the participants' privacy or useless for the concerns of the present study (e.g. Italian exchanges, phone calls, external interferences or interruptions). Nonetheless in the main perspective of representing real and live spontaneous cross-cultural interactions it is considered important and relevant to signal in the transcriptions the presence of the previous interferences which contribute to a proper representation of what actually happens in a centre for legal advice for refugees and asylum-seekers (often based on voluntary work and insufficient part-time staff), in order to evaluate the quality of the most frequent practices, mistakes and vulnerabilities.

The transcription notation applied to the corpus of collected data is adapted from Edward's (1997) system and can be summarized in the following table:

[ ]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech
<u>          </u>	Prominence associated to pitch accent
<b>CAPITALS</b>	Louder speech
◦ ◦	Raised circles enclose quieter speech
(.)	Pauses
(.)	Micropauses
::	Vowel elongation; the more colons the more lengthening
<b>hhh</b>	Aspiration
> <	Speeded-up talk
< >	Slowed-down talk
=	Immediate "latching" and turn-taking

Table 1. Transcription notation adapted from Edward's (1997) system.

prominent words, overlapping speech, and meta-comments are constantly signalled by means of symbols and diacritics.

## 4.2. Phonopragmatic dimensions: Case study 1

The following case-study, concerning legal issues related to procedures of expulsion order and court appeal, examines an ELF exchange occurred between a Nigerian man and his Italian legal advisor who is assisted by an Albanian intercultural mediator. What follows is the transcription of their exchange:

- (1) LA: **So:::** (..) you have not other paper (.) other document? Have you (..) the answer of the:: interview?
- (2) AS: °Is this°
- (3) LA: No (.) this is only (..) **ehm** *verbale* of the interview (.) what you say (.) what they asked
- (4) AS: Yeah
- (5) LA: **But** have you not the **answer**? The **answer** (..) **because** this is the questions that commission (.) asked you (.) **no?**
- (6) AS: Yeah
- (7) LA: And what you answer (.) **but** there is not the **result** (.) the **result** of commission
- (8) AS: **A::h**
- (9) LA: Interview (.) have you not?
- (10) AS: **A::h** I have it
- (11) LA: At home (.) **mmm** (.) **but** is negative answer?
- (12) AS: Yeah
- (13) LA: **Mmm** (.) and how long time ago they gave you?
- (14) AS: Five years (..) *cinque anni fa*
- (15) LA: **Mmmm** that's a long long time (.) ok (.) **mmmm** (..)  
[...]
- (16) IM: **At th is p oint of th e:: procedure t he situation is ve ry complicated** (.) **that's why** (..) **there a re t hree possibilities** (..) the first is that of doing a (..) new (..) request for asylum (..) in this case you **have t o** take again your story that you already told to the commission
- (17) AS: I **have to** (.) **sorry** (.) I **have to** tell a new story again (.) not this one another story?
- (18) LA: No (.) the same personal story **but** with new event (.) new particular new **ehmm**
- (19) IM: **We have to** enrich this story **eh?** (..) **We have to** join or to add new stories that happened after your commission about your story
- (20) AS: Yeah
- (21) IM: **But** there is a problem in this solution (.) a problem in this solution that is that you have already a (..) expulsion (.) **ok?**

- (22) AS: **I'm sorry** (.) that expulsion (..) they had to give me that *espulsione* alright (.) what what is the reason about this *espulsione* (.) to leave country or=
- (23) IM: =No (.) **what** is (.) *espulsione* (.) **that** you **have to**: to go away from Italy?=-
- (24) AS: =**That's what I'm saying because** (..) they give me (.) they give me this **e::h** *espulsione* (.) this *foglio di via*
- (25) IM: **Mmm**
- (26) AS: I go to (..) I leave this country (.) I go to \*\*\*\* (..) **so** I go there (.) and Italian government (.) and I go there and I spend three months (.) **so** Italian government sent to bring me back (.) I only have *espulsione* **so** I (..) they took me to *Roma* and they give me another *espulsione* [LA: ok (.) *ascolta*] *escusa* (.) **sorry** (.) *sì* (.) I spent three months and they bring me back again (.) they bring me back again
- (27) IM: **Mmm** (.) **this is how it works** (..) after the negative response to the commission (.) the first thing it's given to you it's not a true expulsion (.) **but it's a sort of invite** you to go to your country [AS: I have a problem in my country **e::h**] this is the second one (.) after the first invite to go to your country (.) this is the true *espulsione*
- (28) AS: **Mmm** (.)
- (29) IM: Now (.) **we want** to solve this problem to you (.) **eh?** Now you **are** (..) **seeing** everything you have and we **have to** find a solution (.) **eh?** (..)
- (30) [...] **If** you ask a new demand of asylum and there is already an *espulsione* (.) now in this case you **have to** go in a:: structure which is **our** (..) some centers that are closed like prisons and you **have to** wait=
- (31) AS: =Is it camp or is it prison?
- (32) LA: No is like a prison (.) is a camp [*laughing*] **they say** is a camp **but** really is a prison (.) **because** is close (.) you **cannot** go out **because** the situation inside is not **so** good **so::**
- (33) AS: **They** are very hard
- (34) LA: **Ah** (.) **so::: ok this is the first** solution (.) **there are another** possibility **e::h**
- (35) IM: Your lawyer **can** ask a new demand for asylum (.) **but** directly to the judge **because** in Italy there are two kinds of asylum (..) you asked the international asylum (..) which has been negative (.) as **you know** (.) **but there is another possibility** (.) that is Italian asylum (.) that is asked directly to the judge (.) in this case your lawyer **can** ask until there is a new decision to this new request (.) the judge **can** give you a permit of stay (.) **is it** (..) **clear?** (.) **This is the better solution** for you [AS *sighs and laughs*] **because** in this case you **have to** stay in the structure that I described you before
- (36) AS: I **understand but then** that place=

- (37) *IM*: =**Let's hear** the third solution
- (38) *LA*: **No** for this second solution you have not to come inside the close center (.) you **can** live in your house (.) where you **like** (..) and during the appeal (.) during this appeal (.) the judge **can** give you a permit to stay (.) **so** is the best solution **for what I think**
- (39) *AS*: Ok (.) **e::hm** what **if** I'm still in my house
- (40) *LA*: **Mmm?** What I? (..)
- (41) *IM*: What I? **Can** you repeat?
- (42) *AS*: (..) Ok (.) what I (.) what I (.) **if** I'm still in my house I go to:: (.) I go to::: see lawyer or what (.) what (..) for me I don't **have to** go to::: prison?
- (43) *LA*: (..) **Eh** this second solution (..) in the first solution (.) **if** you ask again international asylum=
- (44) *AS*: =Ok (.) ok (.) in the second asile
- (45) *LA*: In the second a::sylum
- (46) *AS*: *Si*
- (47) *LA*: You have not to stay in a center (.) you **can** live alone
- (48) *AS*: I **can** live alone
- (49) *LA*: **Ah** (.) **ah** (..) **ok?**
- (50) *AS*: There is not prison
- (51) *LA*: No (.) no
- (52) *AS*: Ok
- (53) *IM*: It's not prison (.) no (.) you **can** live at your home (.) you **can** do everything you **want**
- (54) *AS*: I stayed to \*\*\*\* **so** for me **if** I go to prison **e:::h**
- (55) *LA*: No (.) no (.) is a different form of asylum (.) you have not the same right with the international asylum **but** the procedure is more easy (.) you have not this danger  
{...}
- (56) *IM*: The **permit of stay** is the first step (.) **because** you have a **permit of stay** waiting to have the decision (.) **eh?** For example (.) the judge **can** give you a (..)
- (57) *LA*: Refugee permit (.) in that case you **can** go out [*IM*: you **can** go out]
- (58) *IM*: **If** you **want**
- (59) *LA*: **But** during the appeal::l **if** the judge **decide** to give you a permit (.) till he **decide** about this appeal (.) this request (.) **can** give you a permit for asylum request or for humanitarian reason (.) **but** in that case you **cannot** left our country (.) **ok?** During this step
- (60) *AS*: Ok
- (61) *LA*: The third solution is to come back in your country (..) [*laughing*] (.) **but is not a big solution** (..) have you understand?
- (62) *AS*: No

- (63) LA: The possibility to come back in your country **but** the government (.) some organization [AS: **if** I go (.) **if** I go my country] in \*\*\*\* (.) they=
- (64) AS: =With my document (.) I go back like that
- (65) LA: **Eh** (.) you come back in your country with the passport (.) your original passport (.) and **then** they:: **can** give you some money to start again your life in your country (.) **but** they don't give you a lot of money (.) they give you **only** one thousand euro
- (66) AS: In my country they are criminal
- (67) LA: **Eh** I **know** (.) there are a lot of person that say us this (.) **e::h**
- (68) IM: **But** you **have to decide**
- (69) LA: **Eh** (.) you **can think** about (.) you **can decide** (.) when you **decide** (.) you **can** say us (.) **if** you like and **we can** speak with your lawyer to (.) describe what is the procedure and **if** he need to have some help we **can**=
- (70) AS: =**If e::h if** I'm not ready **a::h**
- (71) LA: **If** I'm not ready?
- (72) AS: **If** I'm not ready (.) this morning **so**
- (73) LA: No (.) this morning (.) you **can think** about
- (74) AS: I **need** it (.) I **need** the document **so** (..) you tell me to (..) do it (.) you **have to** tell me (.) this one or this one (.) I **want** to do it (.) which one I **would prefer** is to take *asile* [...] that that I **would prefer**
- (75) LA: I **think** it's normal (.) [*she laughs*] (.) ok **e::h so** (.) are you sure? We **can** speak with your lawyer or you **can::** you **want** to speak <with him before>
- (76) AS: I **don't know** my lawyer
- (77) LA: **Ah?**
- (78) AS: I **don't know** my lawyer I don't have a lawyer
- (79) LA: This **e::h** man? \*\*\*\*\* ? This lawyer who said to:: come here?
- (80) AS: This man? **A::h**
- (81) LA: It's not your lawyer?
- (82) AS: I **don't know** he's my lawyer (.) **sorry**  
[*They laugh*]
- (83) AS: He told me to come here
- (84) LA: **Ah** ok (.) [*laughing*]
- (85) AS: I **don't know** (.) he told me to come first (.) **do you understand?**
- (86) LA: Yes (..) **but if** you **want** we **can** call him
- (87) AS: You **can** call him (.) I **can** call him (.) tomorrow I also see him too
- (88) LA: Ok

- (89) AS: You **can** call **if I can** also see him (..) tomorrow (..) *domani*  
 {...}
- (90) IM: Tomorrow this lawyer is coming where you work
- (91) AS: I **know** him (.) I **know** him
- (92) LA: **Eh** tomorrow morning and he **will** give you some indication  
 about a new lawyer
- (93) AS: Alright (.) **tss** [*whispering*]
- (94) LA: Ok (.)
- (95) IM: *Ciao* (.)
- (96) AS: *Grazie* (.) *ciao*

It is evident that the exchange is characterized by a turn-taking between LA and IM who are charged with the important task of explaining and obtaining a positive feedback from AS about his serious legal position and the available judicial actions to undertake. Moreover the phonopragmatic analysis will reveal how the three interactants differently produce moves and acts by means of acoustic and auditory behaviours with the ultimate aim of fulfilling their pragmatic intents.

#### 4.2.1. Acoustic analysis

As variously pointed out above, the phonopragmatic analysis is based on a correlated approach to acoustic analysis and auditory assessment of utterances produced in spontaneous speech. Therefore, the following case-studies have been treated by means of a first acoustic investigation aimed at defining the main suprasegmental variations characterizing each participant involved in the ELF interaction under examination.

It is also true that determining suprasegmentals in the linguistic ‘continuum’ is usually a challenging task since – especially in spontaneous speech – they cannot be easily identified as discrete segments and can extend their executive power over longer stretches of speech. Actually, suprasegmental variations may not be considered as independent from the higher levels of linguistic organization, above all information structure, to which instead are directly related (cf. Brown & Yule 1983).

Speakers’ utterances are therefore examined with the aim of highlighting either unconscious pragmatic and illocutionary influences on the prosodic production of linguistic acts, and possible acoustic/auditory attitudes – mostly due to L1 transfers, along with idiolectal and sociolectal biases inevitably emerging in ELF spontaneous speech – triggering conflicting situations and misunderstandings in inter-ethnic exchanges, further fostered by power/status and knowledge asymmetries among interactants as well as their socio-cultural ‘schemata’ through which they filter the interpretation of reality.

In the case-study under examination (total duration 32m 27s including external interruptions and phone calls), as well as in the following ones, a number of prosodic paralinguistic aspects are considered: use of overall voice quality, pitch range, length, pitch movements and articulation rate used to show – consciously or not – attitudes (involvement, seriousness, anxiety, authority, etc.) or emphasize certain sentence parts (by means e.g. of pauses and non-lexical items).

Moreover, intonational behaviours (in terms of pitch movements during the course of an utterance or a speech) give considerable insight into sentence phrasing and pragmatic structuring of spoken utterances into smaller tone groups.

Focus is another parameter directly related to the pragmalinguistic aspects of intonation and prosodic outcomes: not only as *broad focus* (i.e. no element in the utterance is meant to be stressed more than the others since they are all new), but above all as *narrow focus* (when part of the intonation group is out of focus because already known from the preceding context; in this case focused parts represent new information).

In this perspective the linguistic behaviour of each participant is examined firstly according to his/her phonetic and prosodic correlates such as: (i) pitch (in order to verify prominence, i.e. stress and pitch accent, and the perceived correlate of  $f_0$ ), (ii) duration (in terms of timing, vowel lengthening, syllable duration, and speaking rate), and (iii) loudness (especially as perceptual correlate of intensity).

Therefore, spontaneous speech, as a continuous exchange of turns, acts and moves, is inevitably investigated through a qualitative analysis of suprasegmental correlates of intonation. For this purpose, the intonational model of the Autosegmental–Metrical Theory (Ladd 1996; Pierrehumbert 1980) and the ToBI (Tones and Break Indices) model (Beckman & Hirschberg 1994) have been applied to define the intonational features of the most salient utterances.<sup>17</sup>

In this first case study the participant in charge of the interaction – namely LA, coherently with her role – interlaces linguistic and paralinguistic features to fulfil her illocutionary aims and thus her prosodic behaviour inevitably confirms what will be also highlighted in the following conversation and register analysis.

<sup>17</sup> As already seen in the second chapter, these approaches generally consider two kinds of accent to describe the variation of  $f_0$ : ‘pitch accent’ and ‘edge tones’. The first one is associated to the “nuclear accent” and is indicated by a star symbol (\*). It can be “monotonal” (H\*: high tone with nuclear accent), (L\*: low tone with nuclear accent) when formed by one tone; or “bitonal” when formed by a sequence of two tones (H\*+L: high low bitone), (L\*+H: low high bitone). The second one is associated to the boundary of the prosodic/syntactic constituents. These tonal events are indicated by the symbol (%): L% (low boundary tone) and H% (high boundary tone).

However her ELF utterances are less than those of IM who is in charge of mediating LA's Italian speech. This may be the reason why IM is initially not involved as it is also confirmed by her intonational tendency with rare pitch movements and contrastive focus (e.g. turns (16), (21), (27), (53)). Yet after the initial moves she shows more communicative autonomy and participation prosodically signalled by: back-channels in (25) and (27); conative questions (e. g. *eh?* in (19) and (29)); the frequent use of pauses (in (16) (27), (35); and overlapping speech (cf. turns (36-37) which all express illocutionary purposes, such as convincing and persuading AS of what LA and IM consider the best solution for him.

In (37) a case of ELF miscommunication occurs: IM has not understood AS's words in (36) due to the missing 'don't' in her last utterance in (35) (*in this case you **have to** stay in the structure that I described you before*). The misinterpretation is however perceived by LA who immediately repairs the communicative breakdown in (38). IM' turn in (37) is visible in Figure 1 where her unusual exclamation conceals the misinterpretation of AS's words in (36):

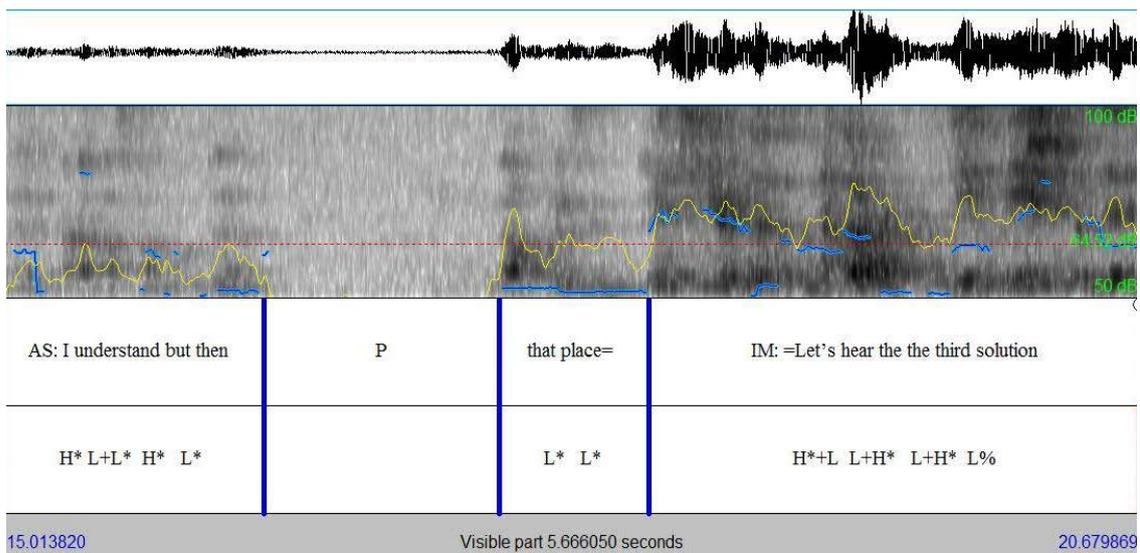
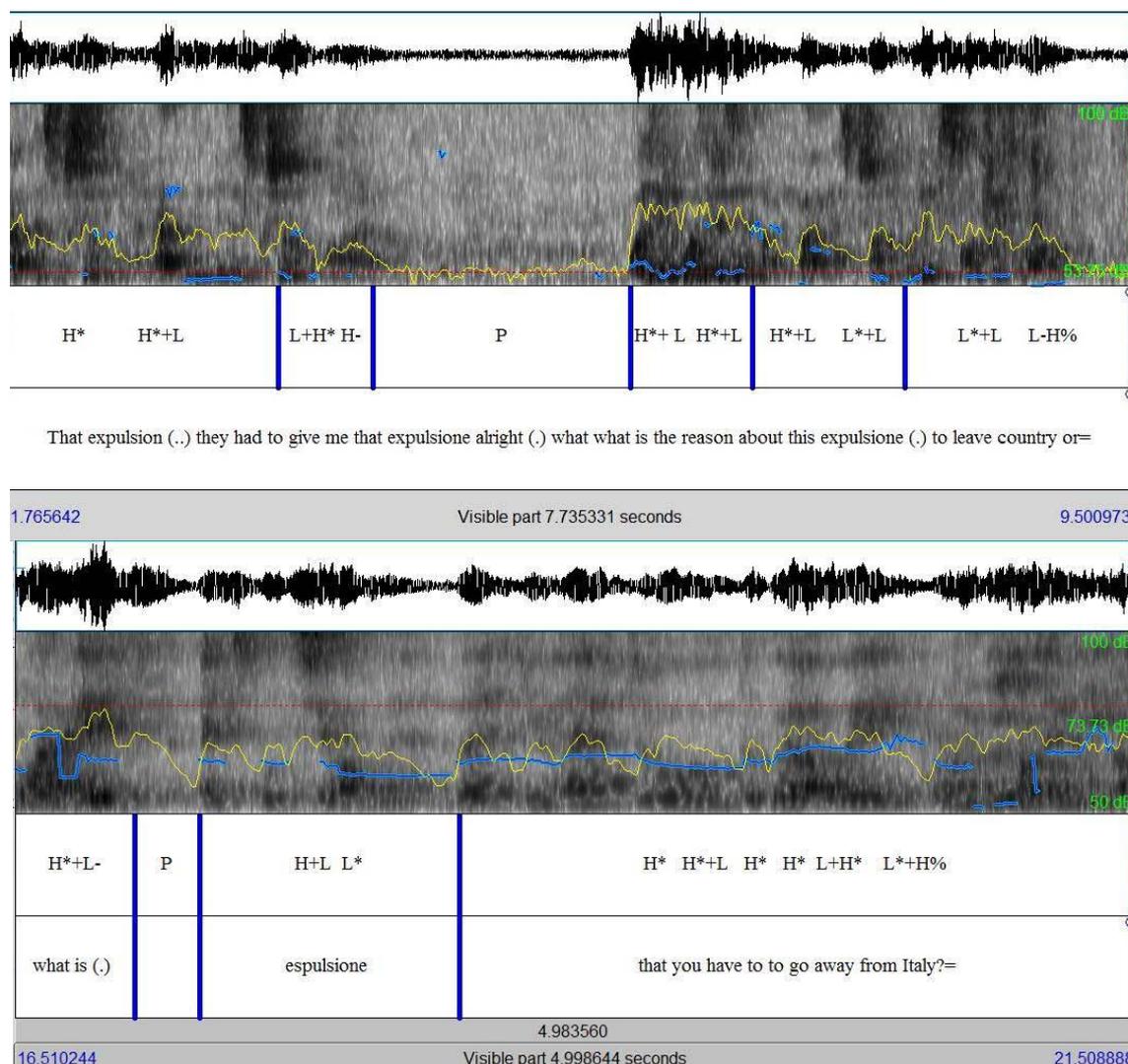


Figure 1. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (36) and (37)

Another interesting case of miscommunication due to inaccurate tonal structure is visible in turn (23) probably derived by an incorrect interpretation of AS' turn in (22) as confirmed by his response in (24) and above all by the IM's continuer backchannel in (25). Actually in (23) the rising tone on 'from Italy' is not justifiable in the declarative sentence. Figure 2 and 3 show the acoustic display of the adjacency pair under examination:



Figures 2 and 3. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (22) and (23)

On the other hand, AS's utterances are very short and concise (though some exceptions can be found in (26), (42), and (74) where he formulates longer statements and arguments rhythmically marked by the prosodic features of his English variation, namely Nigerian English)<sup>18</sup> and non-lexical items seem due to linguistic insecurity (e.g. in (42) and (70)). The intensity of his utterances is low and his speaking rate is faster than the other participants. AS interrupts his interlocutors overlapping or latching to their speech in turns (23-24), (43-44) and (63-64) with illocutionary force and in (42) the considerable duration of the pause (more than 5 sec.) probably reveals a misinterpretation of LA's and IM's falling/rising-tone questions in (40) and

<sup>18</sup> Nigerian English's phonological features include: stress misplacement; phonological interferences (over-differentiation, under-differentiation, re-interpretation of sound, sound substitution and hypercorrection); neglect of the intonational range of Standard English; fixed intonation patterns, i.e. final falling tone for statements, and falling rising tone for questions; avoidance of contrastive focus (cf. Ofuya 1996; Adedimeji 2007).

(41) since AS's hesitation in (42) cannot be due to linguistic incompetence but rather to behavioural reasons.

LA and IM instead are characterized by some segmental tracts, such as frequent final vowel prolongation (e.g. in (1), (32), (34), (39), (67)), frequent pitch movements, slow speaking rate and decreasing tempo (e.g. in (75)), and lexical prominence (words underlined in black in the transcription), aimed at focusing attention along with suprasegmental and intonational patterns derived from the Italian variation she speaks (e.g. characterized by yes/no questions rising tones, rising/falling tone in wh-questions, slow speaking rate, syllabic isochrony; and non-lexical backchannels as in (77)) and the use of pauses to mark new information or linguistic difficulties.

In (75) LA employs a marked intonational structure to persuade AS to be assisted by a private lawyer. Figure 4 represents the acoustic analysis of the move:

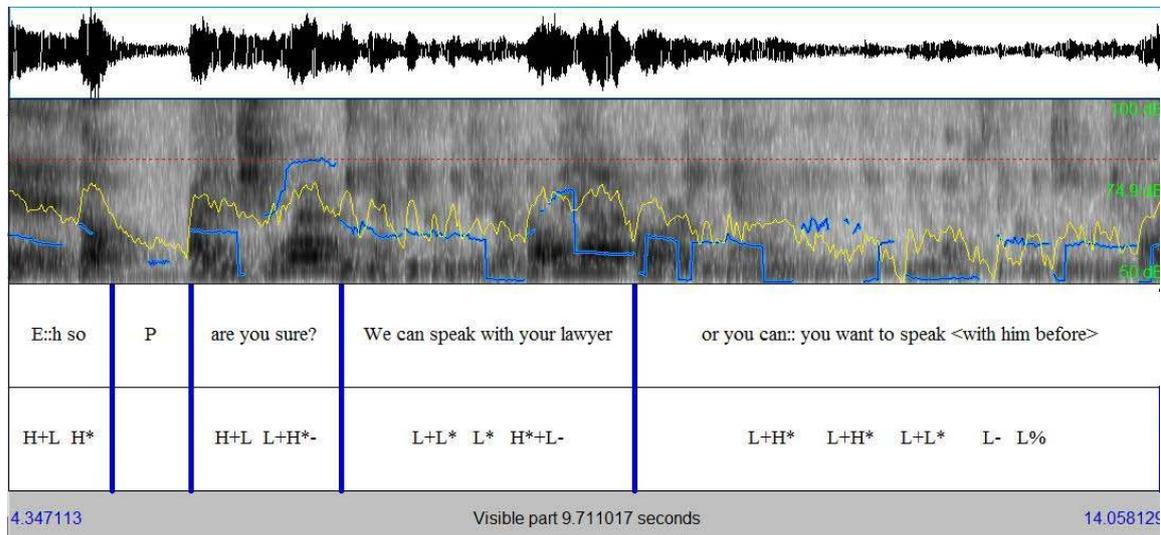


Figure 4. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (75)

Pauses, speaking rate and pitch movements are widely exploited by LA and IM to attract AS's attention and elicit favourable perlocutionary effects.

Participants' intonational and prosodic behaviours are justified by the turn-taking structure and vice versa. LA's perspective, also supported by IM's faithful adherence to her views, is validated and justified by her intentional attempt and disposition to assist and persuade AS that her suggestions may help him in solving his legal problems. On the other hand AS's weak and uncertain prosodic performance further convinces LA and IM that they should persist in their linguistic and paralinguistic prescriptive and sometimes patronizing behaviour.

#### 4.2.2. *Conversational analysis*

The paralinguistic inferences derived from the acoustic analysis have been then correlated to the conversational analysis of moves and acts carried out by means of both Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969, 1975) and UK and US Conversation Analysis models (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975; Burton 1980; Goffman 1981; Moerman 1988; Tsui 1989; Stenstrom 1994) with the aim of detecting speakers' intentionality performed through ELF oral exchanges (and therefore acoustic correlates) and expected or unexpected perlocutionary effects on the receivers (Searle 1983).

After an opening move about the negative verdict of the local commission, LA's eliciting moves (turns (1), (5), (7), (9), (11) and (13)) – to which AS respectively replies with a series of laconic backchannels (2), (4), (6), (8), (10), (12), (14) – are aimed at verifying her assumptions about AS's legal position.

LA intends to be clear and by means of an assertive act (15) she introduces IM's intervention which is initially required as a mere interpreting of the rendering of LA's Italian words to their English translation. Nonetheless throughout the exchange IM's personal attitude will emerge thus revealing that mediation approach is very often totally different from a mere interpreting act.

IM's focusing move in (16) (properly measured by pauses and speech rate) is actually aimed at introducing the main issues of the conversation. However AS is not able to totally understand her ELF and interrupts IM's turn with a dispreferred response in (17) promptly replied by LA's backchannel in (18) supported by IM in (19).

Yet the crucial aspect of the exchange is highlighted only in (21): this turn immediately originates AS's following challenging moves (cf. turns (22) and (26)) immediately replied by IM's upgrading moves (Moerman 1998) in (27), (29) and (30). In (31) the immediate AS' latching signals the perlocutionary effects of the previous IM's utterances on him (namely those of warning against the possibility to be sent to a detention centre, compared to a prison). Nonetheless, LA's illocutionary intents – as higher-status participant – prevail on his worries and in (34) she focuses on another legal solution, then supported by IM's explanation (35).

Once again in (36) AS shows a case of miscommunication due to IM's linguistic mistake at the end of (35) (i.e. *you have to* – instead of *you don't have to* – *stay in the structure*) perceived by LA who repairs in (38).

Turns from (39) to (60) represent a series of AS's eliciting and LA's answering moves where IM's intervention is limited to a unique supporting utterance in (53) to reassure AS, who justifies his worry in (54). In this part of the exchange, AS's paralinguistic correlates to linguistic acts show

perlocutionary effects on LA who patiently replies to his repeated questions and need to be reassured.

In (61) however LA regains her role of ‘gatekeeper’ and introduces the possibility of assisted repatriation, but AS’s overlapping speech in (63) and his summoning act in (66) make LA desist from her intent (cf. her rejection finalizer – cf. Tsui 1989 in turn (67)).

Another source of miscommunication may be found in (68) and in (69) where LA and IM contradict each other (it is interesting to notice that IM uses *have to* while LA employs an epistemic *can* in the same sentence structure) provoking AS’s hesitant eliciting moves in (70) and (72) quickly replied in a hedging tone by LA (cf. (73) and (75)) who pursues her illocutionary intent to get AS assisted by a private lawyer.

The last part of the exchange deals with a role disambiguation: from (76) to (92) AS realizes who is the man that advised him to go to the public centre for legal advice. AS’s acknowledging move in (93) closes the exchange, actually confirming the prevailing LA’s illocutionary intent which succeeds in persuading AS to do what she expected.

#### 4.2.3. Register analysis

In Halliday’s (1994) perspective, register analysis is aimed at detecting language functions as lexical and syntactic choices that signal semantic and pragmatic purposes as well as the interpersonal relationship established among participants in an interaction.

This aspect is further confirmed by a discourse and register analysis based on the Standards of Textuality outlined by de Beaugrande & Dressler (1981). Semantic and syntactic choices are thus here considered as expression of Halliday’s functions in an ELF speaking contexts where participants share different levels of knowledge and status asymmetries.

More precisely, here the *situationality* of the exchange is characterized by an IM who is called to mediate between LA’s Italian legal discourse and AS’s ELF replies. In her speech acts, along with nice and smiling attitudes, downgrading and conative moves are added throughout her construction of the message.

Hence, the persuading illocutionary aims force her to be *coherent* and organize concepts and logical relations in ELF; therefore her utterances are connected and *cohesive* in order to attract AS’s attention and avoid misunderstandings (e.g. (16), (21), (27)).

However, communication breakdowns precisely occur when *informativity*, *accessibility* and *acceptability* are not receiver-oriented, as confirmed in turns (26), (36), and (42) where AS interrupts the exchange to

ask explanation about social, legal and personal aspects which evidently are taken for granted by his interlocutors.

All the same is for *intertextuality* which refers to shared prior knowledge: here participants do not possess the same legal expertise and therefore bare references to normative legislation and procedures may hinder mutual comprehension.

The *formality* of the exchange (along with its *politeness*) signals the type of social distance among participants. IM and LA try to reduce the social gap with AS by means of linguistic and paralinguistic strategies to enhance his attention.

First of all, *formality* is signalled by lexical choices: as usual popularized items are mixed to specialized terms related to the legal and judicial domain (e.g. Italian technical words – in italics – are not translated and thus spread as such among migrants).

In the opening move LA refers to the commission report by means of popularized terms (except for the Italian *verbale*), such as *paper*, *document*, *answer*, *result* (cf. turns (1), (5), and (7)) since she perceives that AS's backchannels are not convincing (as also confirmed by the right-dislocated question in (9) which finally provokes AS's spontaneous answering in (10)).

Besides textual markers, verbs of mental processes and deictics (signalled in brown in the transcription) as well as conjunctions (in pink) exert their influence in the illocutionary conveyance of the message.

IM's register is cohesive and coherent in respect to *intentionality* and *situationality*: in (16), (27) and (35) she textually constructs her utterances in order to be clear and be easily understood by AS who, however, often challenges her statements, (as in (17), (22), (24), and especially in (26), where his tension is perceivable not only paralinguistically (increasing speaking rate, intensity and loudness, nervous movements, overlapping speech in (27)), but also stylistically, as confirmed by the use of the present simple to express past events concerning the expulsion order (e.g. *I go, I spend, I only have, they give, they bring*).

Possessives and pronouns play a significant role in the meaning construction – e.g. the use of *they* instead of *we* in (32) (and then recalled by AS in (33)) marks the speaker's perspective towards *impersonality* and a shift of responsibility for what she is stating. On the contrary, the use of the 'majestic' *we* in (19), (29) and (69) is in contrast with *formality* and *impersonality* aiming at signalling participation and involvement to AS.

Conative and phatic questions (such as *no?*, *ok?*, *do you understand?*) aim at maintaining the communicative contact with the receiver and assessing (and eliciting) his/her opinion.

The use of verbs like *know*, *decide*, *want* attempts to stimulate the receiver's perlocutionary reaction and above all his/her act of consciousness and involvement.

Moreover LA and IM do not avoid the risk of being biased as they show explicitly their opinion, thus influencing AS's decisions. In (35), (38), (61), and (75) epistemic hedges (Salager-Meyer 1994; Skelton 1997), such as *for what I think*, *i think it's normal*, *are you sure?*, clearly have an impact on AS's perception and knowledge.

Moreover, in (61), LA perceives that AS has not grasped her ironic cue (*\*is not a big solution*) as her final phatic question actually confirms (*\*have you understand?*).

As for LA, actually she is unable to prevent herself from intervening, in the attempt to convince the man of what she considers as the best solution for him (e.g. *[laughing] they say is a camp but really is a prison* (.), *the judge can give you a permit to stay* (.), *so is the best solution for what I think*, *the procedure is \*more easy* (.), *you have not this danger*) so as the AS addresses his questions directly to her, neglecting IM.

Even in (65), LA's biased description of programmes for assisted repatriation is observable through the use of the adversative *but* and the negative expression *they don't give you a lot of money*, further reinforced by *only*.

As a consequence, AS seems worried about his position and gradually becomes aware of his serious lack of legal knowledge: his paralinguistic behaviour is characterized by continuous body movements on the chair and facial expressions (such as frequent blinking, and pursed lips). He is scared and confused (above all because of his possible detention and deportation), and shows great trust in LA's words and indications (*I need the document so* (..) *you tell me to* (..) *do it* (.) *you have to tell me* (.) *this one or this one* (.) *I want to do it*).

It is therefore evident the fundamental role played by modal verbs in the performing of interpersonal function in ELF.

Actually modality – especially deontic – is widely used by Italian participants (confirming their leading and prescriptive role) and their inaccurate employment may cause cross-cultural interferences inevitably due to its intrinsic judgemental and interpersonal nature.

In this exchange *have to* is often used by all the participants involved, along with *can* and *need*. This modal verb indicates obligation from an external authority, different from the speaker. In this context its use may convey the idea that law and procedures are prescriptive of behaviours and practices which are not shared or accepted by the speaker, in this case LA and IM.

The same assessment may be suggested for deontic *can*, which is surely used to convey a commissive attitude and disposition, but can also be interpreted by the receiver as a concession.

For instance, in (69) LA shows accommodating aims by means of the use of deontic *can* and *need* and the use of verbs for mental process like *think* and *decide*.

Very probably LA and IM are not conscious of the semantic potential of the modal verbs they use (contrary to the various forms of hedging strategies they apply to mitigate the authoritative tone). However in intercultural communicative situations, like those involving vulnerable categories of participants, their semantic and pragmatic use may convey distorted or misinterpreted messages.

On the other hand, AS's insecurity and tension is also signalled by his frequent hesitations, pauses and non-lexical utterance, as well as by a series of repetitions in order to maintain the communicative channel with his interlocutors (e.g. *\*espulsione, they give me* (24), *they bring me back again* (26), *what I, I go* (42), *I need, I would prefer* (74), *I don't know my lawyer* (76), (79), (82), *he told me to come* (83) and (85), *I know him* (91)).

#### 4.3. Phonopragmatic dimensions: Case study 2

Since its very beginning the exchange reveals the risk of a frequent communication breakdown due to linguistic divergences especially in the ELF variations spoken by the three participants: an Italian legal advisor, an Urdu asylum-seeker claiming that he comes from Pakistan, and an Italian IM (a postgraduate in foreign languages).

- (1) LA: **Can** I help you?
- (2) AS: **My problem ehmm**
- (3) LA: **Mmm** what kind of (..)
- (4) AS: Translator (.) no good English
- (5) LA: **Ah** (.) ok (..) a translator (.) from? (..)
- (6) IM: What language do you speak?
- (7) AS: Urdu
- (8) LA: Urdu?
- (9) AS: Indian language
- (10) IM: English not?
- (11) AS: No English
- (12) LA: **But** now we have not an interpreter in this moment **so::** if you like we **can try** to speak in English **ok?** Slowly **so::** you **can try** to understand (.) **ok?**

- (13) AS: Ok (.) **my problem** here this place (.) my fingerprint (.) and I'm apply *asile* (.) **but** apply *asile* (.) in *Sicilia* (.)
- (14) LA: **Mmm** (.) *sì* (.) [IM: yes]
- (15) AS: **But they** ask to go back and take a paper and yesterday *questura* (.) here no my friend no:: (.) *questura:: questura* no (..) six month (.) six month (.) **but** now (.) confused (.) have no help (..)
- [...]
- (16) IM: When did you arrive (.) in Italy? (.) the date
- (17) AS: Date (..) before (..) December (.) before (.) five (..) March
- (18) LA: **But** never police give you a permit to stay?
- (19) AS: Yeah *Questura* **eh** (.) **when coming** (.) **Greece** [LA: **mmm**] by spill board board spill board yes [LA: **mmm**] catch the police (.) and after **they** ask **if** you apply *asile* (.) yes or no (.) me confused (.) **I don't know** I don't speak [IM: **mmm**] I call here my friend in \*\*\*\* (.) you here apply *asile* (.) to go other country (.) go and other country ask to go back (.) and go to back \*\*\*\* (.) **but** no help (.) I go to *Sicilia* (.) *Sicilia* ask me finger (.) **this this this very big problem now** I'm confused
- (20) IM: (.) You don't have any documents
- (21) AS: No have documents
- (22) LA: **But** when police catch you some time ago (.) **they** gave (.) you a paper (.) something (.) where is write that you **must** left Italy to come back in your country?
- (23) AS: Yeah **but** this paper you go out country
- (24) LA: Out country? In another country? [AS: ya] or in your country?
- (25) AS: This paper (.) my country out
- (26) IM: Italy out
- (27) AS: Yeah (.) *Italia* (.) out
- (28) LA: And have you this paper?
- (29) AS: No (.) no paper (.) other people say this paper **no problem**
- (30) LA: **Mmm** (..)
- [...]
- (31) IM: When police catch you here in \*\*\*\* or in \*\*\*\*
- (32) AS: Yes first time (..)
- (33) IM: **Eh** (.) police gave a paper
- (34) AS: Yeah
- (35) IM: This paper to go out
- (36) AS: Yeah
- (37) IM: **If** now you apply *asile* (.) asylum (.) **ehm** you **can** go in a camp [AS: yeah] (.) in a closed (.) closed (.) not open (.) closed
- (38) AS: Closed camp

(39) *IM*: Yes (.) where you **have to** stay inside (..) some months (.) some months (.) **ok? So if** you apply *asile* you **can risk** to stay in this closed camp (.) **do you understand?**

(40) *AS*: Yeah

(41) *IM*: In a closed camp (.) you **cannot** go out this camp

(42) *AS*: A closed camp (..) **it's a problem?**

(43) *IM*: It's not (..) a good place

(44) *LA*: Is like a prison for foreign people (.) **so** you **cannot** go out (.) you **must** stay inside this place (.) and you **must** wait until commission **decide** to meet you (.) **then** you **must** explain to the commission **the reason why** you left your country and **if they** give you the positive answer you **can** go out (.) **if they decide** to give you a negative answer **they can** bring you in your country (.) **so it's not so:: so easy (.) but the other possibility is** to leave Italy to go in another country **but** your fingerprints are in the database (.) Europe database (.) **so they can ehm decide** to bring you again in:: Italy (.) **because** it's the first country (.) **so:: the situation it's not so so easy (.) so** first of all we **must** make a control about **this** expulsion (.) **this paper** that police give you (.) **if** it's true that it was an expulsion (.) **because if** you have not=

(45) *AS*: =**But if** this my fingerprint here my paper

(46) *IM*: And they show you in computer?

(47) *AS*: Yes

[...]

(48) *LA*: **The only possibility we have is this (.) we can** write a letter to the police and **we can** send it by fax (.) **ok? Then** I **can** give you a copy of **this** letter where it is write that you ask asylum (..) with **that** letter you **can** go to the police (.) **because** I call them and **they** wait you (.) and **they can** understand **if** you risked asylum or not (.) before (.) **ok?** Thursday morning around nine thirty [*AS*: yeah] I **have to** go to the police (.) **if** you wait me around nine thirty in front of the police (..) [*AS*: **but**] now listen me (..) Thursday morning around nine thirty wait me in front of the police (.) **ok? Because** I come to the police to resolve your situation (.) **ok?**

(49) *AS*: Ok

(50) *LA*: Next Thursday (.) around nine thirty we **will** meet in front of the police

(51) *AS*: Next Thursday?

(52) *LA*: Next tomorrow (.) not tomorrow (..)

(53) *AS*: **But** my friend=

(54) *LA*: =Alone (..) **I think is better** to speak before me and **then if** there are not any problem (.) I **can** introduce you (.) I **can** help you (.) **ok? But if** you **want** to go alone **they** take your fingerprints again (.)

**they** watch **if** you are or not an asylum seeker (.) **if** you are you **can** go in a center (.) **if** you are not you **can** go in another place (.) **ok? But** you **must decide** what you **want** to do (.) **if** you **want** to come with me we **can** go together next Thursday

#### 4.3.1. Acoustic analysis

Paralinguistic aspects here supply what linguistic competence lacks, yet with the serious risk of being misunderstood. Actually in the present exchange (total duration 18m 34s) LA soon realizes AS's communicative impediments (cf. turn (1)) and adapts her prosodic and paralinguistic behaviour to her interlocutor's attitude by means of high volume and slow speaking and articulation rate.

As for pitch movements, LA tends to mark her utterances with narrow focus along with the use of the initial '*but*' (e.g. in (12), (18), (22), and (24)).

Turns (46), (50) and (56) are based on argumentative purposes and therefore linguistic as well as paralinguistic levels equally contribute to fulfil LA's intents.

First of all the use of regular pauses at the end of the syntactic boundary conveys seriousness and focuses on the receiver's attention. Pitch accents and prominence on certain words (underlined in black in the transcription) are aimed at attracting and making AS aware of the risk to be assigned to a detention centre.

Figures 5 and 6 show LA's typical intonational behaviour in the declarative sentence of turn (12) and in the yes/no question in (18): both utterances are marked by pitch movements corresponding to salient pragmatic aims. In (12) the authoritative and assertive tone is signalled by a rising tone on '*ok?*' and a falling one on '*understand*' which leaves no space to replies.

In (18) the prominence on '*but never*' and the rising tone on '*to stay*' mark the focus on the yes/no question and above all on the importance of AS's response.

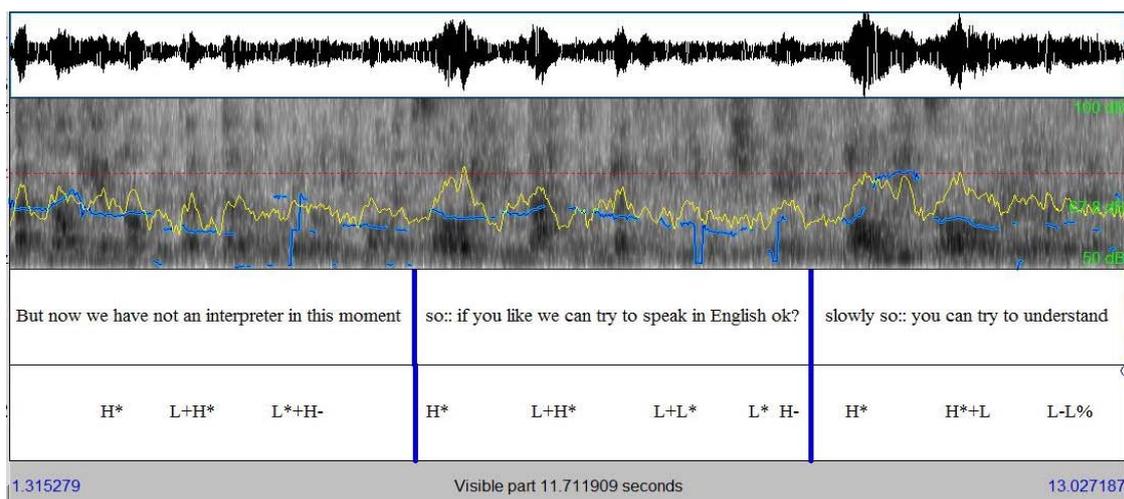
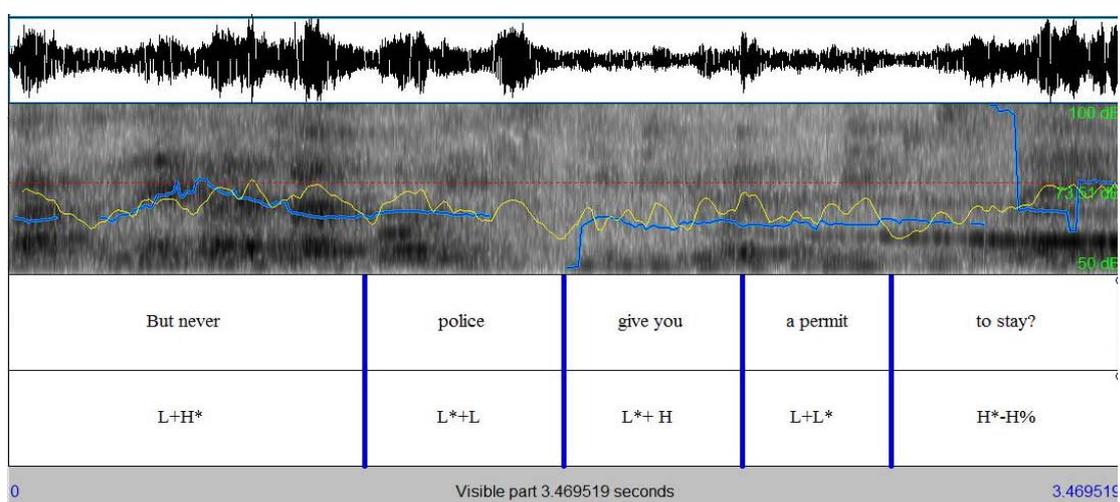


Figure 5. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (12)



Figures 6. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (18)

In her limited interventions IM as well makes use of the same prosodic devices employed by LA but her tone is never prescriptive and authoritative rather quite apprehensive and worried, which signals her personal involvement in the conversational process.

Figure 7 illustrates one of her mediation act aimed at informing AS of the functioning of a detention centre (cf. turn 39). Her intonational profile is variously marked also in the following turns which finally result in the AS's left-branching move in (44). Long pauses and frequent pitch movements from rising to falling tones increase the receiver's attention as well as signal the speaker's involvement and illocutionary force.

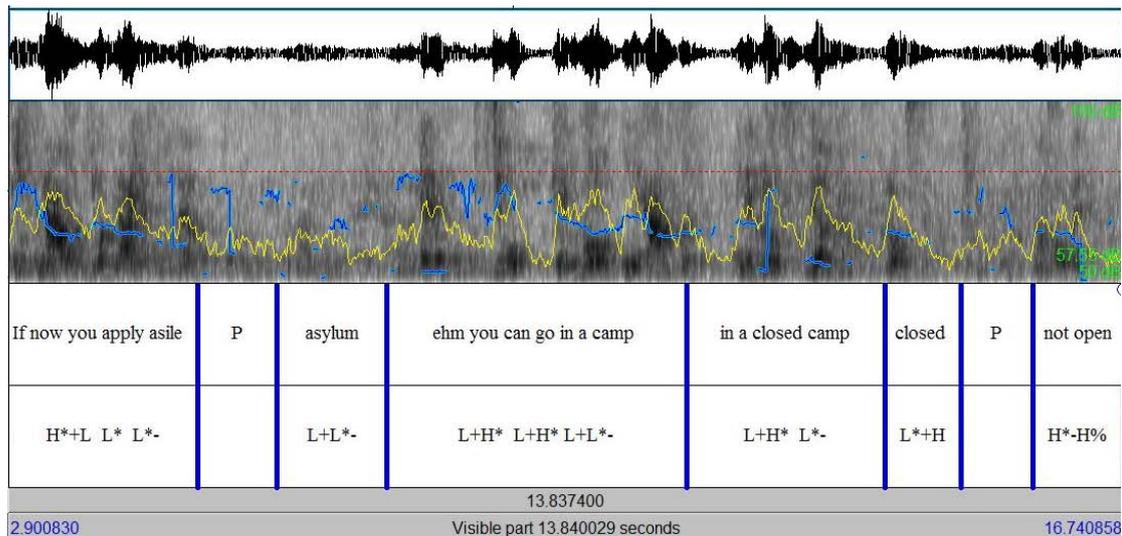


Figure 7. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (39)

AS's utterances are very slow and uncertain: his longest turns are in (15) and (19) where he attempts to clarify his experience and reply to LA's and IM's questions. His pauses may not be considered as expressing semantic value, but rather his linguistic inadequacy to express what he really wants to state and explain. However his intonational profile is apparently unmarked and inexpressive, which probably denotes his misinterpretation, or better, lack of proper understanding of LA's and IM's directives and warnings.

#### 4.3.2. Conversation analysis

The encounter, as usual, is directed by LA in the role of leader who opens the turn-taking with the eliciting in (1). However AS tries explicitly to make clear his linguistic difficulty by means of a dispreferred answer in (4). LA (maybe because she has not properly understood his request) and IM (thanks to their shared knowledge) apparently seem interested in solving his linguistic need in turns (5) and (6) as confirmed by AS's perlocutionary reaction after their questions in (7) and (9). However as a higher-status participant, LA finally closes the first part of the encounter with an offer in (12), easily accepted by AS in (13).

After this initial preamble LA is rather inclined to determine AS's difficulties (as stated in his first words in (2)) and therefore she begins to weave her illocutionary intents by means of a welfare-interview approach (Guido 2008) which however is pragmatically ineffective. Actually IM's first eliciting in (16) is replied by the AS's dispreferred answer in (17) which is apparently illogic (March is not before December in a calendar year). Therefore LA's focusing (marked by the initial *but*) in (18) is aimed at investigating AS's legal status. However the man's further dispreferred challenging move in (19) signals the introduction of a new topic (the EU

principle of first contact)<sup>19</sup> which IM immediately interprets as his implied admission of being irregular in Italy (cf. turn (20)).

In turns (20) – (49) LA instead aims at confirming the legal hypothesis she has already developed through her previous experience and procedural background which she will eventually reveal in (46).

Thus (20), (22), (26), (28), (33), and (35) (along with AS's continuer moves in (34) and (36)) are LA's and IM's eliciting moves – paralinguistically marked – aimed at gathering supporting evidence – like a detective's investigation – for their covert assumptions.

On the other hand, AS – confirming his conversational role of lower-status participant – regularly replies through preferred responses avoiding instead challenging or questioning LA's illocutionary acts.

AS's echoing response in (38) is followed by IM's new focused summoning (in turn (39)) which anticipates the last one in (41) where the unequal 'preference organization' of concepts and opinions (Guido 2004a: 350) – frequent in cross-cultural institutional or specialized communication settings – is further exploited. Actually perlocutionary effects on AS are clearly expressed in his preferred question in (42) which gives LA the chance to focus on legal consequences of expulsion order in the long explanation in (44).

Therefore after IM's first warnings, LA, firmly convinced of the truth of her deductions, formulates – as expected by her role – her directive summoning in (44), intentionally and consciously marking it both prosodically and textually.

AS's latching in (45) actually confirms LA's assumptions as well as AS's understanding of his legal position (further focused by IM's eliciting in (46)).

Moreover, in (48) LA's authoritative tone enables her to be prescriptive and indicates what AS has to do. Even the man's challenging move in (53) is immediately replied by another LA's unconditional directive in (54) which consists of an explicit warning (constructed through a rising-tone cause/effect *if*-clause: *but if you want to go alone... they take your fingerprints*) which eventually closes the encounter and prevents any AS's reply.

<sup>19</sup> Within the Dublin System, which consists of the Dublin Regulation and the EURODAC Regulation (aimed to establish a Europe-wide fingerprinting database for unauthorised entrants to the EU) asylum seekers and irregular border-crossers over the age of 14 are identified by means of their fingerprints which are sent digitally to a central unit at the European Commission, and automatically checked against other prints on the database. This enables authorities to determine whether asylum seekers have already applied for asylum in another EU Member State or have illegally transited through another EU Member State ("principle of first contact").

### 4.3.3. Register analysis

Once again register analysis is a useful tool to identify participant's textual, syntactical and lexical choices in fulfilling the functional construction of the message. ELF intercultural communication reveals through their – aware or unaware – textual mapping the speakers' beliefs, opinions and values derived from personal and socio-cultural constraints as significantly pointed out in Halliday (1994) in his interpretation of texts as 'socially shaped'.

As for the Pakistani AS, surprisingly he is not able to express satisfactorily his request<sup>20</sup> (apart from the frequent reference to the expulsion order: *but now I'm confused* (.), *this paper to go out country, this paper to go out* (.), *Italia* (.) *out*): the exchange opens with the explicit statement of his linguistic difficulties (*my problem ehmm, translator* (.) *no good English, no* (.) *no English*), soon overcome by LA who suggests that they should speak in English (*but now we have not an interpreter in this moment* (.) *so if you like we can try to speak in English* (.) *ok? slowly so:: we can try to understand* (.) *ok?*).

Therefore, his concepts are not efficiently expressed and are not appropriate to the 'situation', neither syntactically nor lexically (his linguistic variation is closer to the so-called 'broken English' than to ELF).

Although LA and IM attempt to apply ELF accommodation strategies, also supported by prosodic emphasis (as seen above, pauses, back-channels, final vowel lengthening – signalled in green in the transcription – slow speech rate, and voice intensity), the conversation is particularly difficult and non-cooperative (e.g. LA: *So you arrived in Italy in march* (..) - AS: *This paper to go out* (.) - LA: *Ok* (.) *when when they gave you this paper* (..) - AS: *Yes* - LA: *Eh:: the day after did you came to the police?* - AS: *Every time I go to questura* - A: *Eh*).

On the other hand, LA, who is aimed at precisely reconstructing AS's recent experience in Italy, accurately organizes her ideas and questions respecting *coherence* and logical relations. In this attempt she is assisted by IM since the very beginning of the exchange where the mediator supplies for LA's inaccuracy in formulating her questions (cf. e.g. turns (5) and (6)).

The fulfilment of the interpersonal function is particularly interesting since LA and IM perform through ELF utterances their illocutionary acts in order to achieve their goals: therefore *intentionality* is not always sender-oriented and ideas are not expressed respecting social *acceptability* and legal *accessibility*, as confirmed especially in the last part of the exchange in turns from (33) to (46).

<sup>20</sup> It is actually unusual that a Pakistani citizen (yet the man has not produced any identity documents) is not able to speak an 'outer circle' English: if his phonological profile respects standard features, the linguistic structure of his utterances is instead clearly poor and fragmented.

The whole exchange is characterized by a linguistic and paralinguistic accommodation tactic realized through textual and prosodic correlates. All the participants involved (even IM) communicate through divergent use of verbal and syntactic expressions deviating from a number of standard grammatical rules in the name of communicability and *intentionality*. Paralinguistics as well (in terms of body and facial movements) aims at integrating what words fail to properly communicate. This is the case of AS's fragmentary utterances in (13), (15), (19), (25), and (45); LA's marked questions in (18), (22), and (24) where verbal tenses are mixed between past and present (e.g. *\*police catch you, \*where is write, \*that you must left, \*never police give you?*); and above all LA's summoning declaratives in (44), (48) and (54) where textual strategies, carried out especially through conjunctions and modal verbs, contribute to LA's warning intents towards AS (e.g. the simile *\*Is like a prison, you cannot go out, you must stay inside, you must wait, you must explain, they can bring you, so it's not so:: so easy, but your fingerprints are in the database, so:: the situation it's not so so easy*).

However, the use of textual markers (in brown in the transcription), modal verbs (in blue) and a series of conjunctions (in pink), indicates also LA's textual disposition to *cohesion*: the logical sequence of utterances guides to her receiver to the pragmatic achievement of her intents (e.g. by means of deontic *must* and *can*; conjunctions like *so, if, but*; hedging structures such as *I think is better, the situation is not so easy*; the use of the 'majestic' *we*, and of imperatives like *\*listen me*).

IM too operates at the level of textual 'deletion' and 'generalization' (van Dijk 1980) eliminating what she considers irrelevant or even impeding syntactic and textual details. This conscious ELF simplification, aimed at mimicking AS's stylistic and communicative behaviour, is deliberately applied after some attempts to produce her utterances in standard English which she perceives as pragmatically ineffective (cf. in (6) and (16)). This accommodating attitude may be interpreted as a downgrading operation in the interpersonal setting: in this sense, social distance is flattened and IM tends to neglect the necessary equidistant positioning between AS and LA. In (31), (33), (35), (37), (39) and (46), actually, IM uses non-standard lexical and syntactic expressions (associated with conative questions and non-lexical fillers) borrowed by AS's linguistic variation in the attempt to approach her interlocutor's communicative mode and facilitate the successful fulfilment of LA's illocutionary intents (e.g. *\*police catch you, a paper, this paper to go out, you apply \*asile (.) asylum (.) ehm, if you apply \*asile, ok?, do you understand?, and \*they show you*).

However, the exchange significantly ends with the LA's directive modality aimed at giving help to AS (e.g. *the only possibility we have is this (.), if you wait me [but] now listen me (.), I come to the police to resolve*

*your situation (.) ok?*) but according to her conditions (*I think is better to speak before me and then if there are not any problem (.) I can introduce you (.) I can help you (.) ok?*), thus reaffirming her leading higher-status role.

LA's turns in (48) and (54) are linguistically and paralinguistically relevant since LA here expresses all her illocutionary force by means of: *cohesion* (e.g. in (48): *the only possibility we have is this, then I can, with that letter, because I call them,*

*if you wait me, now \*listen me;* in (54): *I think is better, then if there are not, but if you want, but you must decide*); *parataxis* (generally through the frequent use of copulative *and*); the use of 'we' opposed to generic 'they' (vaguely referred to diverse authorities in charge of immigration and border protection); judgmental and interpretative epistemic modality vs. commissive deontic modality (e.g. *you can go in a center, you can go in another place vs. you must decide, we can go together*); popularization vs. specialization (e.g. *place, positive answer, they bring you, paper, a letter, the police vs. e.g. commission, fingerprints, database, expulsion, introduce*).

Moreover, both LA and IM try to understand AS's legal position who evidently is not aware of the risk he is running, first of all that of detention in a CIE (e.g. in (42): *A closed camp (..) it's a problem?*).

Generally, LA, supported by some of IM's important remarks, expresses all the urgency of explaining the judicial measures applied in Italy to AS, by means of textual, lexical and prosodic strategies in conveying the ELF message (e.g. repetitions, hesitations, deontic modality, phatic questions: *ehm you can go in a camp (.) in a close (.) closed (.) not open (.) closed, Yes (.) where you have to stay inside some months (.) some months (.) ok?, you can risk to stay in this closed camp (.) do you understand?, you cannot go out this camp, so you cannot go out (.) you must stay inside this place (.), so the situation it's not so easy (.)*).

It is evident that the encounter is asymmetric because of the linguistic differences which place AS in an inferior position (broken utterances, flat voice, use of gestures to overcome linguistic difficulties) and above all prevent him from expressing his real needs and, at the same time, LA from verifying her perlocutionary effects on him, which forces Italian participants to impose their decisional power and perspective on the migrant.

#### 4.4. Phonopragmatic dimensions: Case study 3

In the following exchange an ex-Yugoslavian mediator tries to gather information from a Nigerian young woman who evidently needs help and whose asylum application has been rejected. Moreover, the mediator is aware of her troubled past of exploitation and prostitution that emerges from the report issued by the local Commission for the right of asylum, and the whole encounter is based on this assumption.<sup>21</sup> The following exchange, therefore, is particularly challenging because the mediator is initially alone for the preliminary encounter with the Nigerian woman and aims at reconstructing her personal experience, aware that in her personal report to the local Commission she stated and confirmed her past of exploitation and prostitution.

- (1) *IM*: When (.) you (.) arrive in Italy? **Describe me your story**
- (2) *AS*: (..) When I leave Nigeria?
- (3) *IM*: Yes (.) ok (.) when you live in Nigeria *dai*
- (4) *AS*: Why (..) now I can't remember the date now
- (5) *IM*: *Vabbè* (.) **don't worry** about the date
- (6) *AS*: When I live in Nigeria?
- (7) *IM*: Yes (.) what do you do? You go to school (.) you lived with your mother (.) your father (..)
- (8) *AS*: Yeah **but** I go to school and I leave to (..) before my mother lets
- (9) *IM*: **Mmm**
- (10) *AS*: The woman who take care of me the mother of \*\*\*\*
- (11) *IM*: **Mmm** (.) the mother of \*\*\*\*
- (12) *AS*: Yeah (.) she take care of me for=
- (13) *IM*: =She was a good woman
- (14) *AS*: Yeah
- (15) *IM*: Ok (..) **then**? [*AS cannot continue and cries*]
- (16) *IM*: No (.) **don't worry** (.) *dai* (.) **we want** to help you (..) **e::h** \*\*\*\* where is now? Where is now? You **know**? **If** you don't **want** to speak with **us don't worry** (.) I **want** to understand your story **we**

<sup>21</sup> The exchange evidently deals with a delicate issue: the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation. The phenomenon, especially in Nigeria, involves a target of young women, all coming from the same geographic area. In most cases, the woman or her family are approached by someone (usually a person who is not unknown, but is part of the extended family, or is a person who is known locally) who suggests a departure for Europe with the prospects of easy work, safe and well-paid. Another aspect of sexual exploitation and trafficking concerns personal documents: victims are not personally involved in any way during the preparation of the required papers to leave their country. And once arrived, girls and women find themselves in a foreign country, without family support and without any possibility of contacting friends and parents possibly present in Italy or Europe. Hence seen from this perspective their fear of admitting and reporting to the police is quite justifiable.

**want only** to help you (.) **if** you **want ok?** I **need** to understand ok? **If you want if you don't want ok (..)** do you **want** to explain me?

(17) AS: He live in \*\*\*\*

(18) IM: In \*\*\*\* ok and **so**

(19) AS: I **don't know**

(20) IM: **Ah** you **don't know (.) ok (.) but (..)** you **want** to speak about Italy (.) when you stay in Italy (.) what (..) you do (.) where you lived (..) what kind of work?

(21) AS: I lived with an old man

(22) IM: **Ah ok ok (.)** and now you don't work with them anymore? **(..) But** with this old person did you have a contract?

(23) AS: No

(24) IM: **So (.)** do you **remember (..)** when did you come in Italy?

(25) AS: In (..) 20\*\*

(26) IM: **Ok** and (..) did you find a job immediately?

(27) AS: The place I lived before in \*\*\*\* and I have a little baby (..) to take it to school (.) **because** the mother is working

(28) IM: **Ah** ok (.) baby-sitter (..) always without contract (..)

(29) AS: **Mmm?** (..) yes (.) yes (..) before they gave me six months

(30) IM: And **then** is expired and you asked to renew it with the job contract?

(31) AS: With the last contract (.) when I go to visit my friends to \*\*\*\*

(32) IM: **But** why you go in the hospital in \*\*\*\*? You have problem? Gynaecological problem?

(33) AS: **Mmm?**

(34) IM: In the hospital?

(35) AS: No (.) **because** of (..) my (..) **mmm** menses (..) they took me to check (..) my (..)

(36) IM: **Mmm (.) ah** and now it's **ok?**

(37) AS: Yes

(38) IM: And what was the reason? **Because** you don't have (..) medical problem?

(39) AS: No (..) the dates

(40) IM: **Ah (.) ah (.) ok (.) ok (.)** the doctor explained to you your problem?

(41) AS: **Mmm**

(42) IM: Ok (.)

[...]

(43) IM: **So** first of all (.) **don't be afraid (.) we** are here to help you (.) **understand?** **Can** you **understand** me? (..) Ok (.) **try** to **think** about your life (.) other problems you had in Italy (.) **try** to **think** about your job (.) **don't know (.)** other activities (.) prostitution (.)

**don't worry** (.) don't be [AS: No (.) I didn't do prostitution] (..) **mmm but** we **need** some more important elements (.) **ok? Don't worry** (.) **don't be afraid** (.)

(44) AS: I didn't do it (.) it's not true (.) I cannot say that to commission

(45) IM: **Ah ok** (.) **but** other reasons (..) do you **want** to come back in Nigeria?

(46) AS: No

(47) IM: **Do you understand? Sure?**

(48) AS: **But** what I have to say?

(49) IM: Your story

[...]

(50) AS: In questura finish (.) **but** now they say to find one lawyer (.) I call my lawyer in \*\*\*\* and my lawyer said I **should** reappeal (.) he said I **should** reappeal **so** that **if** I **can** reappeal they **will** give me back my document

(51) LA: **Mmm** (.) **but** have you some paper about your reappeal?

(52) AS: **Mmm?** What? I **want** to reappeal (.) the lawyer said I **should** come and **e::h** call the lawyer in \*\*\*\*

(53) LA: Sì

(54) AS: **So** that you **can** read the paper to reappeal (.) **this is what** I had before

(55) LA: This is the first appeal or the second one?

(56) AS: Yes (.) all the paper I had before

(57) LA: **Ah** (.) **eh** (..) **can** I watch your last permit to stay?

{...}

(58) **Mmm** (.) police say that it's not ready **because** they are waiting **ehh** like a paper of the lawyer? About your appeal?

(59) AS: (..) yes

(60) LA: **But** who is your lawyer?

(61) AS: In \*\*\*\*

(62) LA: Ok I find it **don't worry** [...]

(63) AS: This is the number

(64) LA: Ok (.) I **can** **try** to call him (.) **ok?**

(65) AS: Sì

{...}

(66) IM: **So** the layer says that **ehm** maybe very probably the appeal is **ehm** <closed and lost> (..) your appeal (..) your previous appeal (.) **ok?**

{...}

(67) LA: Ok (.) **so** lawyer says that he ha:: **has to** control inside your paper **ok? But** he **remember** that your appeal is (.) finish and **you** have not a good result (.) **so** now he **has to** come back in his office

and **then** he **will** call me or advise about **ehm** (.) the result **ehm** (.) I says that there are another possibility for our law (.) another form of asylum (.) **ok? So I want** to know **if** he:: he like to:: **try** this form this appeal this new appeal **ok? For that reason** he **ehm will** call me a::nd <I **can** explain him> what i::s this form of appeal **e::h so I think that it's possible** to meet again next week (..) now >I **have to** ask **if** is open the office< (..) **so** we **will** meet again to have some news (..) **ok?**  
 (68) IM: °Ok° (..)

#### 4.4.1. Acoustic analysis

In the first part of the encounter (whose duration is particularly long – 50m 04s – since it is often interrupted by phone calls and external interruptions) IM is alone with AS and her illocutionary attempts are doomed to fail because she employs an inquisitive tone which is likely to hinder rather than help AS to answer IM's questions and perhaps denounce a case of sexual exploitation.

At the beginning of the encounter IM roughly opens through a wh-question and an imperative eliciting move in (1) which are pronounced in a falling tone and at a slow and articulated rate alternated to frequent pauses. The same patronizing tone is further replicated in (3), (5), and (7).

However after AS's crying, IM reveals her illocutionary intentions in (16) which is pronounced in a begging and concerned tone by means of high volume and frequent pitch movements associated to a faster speaking rate.

In (43) she regains her accommodating tone (slow speaking rate, decrease in loudness and pauses at syntactic and lexical boundaries) which seems to produce the expected effects on AS who reacts in (44) and soon after addresses an ambiguous question in (48) which however is misinterpreted by IM in (49).

Interestingly Figure 8 displays a case of miscommunication due to IM's mispronunciation (more precisely to the phonological accommodation of the vowel lengthening that in English instead is distinctive) of *leave* and *live* which confuses AS (as also signalled by the long pause before her answer).

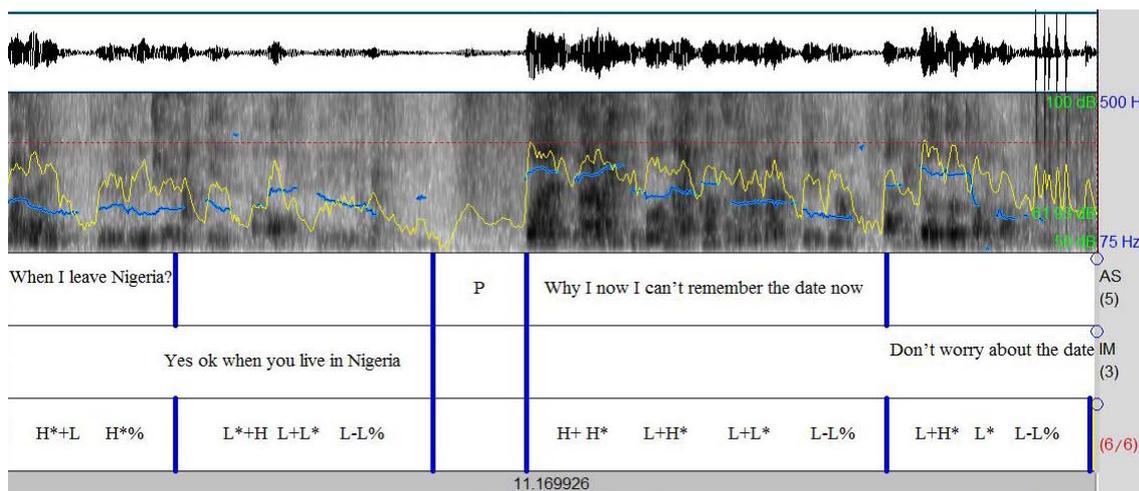


Figure 8. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (2) - (5)

In the second part of the exchange instead AS is with LA and here miscommunication is more frequent because AS cannot understand LA's questions even though they are produced at a slow speaking rate and with high intensity. Probably AS is unable to decode the lawyer's eliciting moves because they are characterized by a tonal transfer from the Italian variation she speaks. Actually questions in (51), (55), and (59) are marked by rising-falling-rising tone typical of the question pattern applied to AS's local variety that she directly and indifferently transfers to her ELF.

IM here intervenes only in the end of the exchange when she has to communicate to AS the negative outcome of her court appeal. In (66) and in (67) actually IM and LA give the same bad news to AS but their intonational and prosodic behaviour is totally different, as shown in figures 9 and 10:

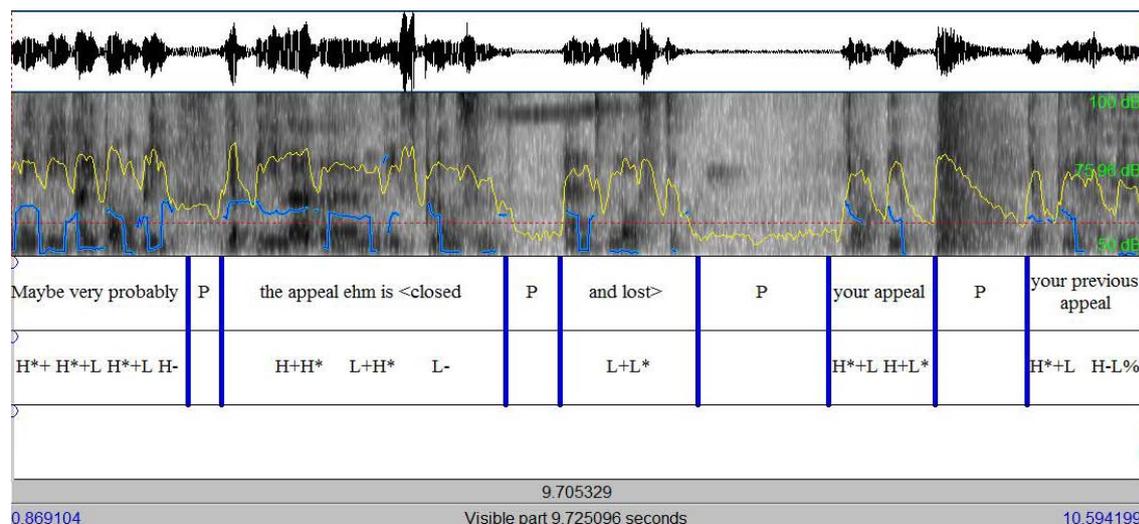


Figure 9. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (66)

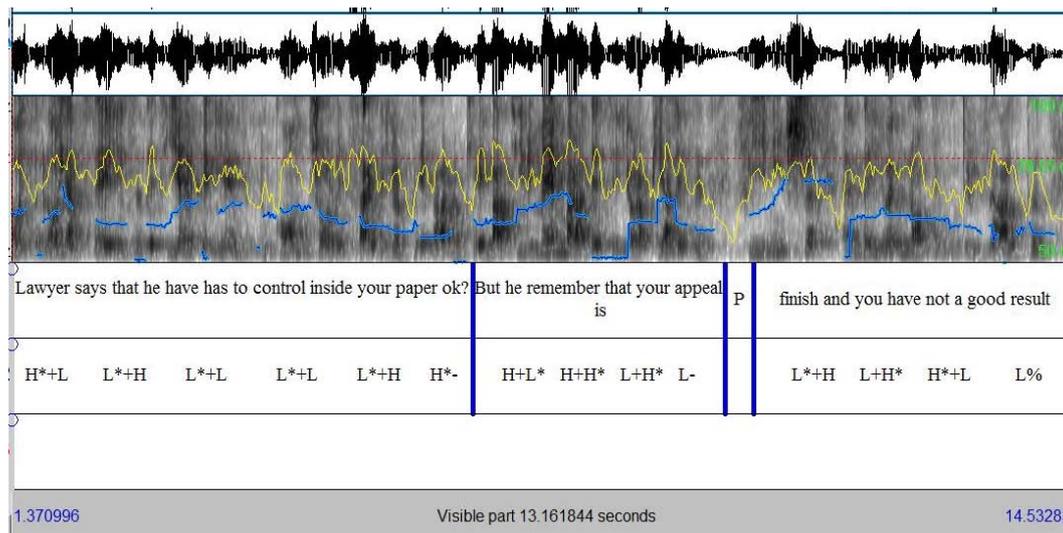


Figure 10. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (67)

IM is involved in AS's personal case (as confirmed by her identifying with AS in (68)): long pauses, deep voice and non-conclusive tone at the end (on 'your previous appeal') define the pragmatic predisposition of hedging bad information and the attempt to mitigate its effects.

On the other hand, LA in (67) begins her directive act with the reformulation of the same unpleasant message with a different tonal behaviour: the high tone on 'ok?' has a preparing conative function and is followed by 'but' marked with the same tonal pattern. The conclusive tone on 'not a good result' signals the illocutionary aim of considering that phase as concluded and considering instead an extreme legal attempt.

AS speaks Nigerian English and her linguistic and paralinguistic devices (especially e.g. silence, whimpering voice, non-lexical items) is quite ambiguous since she does not reveal if her communicative reticence is due to linguistic inadequacy or rather to pragmatic purposes. She challenges her interlocutors' patience since she has voluntarily chosen to be assisted by a lawyer. This unexpected communicative behaviour also challenges the expected role dynamics, since the participant who normally acts as the higher status (namely LA or IM) here is constantly put under discussion.

The paralinguistic behaviour therefore is affected not only by pragmatic aims and intents but also by communicative adaptations to dispreferred conversational deviations.

#### 4.4.2. Conversation analysis

The move/act analysis is again a practical tool to detect the unequal biases emerging from cross-cultural encounters.

The exchange opens with an unsuccessful ‘gate-keeping’ interview (Roberts & Sayers 1987) conducted by IM who in (1), (7) and (15) tries to carry out a series of eliciting moves in order to obtain important information about AS’s past. Yet the woman is uncooperative and the initial miscommunication in (2) and (3) due to an ELF mispronunciation (*leave* vs. *live*) delays the natural eliciting-answering turn-taking, whereas a series of dispreferred responses follows from (4) to (15) when AS bursts into tears.

The emotional level of the exchange prevents it to be successful since even Grice’s (1975) cooperative maxims are not respected either by IM’s questions or by AS’s responses. They are not informative or relevant since IM’s eliciting moves aim implicitly at investigating AS’s past relationships; on the other hand AS’s replies are obscure and ambiguous (cf. (8), (10), (12)).

After the unexpected interruption, IM’s downgrading move in (16) (as well as the following one in (20)) reveals her illocutionary intents and tries to repair the conversational frame shifting topic to work with the aim of directly tackling the issue of prostitution. However, except for the tentative signal of cooperative attitude in (17), the series of AS’s preferred responses (in (25), (27), (29), and (31)) induce IM to attempt another topic in (32), thus invading her health privacy. Actually in (34), (36), (38) and (40), IM’s direct questioning moves are misleading, as especially confirmed by the inquisitive tone of her suggestive conclusion in (38).

However, the turn alternation is pragmatically inconsistent and asymmetric since the two participants deliberately move on different communicative dimensions and are not fair with each other. Only at the end of the first part of the exchange does IM clearly declare her intentions by means of hedging strategies (cf. summoning move in (43)), which however do not have the expected perlocutionary result: AS definitely clarifies her position (44) but uselessly reopens the exchange in (48).

In the second part of the exchange a third participant appears on the conversation floor: i.e. LA who employs a different interactional frame with AS.

The lawyer’s approach is related to strictly legal issues since she is willing to make AS aware of her critical position in the foreign country where she in vain asked for asylum.

However, AS misinterprets LA’s questions, as her summoning move in (52) reveals, further supported in (54) and (56).

LA, differently from IM, decides to find the information she needs by directly phoning to AS’s previous lawyer since she perceives that the woman is deliberately uncooperative after her unanswered eliciting moves in (57) and (58) (but rather very probably she does not understand LA’s words).

IM's focusing move in (66) is particularly interesting from an acoustic point of view (as seen above), but also in respect to the same semantic and pragmatic message reformulated by LA thereafter (in turn (67)), even though by means of totally different pragmalinguistic tools.

Interestingly, the exchange abruptly closes with the expected response of accepting LA's directive in (67) which yet is surprisingly given by IM in (68), while AS abandons the conversation floor leaving the room without replying.

#### 4.4.3. Register Analysis

In the first part IM, who aimed at investigating AS's past, neglects textual accuracy and her questions are often incoherent and 'schema'-biased (Guido 2008) since they do not respect AS's *accessibility* and *informativity* about legal consequences related to court denials and sexual exploitation.

*Politeness* and *impersonality* signal status asymmetry between IM and AS since social distance is conveyed by the 'gatekeeping' interrogation tone used by the Italian mediator (her code-switching to Italian, e.g. *vabbè* and *dai* in (3) and (16), signals annoyance and urgency); however IM downgrades her leading position in (16) and (43) where distance is apparently eliminated by means of prosodic prominence as well as by the modal verb *need* and textual hedging (e.g. *we want only to help you (.) if you want ok?, I need to understand ok? If you want if you don't want ok*).

Nonetheless, her following moves are textually constructed as direct questions without respecting *formality* and even *politeness* (e.g. *did you have a contract?, \*but why you go in the hospital in \*\*\*\*? \*You have problem? Gynaecological problem?, And what was the reason?, because you don't have (..) medical problem, the doctor explained to you your problem?*).

Indeed, IM really wants to help the young woman and is visibly involved as evident in her use of present tense for past actions, conatives and acknowledging moves (e.g. *ok, ok, don't worry*). Anyway at a certain point (43) she downgrades her conversational dimension and expresses her real intentions through frequent hedges and phatic questions, as well as through the use of conjunctions such as *so* and *but* (e.g. *So first of all (.) don't be afraid (.) we are here to help you (.) understand? Can you understand me?, try to think, don't know (.) other activities (.) prostitution, don't worry (.)*).

Nonetheless, IM's repeated attempts inexorably fail since her discourse strategy is pragmatically unproductive and does not cause the expected results on AS.

Actually, as for AS, after the ‘gate-keeping’ opening (as seen above, *when you arrive in Italy? Describe me your life (..)*) IM, in an attempt to carry out an interview, produces a series of questioning moves which however fail as evident in the AS’s dispreferred answers.

However, AS’s paralinguistic behaviour confirms her discomfort and worry that hinders the expression of her needs and requests (she has probably come deliberately at the centre for legal advice since she is still irregular): hesitancies, inaccuracy, tears and shrill voice.

On the other hand, AS’s aggressive tone in the second part of the exchange (*(Mmm? What? I want to reappeal (.) the lawyer said I should come and e::h call the lawyer)*) reveals a shift in conversational ‘tenor’ and this kind of *politeness* behaviour is unusual for the *situationality* of the encounter. The use of the directive *should* and the *intertextual* reference to another lawyer, subverts AS’s leading position which is re-established only in (67) where LA, who has already deduced what is happening, decides to help the young woman to understand how the Italian legal system works for her.

Her long utterance begins with a series of hedging strategies which aim at (i) dislocating the responsibility of her words to another subject (cf. *lawyer says..., \*he remember, \*he like*); (ii) mitigating the effect of bad news on the receiver (*\*your appeal is (.) finish and you **have not a good result**, there are another possibility for our law (.) another form of asylum (.) ok?*); (iii) reaffirming LA’s leading position (*I **can try** to call him (.) **ok?**, So I want to know if, **I think that it’s possible** to meet again next week*).

Similarly, LA’s lexical and syntactic choices (e.g. modal verbs, *I* vs. *he*, phatic questions) are aimed at reaffirming her leading role and decision power.

It is evident that AS’s reaction is almost absent, since she does not reply and interrupt LA’s speech. Her silence is probably due to her disappointment for the dispreferred and unexpected answers just received both by her previous lawyer (confirmed by LA’s phone call) and LA itself.

Yet, AS’s first directive move in (50) (cf. *my lawyer said I should reappeal (.) he said I should reappeal so that..*) is linguistically and paralinguistically built with the pragmatic aim of gaining LA’s care and attention for her case (repetitions, modal verbs, pitch accents, aggressive voice quality, fixed gaze). Instead, during the exchange she gradually realizes that her goal (bringing a court appeal) cannot be fulfilled and very probably her legal situation is more dangerous and complicated than she expected.

Moreover, after IM’s explanation in (66) (cf. *so the layer says that **ehm** maybe very probably the appeal is **ehm** <closed and lost> (..) your appeal (..) your previous appeal (.) ok?*), performed with hesitancies and pitch emphasis, LA wants to intervene, maybe because she is surprised by

the young woman's silent reaction and suspects that IM has not been completely explicit.

This is a case of misinterpretation of silence. AS indeed is silent because of her disappointment and frustration (aroused by the perfectly clear IM's assertion in (66) further reformulated by LA's turn in (67)), and not for misunderstanding or lack of English competence. Here a proper triangular mediation process along with a focused interview would have enhanced the cross-cultural communicative performances and guaranteed their successful outcome in cognitive as well as emotional terms.

Giving and receiving bad news seems gender-relative in this exchange. The Nigerian AS actually is extremely silent and uncooperative, but data collected on the fieldwork among African female participants in the interaction show (as also previously pointed out) that silence is commonly shared as a sign of awareness and disappointment rather than miscommunication.

#### 4.5. Phonopragmatic dimensions: Case study 4

The long and complex ELF exchange (total duration: 35m 05s) involves different interactants and listeners belonging to a Ghanaian family (composed by two women and a man with their baby, who are humanitarian protection holders – henceforth MI1, MI2 and MI3), their Italian LA, an Italian IM, and a group of trainees (who however are only auditors).

- (1) MI1: You *parle englis*
- (2) IM: Yes (.) **tell me**
- (3) MI1: **They want** to take the baby to Africa for visit
- (4) IM: **Ah**
- (5) MI1: **But we want** to **know if** we **can** take the baby to Africa
- (6) IM: **Ah**
- (7) MI1: For visit
- (8) IM: **Ah** ok (.) for visit
- (9) MI1: Yes
- (10) IM: **Mmm** (.) **we have to** ask to the lawyer
- (11) MI1: Ok
- (12) IM: **So** the documents are all ok
- (13) MI1: Yes (.) documents are all ok (.) **but we** just **want** to take the baby to Africa
- (14) MI2: And **then** to come back
- (15) MI1: **But** not (.) not now
- (16) IM: When?
- (17) MI1: Six months or one year to come back (.) ok

- (18) *IM*: Alone?
- (19) *MI2*: Not
- (20) *IM*: With you?
- (21) *MII*: Yes (.) her mother
- (22) *IM*: Where are you from?
- (23) *MII*: Ghana
- (24) *IM*: Do you have relatives in Ghana? (..) Do you have your family in Ghana?
- (25) *MII*: Yes
- (26) *LA*: On your passport there is not=
- (27) *MII*: =No (.) they mixed all together
- (28) *LA*: They have two different passport
- (29) *MI2*: No (.) one passport
- (30) *LA*: **But** she is ON her passport (..) <she is on your passport> ok
- (31) *MII*: Yes (.) yes (.)
- (32) *IM*: Ok (.) there is no problem for this (..) how long time **have** you **to** remain in your country?
- (33) *MI2*: Maybe six months or seven
- (34) *LA*: Six months (.) you **must** come back before **then** your permit expires
- (35) *MI2*: **Ah**
- (36) *LA*: What kind of (..) health problem she has?
- (37) *MI2*: Who?
- (38) *MII*: **A:::** is the baby is not around to renew the document (.) **that's why** we asked  
*[MII, MI2 and MI 3 talk with each other]*
- (39) *LA*: Do you **want** to come back in Ghana **because** she has some health problem and you have passport on your passport she is and you are on (.) **ok?**
- (40) *MII*: Yes (.) yes
- (41) *LA*: You have also a passport for the same reason
- (42) *MII*: Yes (.) yes
- (43) *LA*: You **can** come back in your country **but** you **must** come back in Italy before permit and passport expire
- (44) *MII*: **But** we **can** leave (.) the baby in Africa
- (45) *LA*: **Ah** she can leaves (.) *sì*
- (46) *MII*: She **can** leave
- (47) *LA*: Yes
- (48) *MII*: At the end of the passport (.) the end of the document she **has to** bring her back before renew
- (49) *LA*: Yes (.) before to **remove** if you **want** to have the baby on your passport (.) she **must** come back in Italy (.) **so** when you go to **remove** (.) **ah:::** she=

- (50) *MI2*: =**But** (.) it's not here **because** he **can** renew it
- (51) *M11*: **If** the baby it's not in Italy [no] they **can** renew it
- (52) *LA*: No (.) you **can remove** alone (.) without baby (.) **if** you **want** to put the baby on your permit she **must** come back
- (53) *M11*: **Ah but if** the baby is not here
- (54) *MI2*: **Mmm**
- (55) *LA*: No problem
- (56) *MI2*: No
- (57) *M11*: No problem (.) **but** they **can** renew that mother or for him
- (58) *MI2*: But the baby not
- (59) *LA*: No (..) **but** she has some health problem?
- (60) *MI2*: (..) No the problem is now (..) **ehm** (..) **you know**=
- (61) *M11*: =Now the mama is get work to do
- (62) *MI2*: She get work to do
- (63) *LA*: **Ehehehe**
- (64) *M11*: He want to take the baby to mama from Africa
- (65) *LA*: Ok
- (66) *MI2*: **So** that (.) when
- (67) *M11*: He can work
- (68) *MI2*: She **can** get the chance to (..) work
- (69) *LA*: **Mmm mmm**
- (70) *M11*: *Capito?* {understood?}
- (71) *LA*: *Ho capito* {I've understood}
- (72) *MI2*: **So** that (.) when she go **maybe** (..) four five years [*LA*: **mmmm**] **then** we bring her back
- (73) *LA*: Ok (.) **but** normally I **want** to say you **this** (.) normally commission give humanitarian reason **because** there are some problem in your country (.) **no?** [*MI2*: yeah] **because** your explained them that you have some problem
- (74) *MI2*: Yes (.) yes
- (75) *LA*: **Then if** they look on your passport [*MI2*: passport] that you come back to your country [*MI2*: country] without any [*M11*: baby] problem **so** (.) they **can think** that you have not any problem (.) **so** they **can think** that (..) it's not necessary to **remove** your document (.) **ok?** **So** you **must**
- (76) *M11*: Think about it
- (77) *LA*: **Mmm** (.) think this **but** here there are a lot of *asilo* (.) *scuole* (.) for the child (.) **so** there are public *asilo* (.) inside the public *asilo* you **can** come without pay (..) **so** you **can** resolve (.) in this modality
- (78) *M11*: Without pay (.)
- (79) *MI2*: Also I **want** to ask here about the project (.) and now the project closed
- (80) *IM*: With the nuns?

- (81) *MI1*: **Mmm?**
- (82) *IM*: With the church?
- (83) *MI2*: Church (.) **so** now we don't work to get the money
- (84) *MI1*: To take care of the baby
- (85) *MI2*: To take care of the baby so we **don't know (.) so** that I can get the chance to get some work to **try** my best
- (86) *IM*: **Mmm (.) but** there are a lot of families here that they work and they have babies
- (87) *MI2*: Yes I **know**
- (88) *IM*: There are a lot of solutions to take **instead of** leaving her in your country
- (89) *MI2*: Country
- (90) *IM*: Yeah (.) **ehm (.) because in my opinion it's better if** the child **will** grow up with her [here] (.) yes and with her parents (.) **no?**
- (91) *MI2*: **Mmmm**
- (92) *IM*: You **can** find **other** solutions [other solutions] **than** leaving her in your country  
[*MI1, MI2 and MI3 talk with each other*]
- (93) *LA*: Where are you from?
- (94) *MI1*: Ghana
- (95) *LA*: Ghana (.) **but** what is your city? Village?
- (96) *MI1*: \*\*\*\*
- (97) *LA*: \*\*\*\*? **Ah** ok (.) ok (..) and before to come have you a job?
- (98) *MI2*: **Mmm?**
- (99) *LA*: Have you a job before to come in Italy?
- (100) *MI3*: Yes
- (101) *LA*: What kind of job?
- (102) *MI3*: Cooker
- (103) *LA*: Ok (..) **so (.) I think** that you **can try** to find a solution like school for little child (.) **then if** you don't find any solution (..) **but I think it's better** for a family to live together **no?**
- (104) *MI2*: **Mmm (.) mmm (.) but** she **can** go for holiday and come back for the baby
- (105) *LA*: Yes yes
- (106) *MI2*: With this document
- (107) *LA*: Yes it's possible
- (108) *MI1*: **But** not in Ghana state
- (109) *LA*: No (.) also in Ghana (.) in Ghana you **can** come (.) with humanitarian permit to stay and passport you **can** come back in your country (.) **if** you are a refugee or for **sussidiarian** protection (..) in that case=
- (110) *MI1*: = **But if** you **want** to go to Africa they **will** give you problem they give you problem

- (111) LA: **Maybe** they **can** give you some problem (.) **because** they **can** watch “ok (.) you came in Italy and explain that you had some problem with your country (..) **so** you **can** have some problem (.) **but** [MI1: **but if** I go to visit someone from Nigeria they will give you no problem?] no (..) **if** you come back (.) **if** you **want** to come back in Italy for the law with this document you **can** come back (.) for the law (.) about the condition of your country and about the authority **think if** they watch this kind of permit (.) **I don't know**
- (112) MI2: I **understand**
- (113) LA: **Ok? So** (.) **is better** (.) **I think is better** to don't come back **but** [ok (.) also (..) ] **if** you are not dangerous (.) **if** you think=
- (114) MI1:= **But if** you visit somebody from Nigeria it's not problem
- (115) LA: No (.) no (.) is not problem
- (116) MI2: Now I'm here (.) I **can** go **maybe** by business (.) I **can** go **maybe** to Nigeria (.) and come back to Italy (.) not to Ghana
- (117) LA: No
- (118) MI2: Ghana is my country
- (119) LA: Ok (.) ok (.) I **understood**
- (120) MI2: I **can** go Nigeria or Togo (..)
- (121) LA: **Mmm** (.) Alone? Or with the family?
- (122) MI2: Alone
- (123) LA: No (.) you **can** come
- (124) MI2: I **can** go and come (.) ok (.) without any (..) visit (..) problem
- (125) LA: No (..) I **want** to **know if** it is possible to speak alone with (.) your wife it's possible?
- (126) MI2: Mmm ok
- [MI1, MI2 and MI3 talk with each other]
- (127) LA: I **can** speak alone with her? (..) Ok  
[...]
- (128) IM: How are you here in Italy (.) **eh?**
- (129) MI3: I'm fine
- (130) IM: Are you well? Are you fine?
- (131) MI3: Yes
- (132) IM: What do you **think** about leaving your child in your country?
- (133) MI3: No (.) **because** I don't work (.) **do you understand?**
- (134) IM: You will be (.) happy if she will stay there and you here?  
[MI3 laughs]
- (135) IM: Living your life here without her? What do you think?
- (136) MI3: Ghana is my country (.) she go to visit my family for six months **then** she come back here

- (137) *IM*: **Ehm** she **will** visit your relatives in your country [*MI3*: yes  
(.) yes] **after that** she **will** come back here
- (138) *MI3*: Yes (.) she **will** come back (.) after six months later she  
**will** come back (..)
- (139) *IM*: And she **will** live here?
- (140) *MI3*: Yes here with me
- (141) *IM*: We **know** that **it's better if** you **will try** to find a job **before**  
going back to your country and leaving her there **because maybe** you  
**can't** find money to make come her back here again
- (142) *MI3*: **But** I do it for my baby
- (143) *LA*: **But** do you have a job now?
- (144) *MI3*: No I have
- (145) *LA*: You have a job
- (146) *MI3*: Yes
- (147) *IM*: Ok
- (148) *LA*: Where do you work now?
- (149) *MI3*: Baby-sitter
- (150) *LA*: **Ah** ok (.)
- (151) *IM*: **Ehm** your child **can't** come with you when you are  
working?
- (152) *MI3*: No (.) they say no
- (153) *IM*: They don't **want** (.)
- [...]
- (154) *IM*: Ok (.) ok (.) **ehm** the lawyer **wants** to speak with you alone  
**because** she **knows** that **sometimes ehm** some mothers **ehm** take their  
daughter to **ehm** their country in order to do **something** related to  
culture and [**mmmm**] their traditions (.) some **excisions** (.) for example  
[*MI3*: yeah (.) I **understand**]
- (155) *MI3*: **Mmm** (.) **mmm** [*smiling*]
- (156) *IM*: **Because** it's illegal (.) **ok?**
- (157) *LA*: It's not legal **so**
- (158) *IM*: **If you will do** something like this and someone here in Italy  
**will know** it (.) you'll have a lot of problems
- (159) *LA*: **Mmm?**
- (160) *IM*: **Ok?** (.) She **ehm** says this to all women that come here with  
daughters and say that **want** to come back to their country (.) >even for  
holiday for example<
- (161) *MI3*: That is for holiday
- (162) *LA*: **Mmm**
- (163) *IM*: Here we are all women **ok?** And we **know** that something  
like **excision for example** is very painful **ehm** in a **ehm** woman's life
- (164) *MI3*: Yeah (.) I **understand**
- (165) *IM*: >And it **can** be also dangerous<

[MI3 laughs]

(166) IM: And **if** you **need** to talk to us for this reason you **can** come here and we **can** talk to you and we can explain you everything (.) **ok?**

(167) MI3: Ok

(168) LA: Ok

(169) MI3: Thank you

(170) LA: *Ciao*

#### 4.5.1. Acoustic analysis

The acoustic analysis focuses on the most salient prosodic correlates associated to pragmatically interesting acts. Actually after the initial ‘cut and thrust’ among IM, MI1 (a Ghanaian woman) and MI2 (a Ghanaian man) aimed at assessing the migrants’ request for legal advice, LA intervenes with her dispreferred eliciting move (36) in which she interrupts the development of the conversation.

Figure 11 shows the synthetic acoustic representation of moves (36) and (38):

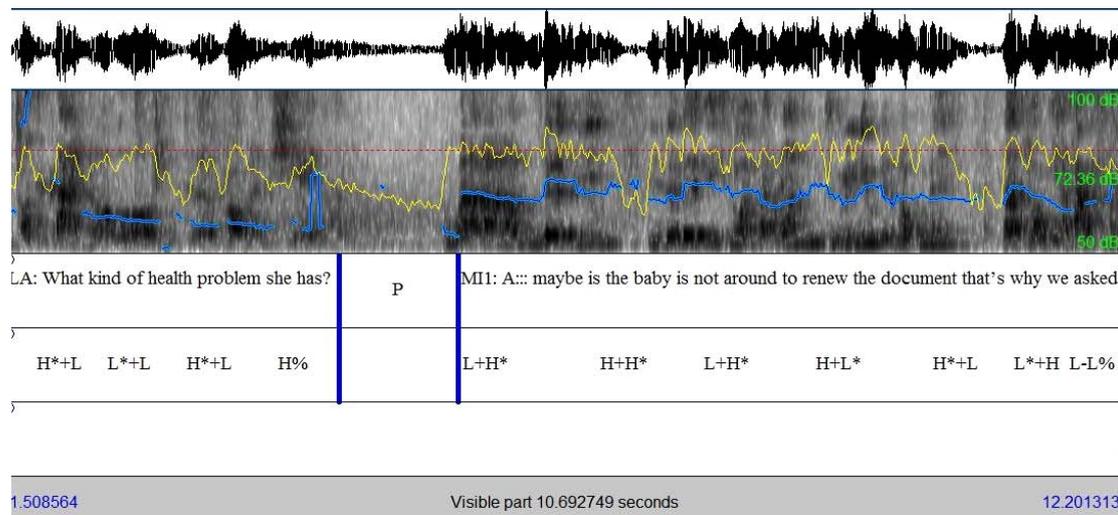


Figure 11. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (36) and (38)

LA here is implicitly constructing her assumptions concerning FGM (female genital mutilation) and her wh-question is formulated with the usual rising tone in the end of the utterance which is typical of the regional Italian variety she speaks. The following long pause actually represents an ambiguous reaction which is interpreted by LA as a supporting evidence to her assumptions. MI1 replies in (38) with an uncertain explanation which does not convince LA who insists in (39) with an utterance which starts as a question (and here she unusually employs the correct auxiliary *do*) but ends as a declarative that however apparently convinces MI1 (cf. turn (40)).

Thereafter LA is aimed at persuading her receivers that they should change their mind about the journey (as the conversation and register analysis will confirm as well), but her leading role is continuously challenged especially by MI1 who tries to impose her perspective by means of high intensity and loudness, interruptions and latching turns (cf. e.g. (53), (57), (61), (64), (76), (84)).

In (59) LA relaunches her eliciting move and this time her interlocutors' reaction is quite different from the previous case (shown in Figure 11).

Figure 12 acoustically represents turns (59) – (62):

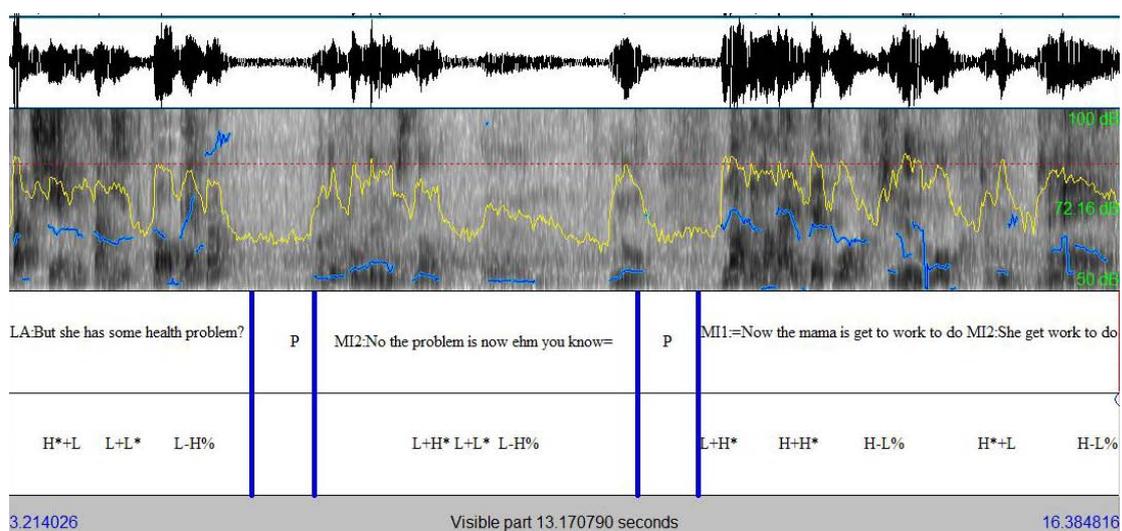


Figure 12. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (59) - (62)

Once again pauses and hesitations convince LA of her conjectures and MI1's prompt latching reply in (61) to MI2's uncertainty in (60), and especially its conclusive tone on *to do*, is considered by LA as an initial admission of what she supposes it is concealed behind their requests.

Moreover, as shown in Figure 13, LA attempts to regain her leading role – often challenged by MI1 – in (73) (and similarly in turns (75), (77), (103)):

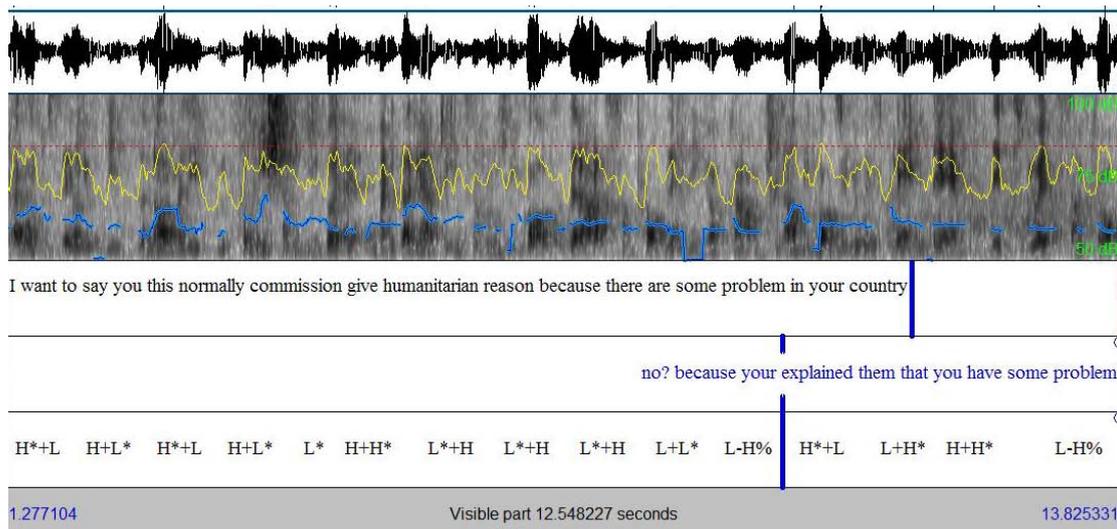


Figure 13. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (73)

Pitch movements and the final rising tone are aimed at focusing the attention of her interlocutors on her statements which recall legal aspects that represent that part of unshared knowledge which can mark LA's leading position among the other participants.

Moreover, once again, L1 phonological transfers challenge the message comprehension – e.g. in (97) where the falling-rising tone at the end of LA's dislocated question (*\*before to come have you a job?*) confuses MI2 who asks LA to repeat (cf. the non-lexical utterance in (98)). LA's following accommodating strategy in (99) attempts to reproduce English yes-no interrogative tonal pattern and the standard word order.

However, MI1's and MI2's resistance persuades LA that it is advisable to ask a face-to-face exchange with M13 who so far has been silent.

Figures 14 and 15 actually display IM's moves in (157) and (163) which are representative of her paralinguistic behaviour throughout turns from (130) to (169):

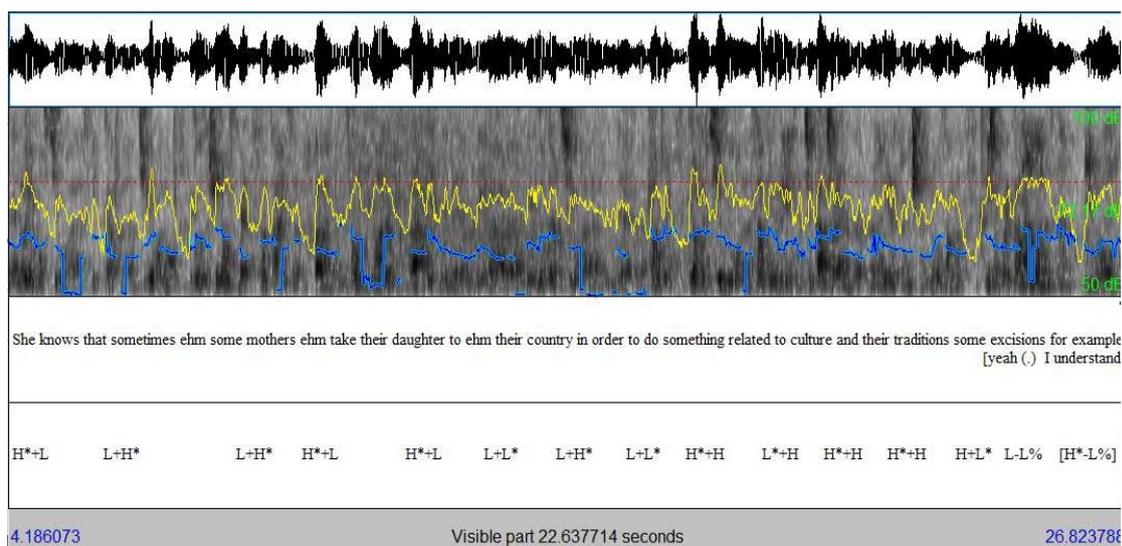


Figure 14. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (157)

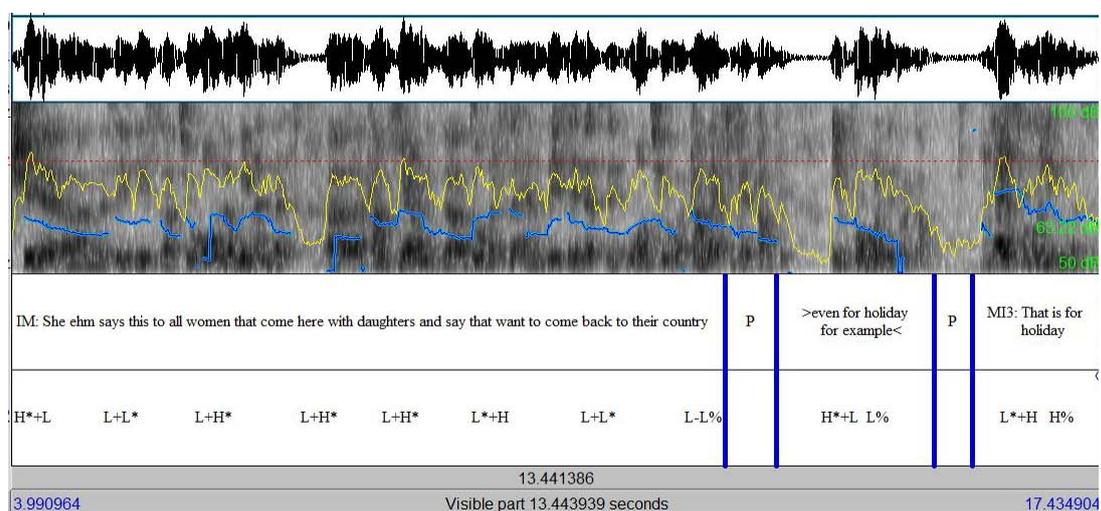


Figure 15. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (163) and (164)

IM is very nice and gentle, she often smiles and probably applies this paralinguistic behaviour because of ‘schema’-oriented biases about FGM: she is involved in the topic and LA’s previous cues have convinced her as well that the little child should be saved from what she considers bare brutality and unnecessary violence. However her illocutionary attempts are not satisfied maybe because LA could have misjudged the whole conversation frame or probably because this may be not the right communicative strategy to deal with such a controversial matter.

In (163) MI3 even shows that she has misinterpreted IM and her final rising tone conveys a statement of self-evident truth rather than an admission.

IM’s utterances and above all tonal behaviour is instead biased: it could also be perceived as offensive and intrusive. Her speaking rate is too fast (probably because of the thorny and embarrassing topic) and especially in turns (134), (136), (138), (144) her tone is patronizing and emphasizes

socio-cultural biases about work and family by means of judgemental yes/no and wh-questions and rising tonal pattern.

#### 4.5.2. *Conversation analysis*

This collective exchange (the participants involved in the conversation are i) a Ghanaian family composed of a man (MI2), two women (MI1 and MI3) and one little child; ii) a mediator (IM) who initially receives the family; iii) a lawyer (LA) who joins the conversation after some moves) begins with MI1's summoning to attract IM's attention. The woman (probably one of the couple's friends or relatives) manages the initial turn-taking with IM as the interpreter of the couple's interests (cf. turns (3) - (15)). Her unusual 'gate-keeper' role arouses IM's suspicions about her request which is pragmatically actualized in dispreferred responses to the woman's elicitation (cf. turns (18) - (22)).

This is the reason why IM deliberately involves LA (who in the meanwhile is engaged with another user) with the excuse of possible bureaucratic impediments concerning passport expiration (cf. turns (26) - (35)).

However the first illocutionary attempt to clarify their doubts is made in (36) by LA whose dispreferred eliciting move (none of the interactants has so far talked about health problems) obtains her interlocutors' perlocutionary reaction of defying her questions by means of a challenging move in (38). However LA's higher-status role enables her upgrading – acoustically and paralinguistically marked – advancement throughout the following turns (from (39) to (59)) where adjacency cues alternate as a series of MI1's and MI2's preferred answers to LA's questions who is definitely the carrier of prescriptive and directive acts (especially in turns (49), (52), and (57)).

LA's pragmatic intentionality once again emerges in (60) where she tries to elicit MIs' response about the reasons of the journey while they give a challenging response about work (cf. turns in (61), (62), (64) and (68)) which LA immediately misinterprets as a proof of her suspicions – turn in (63). The conative-phatic function (Jakobson 1960) activated in (70) (in Italian as well) by MI1 marks a shift in the conversational status, since she challenges LA's role as a leader interrupting the ELF move alternation and using her language (and in addition raising a question about understanding which in the Italian sociolectal variety spoken by LA is even perceived as offensive).

However, LA aims at regaining her leading role and after her acceptance of MI2's supporting move in (72) she relaunches her leading position by means of a legal re-opening move in (73) and (75) (where MI1

and MI2 cues overlap LA's speech) further supported by Western-biased suggestions in (77) as well as by IM's contributions in (86) and (88), but above all in (90) and (92), where hedging strategies have the clear objective of persuading MI1 and MI2, and of establishing a manipulating hegemony influenced by Western socio-cultural 'schemata' and by taken-for-granted dominant opinions (cf. Fairclough 1989, 1995; van Dijk 2001). Also LA reaffirms the same perspective about work and family in turns (97) – (103): especially turn (103) is quite significant in this sense.

Nonetheless, MI1 and MI2 seem not inclined to change their mind, as shown by their following re-opening moves about the legal terms provided by their residence permit (cf. (104) – (111)). LA's illocutionary act in (111) – once again prosodically significant – is a further attempt to dissuade MIs in their intents, as clearly declared in the tentative finalizer (Guido 2004a) in (113).

Although MIs seem not yet convinced (cf. reopening turns in (114) – (124)), LA dispreferred summoning in (125) marks a sudden change in the conversational structure: she aims at excluding two of the participants who have so far composed the turn-taking frame. LA's illocutionary intent is that of persuading MI3 (the mother of the baby) without the presence of MI1 and MI2.

LA's kind request however astonishes her interlocutors who suddenly code-switch in their L1 variety and oblige LA to reformulate her question in (127).

In the last part of the exchange, the participants' status asymmetry is evident in the move/act alternation. Obtained what they expected, IM follows LA's instructions and as the turn leader she manages the cue alternation throughout the exchange. After the first accommodating questions in (128) and (130), IM's 'gate-keeping' eliciting moves in (132), (134), and (135) are aimed at inspiring MI3's feeling of guilt – but, however, from a western culture-bound perspective (i.e. that of taking care of family and children by never leaving them alone). IM3 consciously replies accommodating her responses to IM's perspective in (133) – a summoning move reinforced by the conative questions *do you understand?* – and the following declaratives in (136), (138), (140) and (142) – in the pragmatic attempt to defy IM's further questions – thus trying to close the exchange.

This cross-cultural attitude is particularly interesting since it reveals the migrant's awareness and exposition to western 'schemata' (especially those concerning being a 'good' mother and a responsible family manager) and her knowledge of conversation and socio-cultural rules which control cross-cultural exchanges.

Seen in this perspective, LA's and IM's behaviours appear even incautious and naive because they cannot perceive MI3's careful illocutionary point.

Yet, from (141) to (152) LA and IM, convinced of their higher-status position, reaffirm their socio-culturally marked verdictive act (Austin 1962) assessing what is advisable and what is not in an extreme attempt at avoiding the journey to Ghana.

Actually, IM finally reveals LA's real intentions in (154) explicitly focusing on the westernized viewpoint about FGM, supported by the threatening of legal prosecution in the summoning move (156), further reformulated in (157) and (158).

LA's and IM's eliciting backchannels in (159) and (160) are then followed by a downgrading move in the following part of (160).

IM3's dispreferred response in (161) signals a case of semantic miscommunication perceived by LA, who replies with a non-lexical backchannel in (162).

IM finally closes the exchange with the last argumentative informing moves in (163), (165), and (166) about the harmful effects of the female genital mutilation practice on the physical and psychological health of a woman, however with no other perlocutionary effect than IM3's laconic acknowledging moves in (164), (167) and (169), replied by LA's rejection finalizers in (168) and (170).

#### 4.5.3. Register analysis

This long exchange is interesting not only for the number of questions about passport and document, but also for IM's and LA's belief that the family wants to move to their original country to practice FGM on their little daughter.<sup>22</sup> The suspicion of a journey for FGM reasons is perceivable since the first cues of IM who addresses some questions to the man, who is the father of the little child, in order to confirm her opinions. Anyway she does not seem satisfied because the elder woman (very probably a relative) constantly overlaps on the man's answers while the younger woman (the little child's mother) is mostly silent.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> In Sperti (2013) FGM phenomenology is analysed on a phonopragmatic perspective aimed at inquiring into the popularization strategies applied to raising awareness campaigns, often promoted by a Western country in a western-oriented approach to medical consequences and risks of the practice.

<sup>23</sup> IM is consciously aware and well-trained about FGM and international legislation that punishes anyone who arranges for a child to go abroad with the intention of having her circumcised. IM probably suspects that the child is being prepared for FGM to take place in Ghana. She may imagine that the family belongs to a community in which FGM is practised; moreover, in these cases family usually arranges for the child to take a holiday, after receiving medical treatments, or plans a long absence from school.

First of all, register analysis shows that *formality* and *politeness* among participants signal their status and role organization: LA has her higher status challenged by MI1 who assumes the leading role in respect to MI2 and MI3 (who are therefore her subordinates). *Spontaneity* and *participation* as well are asymmetric since the participants' utterances vary from MI2's spontaneous responses to LA's and IM's planned and complex acts and moves.

In general, as far as lexical and syntactic choices are concerned, generalization and popularization strategies (van Dijk 1988; Gotti 2005) are applied to express specialized concepts regarding legal and law impediments and prescriptions or welfare state (e.g. *document(s)*, *passport*, *the authority*, *health problem*, *the church*).

However, some exceptions towards specialization and *formality* are represented by the use of technical terms, such as *humanitarian permit*, *\*sussidiarian protection*, *excisions*.

The use of code-mixing (*capito?*, *ho capito*, *asilo*, *scuole*,) as well as of deontic modality (*can*, *will*, *must*) is due to pragmatic purposes and the need to assure comprehension and elicit the receiver's reaction.

Backchannels and non-lexical items are frequent and reveal interferences at the level of ideational function and concept organization (e.g. in (10), (38), (45), (53), (60), (90)).

However, the case study is particularly significant above all for the western socio-cultural background and 'schemata' emerging from textual strategies and sentence construction.

LA's and IM's evaluation and judgements concerning family management, education and FGM as well, clearly expressed in turns (77), (86), (88), (92), (103), (144), are 'schema'-oriented and hinder their receiver's *accessibility* and *acceptability*.

For instance, LA's request for speaking privately with the mother of the little child in (125) and (127) may be interpreted from a western perspective which gives women equal opportunities and roles (cf. *No (..) I want to know if it is possible to speak alone with your wife it's possible?*, *\*I can speak alone with her?*).

The register analysis, as well, investigates the speakers' use of lexical, syntactic and textual devices to accomplish the illocutionary aims just outlined above.

As for LA, *coherence* and *cohesion* are functional tools depending on *intentionality* and *informativity*, therefore they are textually and stylistically fulfilled through the use of paratactic and hypotactic conjunctions (*but*, *then*, *because*, *if*, *so*), and declaratives (*I want to say you this* in (73)).

*Accessibility* and *formality* by means of directive modal verbs (especially *must*, *can*); popularized lexis (e.g. *passport*, *document*, *health problem*, *authority*); non-lexical items (*mmm*, *eheheh*, *ahah*); epistemic

hedges (*I think that you, but I think it's better, maybe they can, I don't know, is better* (.) *I think is better, I want to know if*); and conative questions (*ok?*).

MI's variation of English is influenced by L1 transfers (namely tonal aspects derived from her native language, Niger-Congo Ga)<sup>24</sup> characterized by stressed brief sentences, rarely interlaced by paratactic conjunctions or *if*-clauses. MI1 especially deserves attention to the *intentionality* and *informativity* of her utterances since this is clearly aimed at resolving her doubts.

Therefore, MI1 and MI2 try to disclose their pragmatic aims since their first utterances by means of textual strategies such as: reformulation (e.g. *they* become *we* in (5)), hedges (*they want* vs. *they want to know, we just want*); mutual turn-taking where they mutually complete and reinforce their respective utterances and moves; declarative sentences with an interrogative and eliciting function (e.g. (44), (48), (51), (53), (57), (110), (114)).

IM's register is in line with LA's conversation management even though *politeness* and *formality* prevail: she attempts to give importance and value to her statements and questions, first of all by means of a syntactic observance of standard rules (e.g. in (10), (24), (32), (88), (90), (92), (128), (130), (132), (135)).

Moreover, her rhetoric abilities are mainly observable in the last part of the exchange where she has to mediate between LA's illocutionary aims and MI3's pragmatic inclinations.

Questions and statements in (134), (135), (137), (141), along with their patronizing and inquisitive tone, are actually what Iaiia & Sperti (2013) define '*fake eliciting*' since obviously she does not expect to receive a proper answer by only a sort of tacit acknowledgment of her visions and evaluations. As such her rhetorical devices (*what do you think?*, *\*you will be happy... \*if she will stay?*, *living your life, what do you think?*, *she will visit, after that she will come back, we know that it's better, if you will try, because maybe you can't find*) are simply aimed at expressing her judgmental and prescriptive view.

LA's call to a gender encounter as well is aimed at the perlocutionary effect of having the Ghanaian woman speak and reveal what her Italian interlocutors suspect.

Moreover, through IM's words, LA tries to alarm and dissuade the woman (e.g. in (156), (157) and (158): *because it's illegal* (.) *ok?*, *\*if you*

<sup>24</sup> Ga has seven oral vowels and five nasal vowels which have three distinctive vowel lengths: short, long or extra long. Moreover Ga is a tonal language (like many West African languages) characterized by two tones, high and low. Hence these acoustic correlates influence stress attribution in the use of English as a second language or ELF.

*will do something like this and someone here in Italy will know it (.) you'll have a lot of problems)* before closing with a downgrading attempt to be empathic and accommodating (in (163) *here we are all women and we know, if you need to talk to us for this reason you can come here and we can talk*) by means of hedging strategies (*something like excision for example*) and hesitations (*is very painful ehm in a woman's life*).

Yet, their attempt fails and the woman's paralinguistic level once again prevails on words and utterances, by means of smiles and giggles (apparently inappropriate to the serious topic at issue).

Probably here the Ghanaian woman has been influenced by the paralinguistic dimension of the encounter more than the linguistic one: seen from her perspective, being alone in front of two foreign experts introducing taboo issues such as FGM, could not facilitate the expected approach and response to IM's eliciting attempts. On the other hand, IM is particularly involved in the issues concerning FGM and its risks and her moves are emotionally produced: hesitations, fillers, fast speech rate, smiles; these features may hinder the interlocutor's *acceptability* and accommodation, conveying instead anxiety.

#### 4.6. Phonopragmatic dimensions: Case study 5

In this significant ELF exchange, a bureaucratic aspect gives the chance to the Italian LA (supported by an Italian mediator) and the Sierra-Leonean AS to tackle through ELF serious problems of integration and post-traumatic psychological disorders.

- (1) AS: Last time I **have been there (.) you know (.) so I don't know** what it is the problem
- (2) LA: **Maybe (.)** that (.) when (..) this kind of permit to stay (.) °humanitarian reason° (.) every time that you come to the police to **remove it (.) they have to ask ehm** to the commission (.) **if** it is possible to **remove** the permit to stay (.) ok? So (.) maybe that the answer from the commission is it's not arrived (.) till now (.) so (.) they **must** wait this answer (.) before to **remove (.)** to prepare the big one permit to stay (.) because for other person it's the same (.) **ok?**
- (3) Every time that you **remove** this kind of permit (.) [AS: *sì*] (.) police **must** ask to the commission (.) "it's possible to remove for another year?" (.) **ok? Because** every year (.) every year they **have to** ask before to the commission (..) **if** commission say "ok (.) you **can remove** it" (.) they prepare your permit (.) **if** the commission say "ok there are not **ehh** other problem in \*\*\*\* (.) **so** we **remove** this permit for **a lot of year so** now it's **suffiscent**" (.) or you change this permit in a

permit for job (.) **if** you have a job (.) or <you lost your permit> (.) **so** (.) **this is the procedure** every time (.) **ok? So** (.) here the person with **eh** the receipt of the month of May (..) you are a receipt with the month of June (..) **so** there are some person who are waiting for a lot of time (..)

(4) AS: **So** (.) what is the problem (.) you **know** about (..) about (..) about (..) the one year

(5) LA: **Eh** (.) **so** you have a permit (..)

(6) AS: **So**=

(7) LA: =**But** the procedure (.) I explained to you (.) the procedure=

(8) AS: =**But** (..) have you understand?

(9) LA: **Mmm**

(10) AS: They told me that fifteen days

(11) LA: **Mmm**

(12) AS: After the past of fifteen days I **don't know** why (..)

(13) LA: I **know** (.) B\*\*\*\* (.) **but** to ask **if** there are specific reason (.) **but normally the problem is this** (.) that they **must** wait the answer from the commission before to renove (.) **but** I **can** ask **if** there are some other problem (.) **if** [yes (.) **if** there are some other problem] (.) **ok** (.) **ok** (.) we **will** meet again next week (.) *va bene?*

[...]

(14) LA: *Ma stu stai bene?* B\*\*\*\*? About your health situation (.) it's all **ok?**

(15) AS: Not **so** fine (..) my stomach

(16) LA: *Ma tu ce l'hai un dottore* (.) **ah** B\*\*\*\*? Have you a doctor? Personal doctor?

(17) AS: I **don't understand**

(18) LA: **Ehm** (..) have you the health (..) **e::hm** [*IM*: card] card?

(19) AS: I have the card

(20) LA: And on the card is not write the name of (..) the:: doctor? **Ah?**

(21) AS: Yeah (..)

(22) LA: *Ce l'hai qua?*

(23) AS: Here? Not (.) I've lost (.)

(24) LA: *L'hai perso? L'hai lost?*

(25) AS: I've lost

(26) LA: **So** you **must** make **ehmm** (..) **denuncy** a::nd ask another time **because** everyone **need** to have a doctor and some time you **must need** him to make some control (.) **ok?**

(27) *IM*: **If** you have problem (.) stomach (.) or (..) I don't **know** why (.) **check**

(28) LA: **So** (.) you **must** go to the **denuncy** office of the police and say them that you lost your *libretto sanitario* (.) they give you a paper and with this paper you **can** go again to the office of (..)

(29) AS: Only the *scheda*

(30) LA: *Ah solo la scheda hai perso?* {Have you lost only the card?}

(31) AS: Only the *scheda* (..)

[...]

(32) IM: **But** in the paper *c'è scritto* the name and address (.) you **can** go to him (.) **ok?**

(33) LA: *Allora* (..) next week (..) **come** here with your book (.) sanitary book (.) sanitary document **so** we **can** help you to ha::ve **so::me** health assistance (..) **ok?** *Va bene? Ti ricordi* (.) B\*\*\*\*? {Will you remember?}

(34) AS: Yeah (..) **but** (.) **but** (.) what I don't **know** (..) I don't (..) I don't **understand** (..) this is difficult in my life (.) **do you understand?**

(35) LA: **Mmm** (.) **but** never you think to come back in \*\*\*\*?

(36) AS: No

(37) LA: **Because** there are some specific project (.) they **can** give you some money e::h they **can** pay the flight to come back (.) and to start again your life in your country (.) they **think if** you have not a (..) a very con **ehm** situation you **can think** about this (..)

(38) AS: I don't have money I don't have any idea how to get some money **do you understand?**

(39) LA: **Mmm** (.) **mmm** (.)

(40) AS: **That's why** I come to them (.) **you know** (.) I don't have money (.) for example (.) **if** (.) **if** it is not possible **ahh** it's difficult **you know? Hhhh**

(41) LA: **So** you permit to stay is not a big problem (.) for now **ok?** (.) **Because** you have a permit (.) you have the slim (.) **so** you have **only** to wait <some time> and then you **can** obtain it (.) **but I say you the situation is not good** (.) from a lot of year you stay here **but** you have not a job (.) a regular job (.) you have not accommodation (.) you have some health problem (.) **because** (..) you say me that you have this problem of (..) stomach **no?**

(42) AS: Well I'm not very well (..)

(43) LA: **So if** you **like** (.) we **can try** to help you to come back in \*\*\*\* at home (.) **because** there are some project and this project **can** give you some money (..) to **ehm** start your life again in your country **ok? If** you say "I **want** to buy some animal or I **want** to buy a shop (.)" **ok?** "To **try** to have have this kind of job in my country" (.) **ok?** <They **can** help you to buy it> (.) they **can** give you **eh** (..) some money like one thousand euro **but** they don't give you directly this money **but**

- [AS: **but no ehm**] they buy this for you this (..) **eh** (.) **thing** (.) **ok? So** (.) and they pay for you the flight to come back in \*\*\*\* (.) there is a specific (..) [AS: sorry (.) sorry (.) just a moment]
- (44) AS: I told you all my parents=
- (45) LA: **=but** you have some uncles (.) some=
- (46) AS: They don't care about me my life (.) my future (.) my life is here
- (47) LA: **Ah** (.) ok (..) is your life [IM: ok ok] it's only to give you this information [AS: so] (.) **but**=
- (48) AS: **=So** (.) I'm living in a (..) bad life (.) nobody to help (..) bad life (.) **but if** I=
- (49) IM: **=But** you have documents
- (50) AS: I **wanna b e** my destiny in this country (.) **do y ou understand?**
- (51) IM: Ok you have document
- (52) AS: **If ahm** is not my destiny I kill myself
- (53) IM: No no no:: I **think** your problem now is only the job **ok?** (..) You have permit of stay (.) you have slim (.) and then you have this kind of permit to stay (.) **it's good for you** (.) **it's ok** (.) only problem your is (.) job (.) **ok?** (..) Come back next week and bring the paper (.) other papers **ok?**
- (54) AS: Yeah
- (55) IM: Ok
- (56) LA: All your paper (.) **we want** to to see all the paper (.) **because** (.) **because** there are some specific house (..) <for the person who has some health problem> (.) **ok? So if we can** (..) see your document (.) health document (.) **we can** ask **if it's possible** to obtain hospitality inside this house (.) a house for refugee people inside a system of assistance and protection of refugee (.) **so** you has this permit for humanitarian reason and **if** you give **us** this document about your health situation (.) **we can try** to ask **if** it's possible to stay inside this project <with house (.) with someone who **can** help you to find (.) job> (.) with some course (.) **ok? So** is a situation (.) **is a ve ry good situation** (.) **it's not sure we can try** to obtain **e::h** the possibility to stay inside this house (.) **ok?** There is one center (.) one house of this (.) in \*\*\*\* (.) **eh?** Near \*\*\*\* **so** (.) **we can try** (.) **but** you **must** give **us** this document (.) **ok?**
- (57) AS: That document=
- (58) LA: **=Health** document about [IM: *libretto sanitario*] (.) *libretto sanitario* (.) some health certificate (.) or **we can** (..) **we can try** to obtain some visit inside the hospital **so if some doctor declare** that you have some health problem (.) °**we can try** ° (.) **we can** obtain a place

inside this house (..) **ok?** **So** (.) we **can try** to have a better situation for you (.) better accommodation

(59) AS: My life is just (..) crazy

(60) IM: Come next week with all papers (.) **ok?**

(61) AS: (..) No problem

#### 4.6.1. Acoustic analysis

The acoustic/auditory investigation helps to determine AS's prosodic behaviour and above all LA's paralinguistic correlates in support of her illocutionary acts.

AS's prosodic features are challenging since his voice is uncertain, sometimes even inexpressive, he often sighs, while his tonal profile is quite regular avoiding important pitch movements and major deviations in pitch range.

On the other hand, LA's intonational behaviour is particularly marked and totally dependent on the pragmalinguistic aspects of her messages (further analysed in the next sections).

Figure 16 and 17 actually exemplify LA's tonal patterns in conveying her messages to AS in two distinct turns, namely (13) and (33):

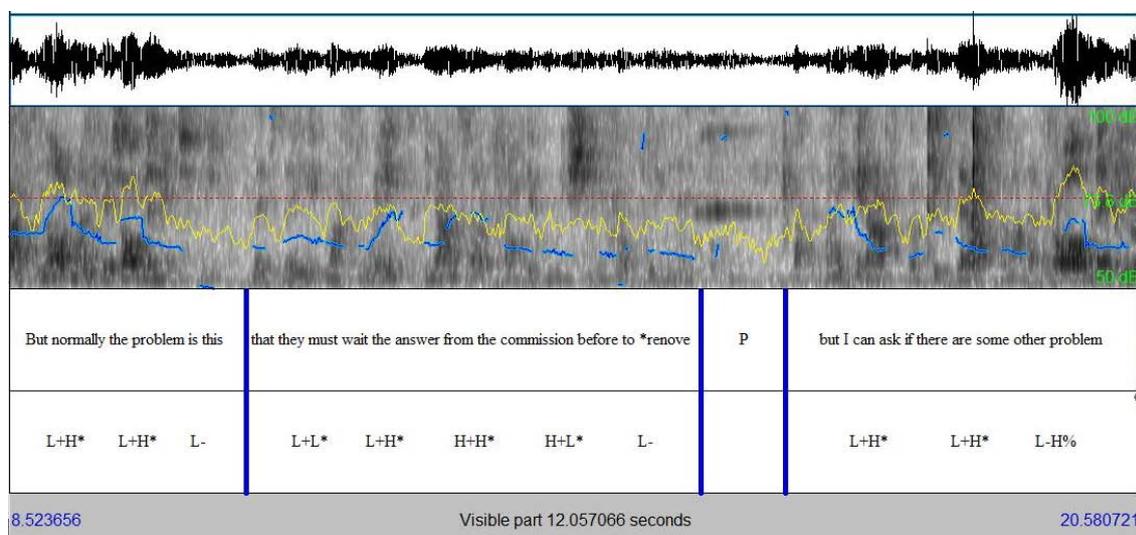


Figure 16. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (13)

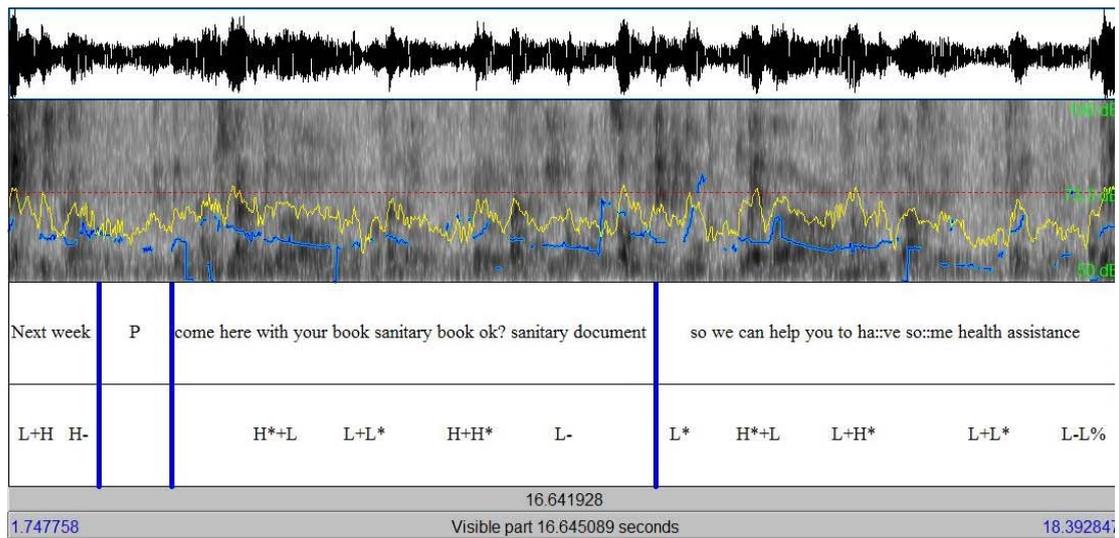


Figure 17. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (33)

In the first case, LA wants to assure AS that his bureaucratic procedure is regular occurring through her frequent pitch movements in the final part of the utterance, after the pause, which are aimed at signalling her availability to help him (cf. the rising tone on ‘*other problem*’ and the pitch accent on ‘*I can ask*’).

In the second case, LA has changed her attitude towards AS since the man has just admitted his psycho-physical problems. LA’s tone is now accommodating and less authoritative, even though still patronizing.

The conclusive tone on ‘*health assistance*’ aims at convincing AS that her suggestion is reasonable and feasible.

Figure 18 instead represents the spectrogram of LA’s turn in (43):

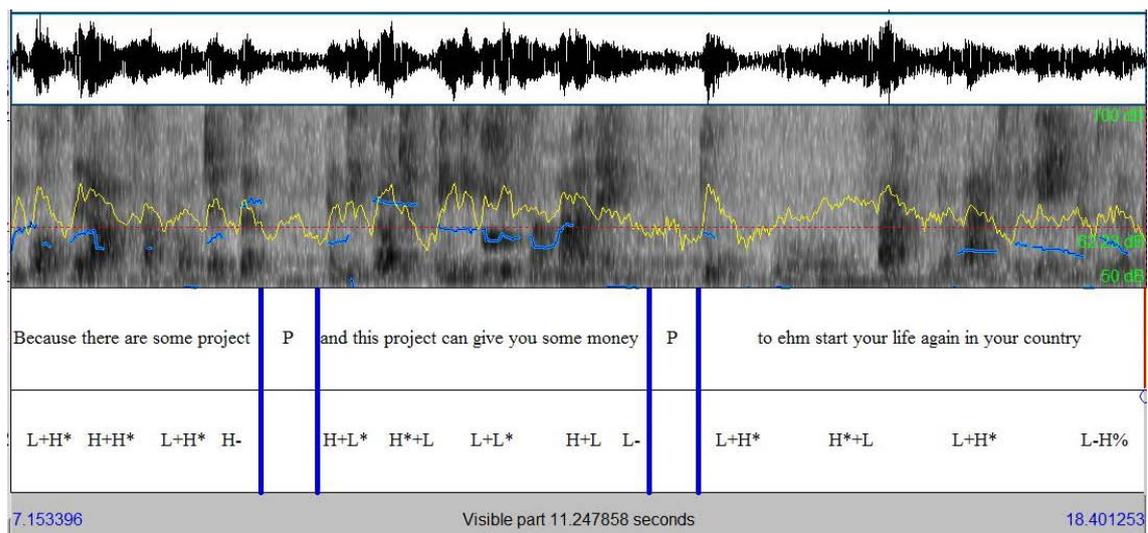


Figure 18. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (43)

Pauses, high intensity, hesitation and pitch movements in this part of the turn (but also in the rest of LA’s long act in (43)) are aimed at convincing AS of the advantages he can derive from assisted repatriation. The final



paralinguistic behaviour clearly changes IM's behaviour as well, as she intervenes in the conversation and reveals her biased and patronizing attitude towards AS. Actually, from (18) to (34) LA and IM try to infer AS's healthcare position by means of a series of eliciting moves and corresponding directives: especially in (26), (28), and (33) LA uses commissive and prescriptive acts and her attitude is particularly emphasized not only by her prosodic features but also by the final phatic contact in Italian (cf. *Va bene? Ti ricordi?*).

However, AS relaunches and reopens the exchange in (34) which produces an immediate, but dispreferred perlocutionary effect on LA who in (35) suggests the possibility of the assisted repatriation. LA's long persuading arguments in (37), (41) and (43) are intentionally constructed to predict a better future for AS in case he opts for going back home, avoiding listening to his complaints in (38), (40) and (42). However AS's dispreferred response in (46) and (48) (further dramatically supported in (50) and (52)) obtains a perlocutionary effect on IM who, emotionally involved, contradicts what LA has just outlined in (41), and thus in (53) she proposes to AS a novel viewpoint (that of residence for medical purposes), also supported by LA's long comment act in (56).

In this sense LA's commissive act in (58) represents a hedging strategy (reinforced by IM's summoning move in (59)) which however aims at convincing AS that an acceptable solution can be provided to his critical situation with her assistance. His perlocutionary effect is signalled by the last acknowledging moves (59) and (61) which disclose – at least apparently – AS' persuasion and agreement, and eventually the confirmation of LA's higher-status position.

#### 4.6.3. Register analysis

De Beaugrande & Dressler's (1981) text linguistics and Halliday's (1994) register analysis help to reveal how socio-semiotic and linguistic functions are activated in the field of ELF cross-cultural communication, through an inextricable correlation of linguistic and paralinguistic dimensions.

In the present case study, AS's ideational function emerges as a confused organization of concepts and ideas corresponding to precise needs which he tries to convey through the interpersonal communicative relationship he establishes with LA.

Actually, since his first utterance in (1) he refers to another situational dimension (*last time I have been there (.) you know*) conveyed through the use of present perfect underlining the still ongoing effects of that event on his daily life – namely the appointment at the immigration office of the police station. The same sentence structure is actually repeated later in (40)

where he once again makes appeal to LA's understanding of his vulnerable condition (cf. *that's why I come to them (.) you know, ahh it's difficult you know? Hhhh*).

Actually, as already pointed out through the acoustic analysis, AS's utterances are prosodically marked by pauses and disfluencies, often associated to sighing, low voice and deep breath; hence his textual performance is pragmatically affected by this prosodic and paralinguistic participation.

As seen above, LA's paralinguistic profile is on the contrary often characterized by high intensity and loudness applied to very long sentences with rare pauses which cannot give AS the possibility of replying and backchannelling. The Sierra Leonean young man, however, tries to interrupt her (*So=*) but his utterance is suddenly overlapped by LA's speech (*=But the procedure (.) I explained to you (.) the procedure=*). Evidently LA has misunderstood AS's concern about his papers (*They told me that fifteen days, After the past of fifteen days I don't know why (.)*). At this point the lawyer realizes that the young man needs more attention and in the end IM as well intervenes to mediate between them (*I think your problem now is only the job ok?*).

The register analysis therefore once again confirms the role organization throughout the exchange. *Cohesion* and *coherence* are as usual ideational and textual expressions of LA's conceptualizations of filters and background knowledge. Her long and complex sentences confirm her leading role through *formality* and *politeness* strategies.

LA's lexis is simple and refers to the semantic field of immigration law and welfare (e.g. *refugee, assistance, protection, humanitarian reason(s), center, health, system, hospital*). However her lexical and syntactic choices do not belong to specialized register and in order to be understood she applies textual and lexical strategies aimed to simplification, generalization and popularization (sometimes despite ELF creative process: e.g. *the police, the commission, the big one \*permit to stay, a permit for job, better accommodation, health situation, some control, a paper, sanitary book, the \*denuncy office, \*some specific house, stay inside this project, \*some course*).

Common textual strategies applied by LA are: repetition (e.g. *every year (.) every year, to start again your life in your country*); declaratives (*this is the procedure, but normally the problem is this*); hedges (*but I can ask, but I say you the situation is not good (.), is a very good situation (.) it's not sure we can try*); conative and phatic questions (e.g. *ah?, no?, ok?*); code-mixing and code switching (*ma tu ce l'hai un dottore (.) ah B\*\*\*\*? Have you a doctor? Personal doctor?, L'hai perso? L'hai lost?*; applied also by IM: *in the paper c'è scritto*).

Moreover, the use of an explanatory direct speech in (3) and (43) is particularly interesting as an ‘acting’ move aimed at enhancing credibility for AS.

Casual, hypothetical and consecutive conjunctions (in pink in the transcription) connect ideas and illocutionary statements; whereas modality once again works on the interpersonal function conveying judgmental and prescriptive messages (cf. turn (3), (13), (26), (57)).

In this exchange, IM has a very limited but important role since LA is willing to manage the conversation alone with AS who is evidently confused and bewildered. Moreover LA misinterprets his emotional state and suggests him a programme for assisted repatriation, disregarding his need for explanation and assistance in the bureaucratic procedure for documents.

Interestingly, LA applies hedging strategies in (56) and (58) to mitigate her prescriptive and directive acts by means of the personal pronoun *we*; verbs like *try*, *want*, *ask*, *can*; downgrading and hedging expressions (such as *if it's possible to stay*, *if it's possible to obtain*, *is a very good situation*, *it's not sure we can try*, *the possibility to stay*, *we can try to obtain*, *we can try to have a better situation for you*).

The same behaviour is identified in IM who, especially in (54) (probably worried by AS's commissive in (53)), avoids *formality* and social distance to persuade his interlocutor that the situation is under control and advances a positive perspective to his receiver (cf. *I think your problem now is only the job ok?*, *it's good for you* (.) *it's ok* (.) *only \* problem your is job* (.) *ok?*). *if you have problem* (.) *stomach* (.) *or* (..) *I don't know why* (.) *check*).

On the other hand, LA's illocutionary aims may be justified by AS's bipolar behaviour which alternates positive statements (*My life* (.) *my future* (.) *is here*) to negative commissives (*I kill myself*); therefore the Italian experts take care of his case and try to encourage him, also being influenced by the prejudices about his psychic conditions (*because because there are some specific house* (..) <*for all the person who have some health problem*> (.) *ok*, *some visit inside the hospital so if some doctor declare that you have some health problem* (..)).

In the second part of the exchange, the so-called ‘baby talk’ (slow speech rate and articulation, clear and rising intonation, frequent pitch movements)<sup>25</sup> and the use of majestic ‘*we*’ are employed with successful outcome on the AS's perception and reaction (cf. e.g. turn (62)).

<sup>25</sup> Actually studies on the vocal expression of emotion (e.g. Scherer 1981) suggests that the increasing of pitch level and pitch range at the level of prosodic contours is typical of ‘motherese’ (mother's speech). This prosodic behaviour seems to enhance the communicative efficacy of speech to children and gain their attention.

Besides, western socio-cultural schemata emerge as far as assisted repatriation is concerned since LA shows that she avoids respecting her interlocutor's *acceptability* and *accessibility* in terms of social values and shared knowledge (cf. in (43): *If you say "I want to buy some animal or I want to buy a shop (.)" ok? "To try to have have this kind of job in my country"*; in (45): *=but you have some uncles (.) some=*; promptly replied by AS who perceives the *tenor* interferences regarding his personal and intimate family roots: *(sorry (.) sorry (.) just a moment*, in (44): *I told you all my parents=*, in (46): *they don't care about me my life (.) my future (.) my life is here*).

The same schema-biased behaviour occurs for medical assistance: in (56) *there are some specific house (.) <for the person who has some health problem> (.) ok?, *inside a system of assistance and protection of refugee, with someone who can help you to find (.) job>*, *so is a situation (.) is a very good situation*; or in (58) *some doctor declare that you have some health problem, better situation for you (.) better accommodation*, LA, supported by IM in (60), expresses her culture-bound perspective and problem solving. Here, however, as knowledge is not-shared, AS is not able (or not interested) to rebut LA's statements and positively replies in (59) and (61).*

#### **4.7. E LF di mensions: phonol ogical, l exical, s yntactic a nd pragmatic findings**

The case studies examined so far, but indeed the entire set of data collected during the fieldwork, provide a series of results that cast light upon a multifaceted reality concerning ELF communicative settings and dynamics involving participants from different linguacultural backgrounds. ELF speakers actually show evidence that it is impossible for them to get detached from their native linguistic and paralinguistic features, while they produce and perceive ELF variations.

This is particularly evident in a communicative domain that involves interactants in specialized settings – which is the case of immigration contexts – where technical constraints inevitably meet non-specialists' communicative and pragmatic needs.

The five case studies have revealed ELF attitudes and frequent behavioural patterns represented by peculiar linguistic and paralinguistic common attitudes emerging during the exchanges.

In this perspective the participants' attitudes can be interpreted as 'accommodation strategies' activated "for both affective reasons and to ensure comprehensibility" (Jenkins 2011: 929): ELF speakers can thus be identified since "their use of English is fluid and flexible, responding

adeptly to the nature of the particular communicative context” (Jenkins 2011: 929).

In an attempt to summarize these features (signalled in the transcriptions in bold red for single lexical items and underlined in red for ELF syntactical clusters), a list of the main findings is here provided. It is quite interesting to notice that they concern pragmalinguistic tendencies characterizing both Western and non-Western participants in the previous case studies and in those transcribed in the whole corpus: once again this unusual aspect may be considered consistent with the speakers’ mutual attempt of facilitating intercultural communication through ELF. The Italian variation of ELF, in particular, reveals a constant phonopragmatic adjustment process which is inevitably influenced and marked by a correlation of L1-derived linguistic and paralinguistic features, which can be identified in the list below:

- Phonopragmatic aspects:
  - neutralization of the interdental fricatives [θ] and [ð] (for which most substitutions are possible, such as /f/ and /v/ and above all /t/ and /d/);
  - reducing of vowel and diphthong variety according to the L1 system (e.g. neutralization of /ɜ:/, /ə/ in /e/ or /ɔ/; /əʊ/ in /ɔ/);
  - neutralization of ‘dark /l/’ ([ɫ]) in favour of ‘clear /l/’;
  - neutralization of “rhotic retroflex approximant” [ɻ] in favour of alveolar trill /r/;
  - neutralization of the aspiration for /p/, /t/ and /k/ in initial position in a stressed syllable (e.g. the first /p/ in ‘paper’);
  - neutralization of the distinctive feature of the glottal fricative [h] in initial position, pronounced as voiceless;
  - neutralization of length contrasts (e.g. ‘live’ vs. ‘leave’);
  - consonant length or gemination (e.g. ‘**bitte**’, [‘letter], [ap‘pointment], [appli‘keiʃən]);
  - syllabic isochrony (i.e. Italian is a syllable-timed language where accented and non-accented syllables have equal duration, while in English, a stress-timed language, they differ in duration giving rise to phonological events such as contractions, main and secondary stress, and elision);
  - L1 Intonational patterns for declaratives and interrogatives.
- Lexical aspects:
  - neologisms or loans (e.g. \**espulsione*, \**asile*, *permit of stay*, *permit to stay*, \**translator*, \**reappeal*, \**renove* [ri‘nnuv], \**denuncy*, \**personaly*, \**complicate* (adj.), \**sussidiarian*, \**fingerpring*, \**citership*, \**autonomy* (adj.));

- semantic mismatch (e.g. *close* instead of *closed*, *advice* instead of *inform*, *slim* instead of *slip* (receipt)).
- Morpho-syntactic aspects:
  - dropping of third person –s (e.g. *\*he decide*, *\*he need*, *\*she take*, *\*he live*, *\*he remember*, *\*she get*, *\*he want*);
  - use of present simple for past events;
  - use of verb base form for past participle (e.g. *\*have you understand?*, *\*is write*, *\*is not problem*);
  - use of verb base form for continuous aspect (e.g. *\*I'm apply*, *is get*);
  - non-standard word order and dropping of auxiliaries for the interrogative form (*do/does* or *did*) (e.g. *\*have you not?*, *\*when you arrive?*, *\*why you go?*, *\*never you think?*);
  - divergent use of auxiliaries for the negative form (e.g. *\*you have not to*, *\*to don't come*);
  - 'it' dropping (e.g. *\*is this*, *\*is like*, *\*in questura finish*, *\*is better*);
  - non-standard verb-subject agreement (e.g. *\*this is the questions*, *\*there are another possibility*, *\*there are some specific house*);
  - non-standard agreement with modals (e.g. *\*can left*, *\*can leaves*);
  - non-standard determiner-noun agreement (e.g. *\*some organization*, *\*a lot of person*, *\*six month*, *\*two different passport*, *\*some health problem*, *\*some person*, *\*some course*, *\*some visit*);
  - non-standard comparative formation (e.g. *\*more easy*, *\*more better*);
  - divergent use of verb prepositions and wh-words (e.g. *\*given to you*, *\*say us*, *\*listen me*, *\*how long time ago*, *\*go Nigeria*);
  - non-standard word order (e.g. *\*interview have you not?*, *\*you have not other paper?*, *\*to make come her back*);
    - divergent *if*-clause formation (e.g. *\*if she will stay*, *\*if you will do*).
- Pragmalinguistic aspects:
  - code-mixing from English to Italian (for communicative efficacy);
  - code-switching from English to Italian (because of lexicon unavailability)
  - use of L1 non-lexical utterances as backchannels (e.g. *ah ah*, *mmm*, *eh*);
  - use of *no?* and *ok?* as question tag with phatic and conative value.

However, such accommodation strategies may also cause ambiguities and become a source of misunderstanding since, even though they are meant to convey – consciously or not – an illocutionary force and to enable mutual comprehension, they may be inappropriately perceived and interpreted. This is the case, for instance, of L1 intonational patterns which are usually transferred (especially by Italian experts) to ELF syntactic structures (especially yes/no and wh- questions). Therefore the inadequate decoding of these utterances by their interlocutors may be due to interpretative mismatches derived from their L1 intonational schemata concerning not only semantic meaning but also pragmatic values (in terms of attitudes and feelings that for instance a question can convey).

Moreover, clusters like *\*I think is better to speak before me* (cf. case-study 2, turn (54)) may give rise to misunderstanding due to a non-standard use of prepositions (in this case *before*) and word order: actually non-western asylum seeker has no knowledge of the western turn-taking conventions.

Therefore, investigating ELF dimensions in specialized immigration contexts often reveals interesting insights into the current evolution of English used in international contexts, which is different from the more frequently explored academic settings where, as Phillipson (2003: 167) points out, “competent speakers of English as a second language are more comprehensible than native speakers, because they can be better at adjusting their language for people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds”.

The encounters here analysed instead involve non-native speakers who often have not formally learnt English in educational settings and thus they are not trained to face intercultural spoken interactions: this may be the reason why investigating ELF used within cross-cultural immigration settings becomes an extremely challenging task in the attempt to enquire into the extent to which in such a fragmentary and multifaceted communicative scenario interactions may be successful or not.

#### **4.8. Conclusions: Investigating specialized ELF Dimensions**

The phonopragmatic analysis also includes a qualitative investigation of paralinguistic cues (i.e. different paralinguistic habits regarding body language, voice quality, proxemics and gestures) which are considered fundamental for the aims and objectives of the present research as well as for the mere linguistic realization of the message. The most common paralinguistic behaviours observed during the fieldwork are summarized in

the following table, according to the participant's role assumed in the cross-cultural encounters:

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Main paralinguistic behaviours</i>
Las	High tonal patterns, overlapping speech, non-lexical items; seated position, bodily closeness, standing upright; fixed gaze, gesticulating.
Ass	High and low tonal patterns, overlapping speech, pausing; seated position, bodily and interpersonal distance, lower gaze; uncomfortable posture and gestures, in tears; changeable kinesics.
IMs	High voice intensity; standing upright, moving around; interpersonal proximity to LA; gesticulating, smiling.

Table 2. Common paralinguistic behaviours observed during the fieldwork

In conclusion, the main and most significant results derived both from the phonopragmatic analysis of case-studies and from the examination of the complete corpus of data collected can be summarized as follows:

- As for phonological and prosodic behaviours, independently from idiosyncratic linguistic features deriving from the considerably different dialectological provenience of the participants involved, the ELF encounters are always characterized by an evident transfer from the L1 linguistic structures to the use of English variations. The intonational profiles of the Italian LAs and IMs are always marked by Italian pitch movements according to the typological differences of each utterance. In the transcription much attention is concentrated, for their different communicative roles, to (i) the use of silence at boundary tones (signalled by (.) and (..)), (ii) the final vowel prolongation (signalled with ::) as well as (iii) the frequency of disfluencies (such as *ehm*, *mmm*, *ah*, *eh*), stuttering and stammering as hesitations, and (iv) the overlapping speech (signalled with [ ] and =) to show attention, dispreferred moves and turn-taking. Moreover as for segmental aspects, ELF mispronunciation is regular: e.g. absence of vowel reduction, mispronunciation of diphthongs, absence of th- trait (pronounced as [d] or [t]).
- Deontic and epistemic modalities are widely used by LAs and IMs (especially verbs like *can*, *will*, *must*) and are again influenced by Italian uses of modal verbs. Modal verbs are employed for pragmatic and illocutionary reasons of intentionally conveying their messages and obtaining perlocutionary effects on their receivers. Modal verbs

always signal judgement, commitment, and involvement in the represented actions and are used consciously to perform the expected communicative intentions. In ELF contexts, where linguistic and lexical difficulty is considerable, their value is even amplified because speakers (above all LAs) charge them with pragmatic aims, especially the conveyance of urgency and pressure on the receivers (namely ASs).

- Exploring ELF textuality is particularly interesting. In the previous case-studies discourse is always mediated from Italian specialized complex lexical and syntactic structures to ELF popularization processes (characterized by simplification, repetition and paraphrasing – Gotti 2005).

Code switching from Italian, or a variety of ILF, to ELF is another effect of the pragmatic aims and intentions which move participants on the challenging floor of intercultural interactions. LAs tend to express specialized concepts (legal, procedural and bureaucratic) first of all in their language or in ILF and, after verifying the inability of their interlocutors to repair the message, they code-switch to ELF applying popularization strategies or asking for the intervention of an IM.

Generally LAs' sentences are complex with a preference for hypotaxis, while often IMs and ASs apply a standard English sentence-structure if they are competent, otherwise their ELF sentences are really simple and paratactic.

- Pragmatic strategies are also revealed in stylistic tendencies and preferences, such as the frequent use of conative contacts with the interlocutor and the employment of hedging structures, as the wide use of *ok?* and *va bene?* signals.

Popularization processes are activated to improve intelligibility, thus code-mixing and Italian words and expressions are often used by LAs in the lexical register of specialized discourse about asylum policies and rights. Sometimes even ELF neologisms are used (such as *\*personaly*, *\*sussidiarian*, *\*renove*) which even show their communicative efficiency and are easily acquired and used by ASs too.

- As far as ELF accommodation strategies and code-mixing are concerned, a series of phonetic, lexical, syntactic, and textual accommodation strategies are applied, mostly by Italian speakers (as already pointed out in 4.7): dropping third person –s, use of present simple for past events, no auxiliaries for interrogative forms, 'it' dropping, question formation with no auxiliaries (do/does or did).

A really common ELF habit in the context under examination is the practice for LAs and IMs to mix and switch languages in their conversations with each other and with ASs.

Code switching from Italian to English and back again is distinguished from borrowing, which is also included as data in the present research, and interference, considered as the involuntary influence and transfer of linguistic and paralinguistic structures from L1s. Besides, data also show a distinction between code switching and the use of a code-mixing.

LAs and IMs employ code switching to signal the difficulty in finding the word they need in ELF, hence an Italian word is used in place of the temporarily inaccessible English word (e.g. *permesso di soggiorno, questura, prefettura, sussidiaria*), for purposes of clarification, or to avoid potential misunderstandings, or to provide better explanations to ensure ASs' understanding. However code switching also signals the attitude towards the use of ILF in intercultural communication, which is considered the middle passage toward the necessary competence in the Italian language required by the Italian law for refugees and long-term migrants.

In other cases, switching into Italian is a peculiar trait of trainees who interrupt the conversation to speak with each other, thus excluding AS from their considerations and consultation.

Code-mixing instead is activated mainly when the migrants' ILF variation is insufficient, forcing LA to continue the conversation in ELF, although very often it is opened in Italian or ILF.

- Besides, conversation analysis shows a high degree of floor holding by LAs who tend to impose and extend their speech acts during the exchange, or to complete the answers of their interlocutors proposing questions that prompt a specific, expected answer. In other cases, LAs ask for the collaboration of IM who, however, is suddenly replaced by LA himself/herself who prefers to manage alone an ELF exchange with AS, thus bypassing IM. Sometimes this behaviour may be due to mistrust or scepticism towards IMs' competence and ability; in other cases instead the high proficiency level of mediators – who speak standard English and are graduates or postgraduates in foreign languages – even hinders the successful ELF interaction: in fact, ASs and migrants show their embarrassment by addressing directly their legal advisors and ignoring IM. In both cases however it is evident once again that what influences and affects linguistic and paralinguistic choices, attitudes and behaviours are always the intentionality and pragmatic purposes of fulfilling mutual communicative goals.

- ELF exchanges have been also analysed taking into account the conversational investigation based on speech acts and moves. Data concern intercultural encounters which mostly start with LA's Opening move; whereas other moves, such as Summoning, Eliciting and Focusing, may be repeatedly activated to attract the interlocutor's attention and induce a reaction, both by LA and AS.

In mediation processes it is interesting to observe the IM's role in managing other moves such as Backchannel, Supporting, Challenging and Repairing, which are often employed in cross-cultural exchanges characterized by a very dynamic, and sometimes dramatic, evolution, above all when levels of discomfort and distress are so high that IMs have to intervene supporting and repairing the communicative channel interrupted between LAs and ASs.

As a consequence, turn-taking and the mechanism of 'adjacency pairs' (as the alternation of preferred or dispreferred utterances), which should signal the end of one interactant's turn followed by the beginning of another participant's, in spontaneous and intense speech, are often regulated by overlapping and interrupted conversational moves.

- Moreover, as explained in the previous sections, exchanges under investigation have been analysed taking into account the theory of speech acts and their illocutionary and perlocutionary force. Actually Searle (1969) re-elaborated Austin's (1962) taxonomy of Speech Acts<sup>26</sup> considering the important role of intentionality in their selection and performing by speakers.

LAs and IMs often perform speech acts with the aim of producing a concrete and prompt reaction from their interlocutors, such as *Representatives* (introduced by verbs such as 'believe', 'find'); and *Directives* to get ASs to do something (e.g.: 'advise', 'ask'). On the contrary they tend to limit *Commissives* (e.g. implying a promise or a danger), and *Expressives* (e.g. apologising or thanking, performed instead by ASs) even though their attitudes and implied messages may be detected in any case by other implicit linguistic and paralinguistic cues.

It is therefore useful to examine how speech acts are performed in intercultural communication according to socio-pragmatic, cognitive and cultural differences which may hinder the conveyance of the

<sup>26</sup> Searle (1969) focused on the speaker's illocutionary role, thus overcoming Austin's (1962) theory of Performative Acts and suggesting a new perspective on his taxonomy by concentrating his attention to the speaker's mind and purposes realized in his/her utterances according to a specific socio-cultural communicative setting.

communicative intentionality, thus inducing ambiguities and misinterpretations.

- Moreover, it is necessary to consider that often intercultural communicative encounters occur on ‘unequal bases’ (Guido 2004a). Indeed Guido (2004a: 381) defines ‘unequal encounters’ as “a confrontation between two persons, one of whom is perceived as socially, culturally, or ethnically/racially superior to the other. An example of this type is represented by the gate-keeping interview, [...] [where] the ‘gatekeeper’, [...] believes to have the social, cultural, or ethnic authority to decide who are the other persons that are ‘admitted through the gate’ to receive a benefit”. Data confirm these communicative attitudes that inevitably produce perlocutionary reactions and interfere with the proper and successful mediation process, which should be considered the main and prevailing objective of a legal advisor as well as of a mediator in the accomplishment of their cross-cultural task.

- In some cases, LAs and IMs adopt communicative strategies marked by a pragmatic behaviour aimed at repositioning or repairing possible perceived status asymmetries in the performance of speech acts. Therefore hedging, downgrading and upgrading strategies are often activated for achieving different effects of ‘modulating’ or ‘reinforcing’ the illocutionary force of a speech act, such as of requesting or giving difficult and unpleasant news (e.g. by means of embedded ‘if’ clauses, hedges to avoid or hide personal commitment or the impact of his/her utterance, and upgrading moves by means of lexico-semantic and syntactic devices used to ‘increase’ the urgent illocutionary force of the speech act, such as: *listen!*).

- In addition, paralinguistic patterns are here considered as vehicles of emotional state as well as communicative and turn dynamics. Varying pitch range and rhythm, or other features such as loudness, pausing, and length, may regulate conversational interaction and especially in frequent cases of overlapping speech it may rule the participants’ turn-shift to gain or hold the floor of the conversation.

Another important aspect which was observed is the interactive relationship between linguistic messages and non-verbal cues and signals as an essential element enabling communication in ELF conversations. In the previous intercultural dialogues many utterances are not composed of words, but of non-lexical items. However, even if the research and investigation of the pragmatic functions and values of prosody in non-lexical utterances have been neglected, data reveal the

importance of non-lexical utterances where meaning can be conveyed just by prosody.

Therefore, intercultural mediators should be made aware during their training of the importance of all communicative devices and their possible interpretations, since non-verbal signs help ELF speakers when they lack the appropriate linguistic means to express meaning and intentions.

Actually, interactants' reactions towards non-verbal signals, such as back-channelling, may differ significantly across cultures and idiolects. Especially listening and replying may vary from passive receiving to interactional and participated interplay. This is reflected also in the prosodic activations of paralinguistic signals and especially back-channels, fillers and disfluencies (e.g. *mmm, ah ah, eh, ehm, tsch*) which are very common in the interactions reproduced in the corpus and indeed used very frequently in place of linguistic utterances. Besides, syllabification often characterizes non-lexical items (e.g. *mmm mmm, ah ah ah, yeah yeah*). Two-syllable items, often combined with other paralinguistic gestures (such as kinesic and proxemic ones), may signal the speaker's intention to fulfil a listening and cooperative role, to indicate that the participant is following and considering what he/she is listening to.

In a certain sense, non-lexical items may communicate more than words emotions and attitudes, doubts and perplexity, persuasion and commitment, but likewise they risk a high probability of being misinterpreted.

LAs are most likely to insert back-channels at IMs and ASs pauses or phrase boundaries. Such behaviours aim therefore at encouraging their interlocutors to continue their turn. IMs, on the other hand, tend to use more back-channelling signals and fillers simultaneously while AS is speaking, probably to encourage and try to gradually ease the communicative situation for him/her. Obviously in ELF interactions participants transfer their native timing and back-channelling habits for listening and turn-taking into their use of English also in interethnic encounters, facilitating the possibility of being misunderstood. Moreover such behaviours might generate opinions and, as a consequence, mutual generalizations and stereotypes about ethnic groups (in association with gender or age group as well) and their communicative appearance, with the result of defining national communities of speakers as inattentive and absent, or as impatient and aggressive, or extremely loquacious (as e.g. some ASs define Italian people).

- The analysis focused attention also on the essential communicative role of conversational silence and pausing, which has long been ignored in the field of linguistic research. However, some scholars, such as Basso (1970) argued that silence is inevitably communicative and “it is not the case that a man who is silent says nothing” (Basso 1970: 213). Indeed for its ambiguous and significant nature silence is difficult to define in the linguistic analysis since, in Samarin’s words – who claims that by disregarding silence, scholars risk ignoring a great amount of communicative contribution – “silence can have meaning. Like the zero in mathematics, it is an absence with a function” (Samarin 1965: 115).

Nevertheless, silence has been studied especially in the field of psychological and psycholinguistic approaches and perspectives, which investigate the use of silence and pausing in conversation and in speech sequences according to social and psychological correlates, such as social class, age, gender, and personality (e.g. Chafe 1985; Scollon 1985; Jaworski 1993; Zuo 2002; Nakamura 2004).

From a prosodic cross-cultural perspective, silence appears as a syntactic tool performing two different functions: syntactic boundary-marking and hesitation.

Since these two functions may assume different forms in spontaneous speech and live communication, silence and pausing are not universal and may change cross-culturally as well as intra-culturally. Therefore according to Jaworski (1993: 24) who considers silence as “probably the most ambiguous of all linguistic forms”, silence may be interpreted differently by participants and can also lead to communicative problems.

The prosodic function of pauses is applied by speakers to define and mark boundaries of significant speech units and turns. Pauses therefore belong to the prosodic and paralinguistic system of language and work along with other paralinguistic correlates of speech, such as voice intensity, pitch and intonation. Moreover silence and hesitations are evident markers of cognitive and semantic activity. In spontaneous speech – as confirmed in the previous analysis – silence tends to precede words, instead of following them to signal and convey emphasis, impression or hesitations due to difficulties in expressing into ELF what the speaker has in mind.

Obviously, data reveal different positive aspects of silence, first of all the fact that textual planning is indispensable in speech production as it often results in a mutual advantage for both speaker and listener, since in exchanges where the amount of pausing, turn-taking and feedback is limited, listeners have great difficulty in following the ongoing ELF talk and interpreting it properly.

African ASs often make use of long pauses which Western interlocutors may perceive as embarrassing and uncomfortable because silence generally carries negative connotations in their native culture perspective and the longer it is the more it can raise doubts and suspicions in the hearers' mind about their honesty and ability to reply.<sup>27</sup>

Data in the corpus show similar behaviours by ASs who sometimes do not answer LAs' or IMs' questions or even turn around their back, thus hindering the building of social interactions, accessibility and accommodation strategies; moreover they prevent their interlocutors from perceiving and comprehending emotional states, whereas their behaviours may be misinterpreted as a device for self-protection and turn avoidance, or as impoliteness, distance, bad mood or shyness.

- Apart from prosodic paralinguistic information, analysis also takes into account the remaining considerable data concerning body and facial expressions.

Gaze and eye-contact play a fundamental role in face-to-face interaction: participants engaged in the following intercultural conversations look at one another to manage turn shift, to signal interest, intentions and attention, and to verify receiver's understanding and acceptance. In Western culture, e.g. gaze is often used as a means of indicating the next speaker who is called to take the turn.

ASs very often avoid eye contact, which their Western receivers typically perceive as unpleasant and rude, thus they usually attempt to repair and re-gain contact and gaze.

Body posture is another factor influencing reactions and turn taking. LAs sometimes are seated behind a table while in other cases they are upright in front of their interlocutors. ASs instead tend to change their posture during an exchange, probably to signal their interest or their need to gain the floor. IMs seldom are seated in an equidistant position from LAs and ASs, but this proxemic behaviour should be avoided since it signals a biased attitude towards participants while IMs who are tasked with mediating, have to guarantee impartiality and neutrality.

<sup>27</sup> However, pauses are not universally cognitive and unconscious. Studies show that silence can also be used as a precise and deliberate means of social control, such as in Nakane (2007) who describes how in Akan communities in Ghana, and Igbo communities in Nigeria, people use silence to signal a form of punishment towards those who violate social norms (not so different indeed from some similar uses of silence in Western communities when people, hurt in their feelings, consciously use silence as a form of punishment toward their interlocutor and do not talk to each other on purpose).

Again taking a breath and leaning forward may also communicate an involuntary reaction or a desire for a turn. In Western cultures leaning back usually indicates the end of a turn and the wait for an answer.

As far as head movements are concerned, Western participants often nod to show agreement and commitment, and they quickly shake their heads from side to side when they disagree and signal the desire to reply. Participants in cross-cultural encounters should take into account that gestures do not have the same meaning in all cultural codes, and, as already seen in the previous chapters, methods used to show involvement and attention (as well as their opposites) vary across cultures with the possibility of leading to ambiguity and misinterpretations. IMs in particular should be aware and sensitive to the intercultural multi-modal conveyance of the message, considering their own behaviours as well as those of the other participants involved in the interaction, interpreting with caution and without cultural biases what they are observing.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. *Concluding remarks*

This ethnographic research developed from the awareness that ELF in intercultural communication within immigration contexts, especially in southern Italy, need urgent and careful consideration.

The well-known – and almost – collapsing aid system incessantly operating along the Sicilian coasts is only the first and more visible step of a long migratory process which inevitably entails different kinds of communicative contacts taking place between Italian authorities and experts, on the one hand, and asylum seekers and migrants on the other.

This research has actually focused on the investigation of intercultural encounters involving legal and bureaucratic specialized discourse employed in a centre for legal advice of the southern Italy specifically dealing with asylum seekers and refugees, where legal experts operate with the linguistic assistance of intercultural mediators. More precisely, the participants involved in the interactions were speakers from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, using ELF to fulfil their communicative goals.

As a consequence, the specialized discourse conveyed through ELF spoken interactions has been here explored by means of a novel phonopragmatic approach, ultimately aimed at identifying ‘gatekeeping’ asymmetries between the interactants in immigration domains, in terms of power-status arrangements and conversational leading roles.

Actually, a crucial research hypothesis is that ELF users involved in intercultural encounters differently appropriate the English language not only according to their own different native linguacultural schemata (Carrell *et al.* 1988), but also to specific pragmalinguistic goals and processes.

More precisely the research objectives concerned the investigation of the spontaneous and natural use of prosodic strategies by ELF speakers from different L1 backgrounds, with the ultimate aim of describing (i) how existing L1 prosodic and acoustic variations (in terms of stress, intonational patterns, speech rate, and disfluency) were redefined in the use of an ELF variation; (ii) to what extent the resulting L1 phonological transfers affected speakers' ELF variations (in terms of phonological phrasing, textual, syntactic and lexical choices); (iii) how meaning, experience and understanding were mediated and cross-culturally constructed to be conveyed in interactions through phonopragmatic strategies; and (iv) the role played by prosody and paralinguistics in the negotiation of speakers' attitudes, emotions, and socio-cultural schemata derived from background interpretative filters.

As a matter of fact, an important theoretical premise to the research is represented by a synergic co-occurrence of perspectives and assumptions that justify the research rationale, i.e. (i) the persistence of 'gatekeeping' asymmetries between the participants in interactions in immigration domains, where achieving successful communication and access to information and opportunities through mutual accommodation strategies appears rather challenging, if not sometimes problematic (Erickson & Shulz 1982; Guido 2008); (ii) the pragmatic implications derived from the Speech Acts Theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969; 1983) based on the performing of illocutionary intents through the adoption of prosodic and pragmalinguistic strategies; (iii) the interface between the multimodal construction of messages and their perlocutionary effects on receivers from different sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds interacting through their own ELF variations (Guido 2008).

The phonopragmatic approach, therefore, has aimed to explore first of all the possible prosodic and auditory processes involved in such cross-cultural dynamics, with particular attention to the speakers' illocutionary and pragmatic intentions conveyed through speech acts.

For this purpose, the phonopragmatic analysis was applied to a corpus of recorded data collected during spontaneous cross-cultural interactions between asylum-seekers, refugees, language mediators and legal advisors, taking place at a centre for legal counselling and assistance to refugees and involving ELF and Italian Lingua-Franca.

As a result, a qualitative research method (Seliger & Shohamy 1995) was applied to five case studies explored from (i) a register perspective, taking into account lexical, rhetorical and stylistic choices, such as the use of tense and aspect, deontic vs. epistemic modality, conversational hedging,

popularization and simplification of terminology, accommodation strategies; (ii) a phono-prosodic perspective, exploring prosodic parameters (such as pitch level and range, intensity, stressed syllable duration, pauses, speech rate, intonational phrase, and pitch contour) and other paralinguistic and extralinguistic features (such as facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye movements and eye gaze, head and hand movements, voice quality); and (iii) a phonopragmatic perspective, considering and analyzing how the identified phono-linguistic strategies actually match with the speakers' pragmalinguistic goals in the conversation frame, where western perspectives and schemata meet non-western attitudes and viewpoints, often resulting in communication breakdown, or at least persuasive and manipulative attempts by the higher-status participant.

More precisely, spectral, pitch and formant PRAAT analysis (Boersma & Weenink 2014) of conversation turns and acts occurring in mediation processes in immigration settings was here employed by considering phono-prosodic parameters used in different ELF variations.

The objective of the acoustic analysis was to describe (i) how prosody and phonology are influenced by pragmatics and consequently how they affect the speakers' conveyance of intentionality in conversational interactions and the receivers' perception and interpretation process, and (ii) how native-language syntactic and stylistic structures are transferred to the use of ELF variations and to which extent they affect the production and perception of the English language used in intercultural encounters – and, as a consequence, improve or hinder the cross-cultural mediation process.

However, the phonopragmatic and register investigation of utterances and speech acts fulfils its complete task only when the auditory and acoustic evaluation matches the conversation analysis in terms of moves and acts, which may reveal pragmalinguistic power-status and role asymmetries through the imposition of worldviews and schemata.

## **5.2. Future prospects**

The previous five sections have presented a number of case-studies selected from a considerable amount of quantitative data collected on the ELF ethnographic fieldwork described above.

Hence, the organizational structure previously proposed derives from a methodological need for a systematic data management. Yet a data-driven research method inevitably provides a series of information and evaluations that hardly fit a univocal theoretical generalization.

Actually the main purpose of the present study (and probably of those which can derive from it) is to provide an insight into the complex and multifaceted linguistic phenomena related to cross-cultural specialized

settings through the exploration of divergent communication strategies used by ELF users. In addition, such research purpose obviously does not have an end in itself, but rather the main objective is to hypothesize and suggest a procedural communicative framework enabling future intercultural mediators to successfully perform their task.

In order to answer the research objectives and verify the research hypotheses, the case-studies have been selected from a corpus of collected data and thus analysed with the aim of providing a first interpretative phonopragmatic assessment of ELF cross-cultural interactions in specialized immigration domains, namely the legal and welfare ones, exploring linguistic and paralinguistic behaviours and strategies (with constant reference to their pragmatic reasons and intents) actualized by the interacting participants.

The observation process has shown all its crucial importance for the present research since it allows the multiple perspectives of the participants involved in the interactions and their relationships, achieved not only by means of recordings, but also through careful detailed field notes and informal conversations and interactions with the participants.

In an attempt to summarize previous evaluations and considerations it is here proposed a broad outlook on the main linguistic and paralinguistic behaviours which differently emerged from the participants involved in the ELF exchanges taken into consideration.

The most important parameters under examination are here reviewed with the aim of finding possible behavioural patterns which may be recurring, and thus typical of certain groups of ELF users, among the participants encountered during the fieldwork.

In the case-study qualitative analysis, special attention has been paid to cross-cultural behavioural patterns represented by peculiar and common linguistic and paralinguistic attitudes revealed by speakers during their exchanges.

To sum up, it is possible to recognize that linguistic and paralinguistic behaviours in the exchanges here considered as affected by roles and conversational rules.

More precisely, legal advisors still represent the ‘gatekeepers’ who enable and direct the encounter, and their ELF accommodation and adaptation strategies are totally aimed to pragmatic goals of persuading and giving directives.

From a strictly phonological perspective, it should be noticed that the Italian experts and legal advisors met during the fieldwork made no attempt to reproduce the ENL or ESL pronunciation, accent and intonational patterns. Rather they strictly transfer local and native paralinguistic and prosodic tactics to their ELF acts in the attempt to recreate the same pragmatic and perlocutionary effects produced in their own speech community.

As already observed by several researchers, L1 influence on the phonological and phonetic realization depends on L2 competence (cf. e.g. Ueyama 1997; Ueyama & Jun 1998; Jun & Oh 2000; Stella & Gili Fivela 2009; Stella 2010). This is particularly evident when the native phonological system and the L2 one (in this case that of ELF) employ different tonal accents and patterns, especially in marked tonal realizations such as syllable-timing, narrow-contrastive focus and emphasis.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, silence and non-lexical items are totally transferred to ELF spontaneous realizations with the same pragmatic implications of their corresponding employment in the L1.

On the other hand, migrants and asylum seekers represent the most challenging viewpoint in the ELF dimensions of immigration communicative contexts where L1 transfers are not easily recognizable.

More interestingly, data show gender-based variations in the use of linguistic structures (namely verbal, lexical and stylistic ones) as well as in their phonological realizations. Evidently sub-Saharan migrants, coming from ex-British colonies, generally show some degrees of standard pronunciation and suprasegmental patterns, even though dialectological and sociolectal tracts are recognizable (e.g. vowel reduction, inter-dental fricative assimilation, L1 tone influence on English stress).

Therefore, the asylum seekers' more fitting conformity to the standard linguistic and paralinguistic behaviours (especially as far as segmental and suprasegmental variations are concerned) may give rise to misunderstanding episodes which may hinder the successful outcome of the exchange with their Italian interlocutors. As a consequence, mediators are charged with the task of intervening to recover linguistic and paralinguistic misinterpretations, but sometimes they seem to underestimate their important role in cross-cultural triangular interactions.

The mediators observed in this fieldwork were all female under- or post-graduates in foreign languages revealing L1 influences similar to those underlined for the asylum seekers, with rare exceptions due to the attempt of reproducing standard articulatory and intonational English patterns (especially in statements and wh-questions).

To conclude, the phonopragmatic model, here applied to five exemplifying case studies, should be implemented through further research investigation which may entail not only qualitative but also quantitative and statistical analysis of the whole corpus of data collected.

<sup>28</sup> More precisely Stella & Gili Fivela (2009) propose a falling tonal accent (H\*+L) for the description of the question contours and other focalisation processes applied to L2 tonal productions according to different levels of linguistic competence. Nonetheless concepts such as 'interlanguage', 'errors', 'competence' and 'fossilization' are irrelevant for ELF since it may not be considered a 'foreign language' (as extensively pointed out by Jenkins 2006).

Actually, by means of an appropriate tagging practice, data may constitute a corpus of naturally occurring transcribed spoken interaction where phonopragmatic behaviours and patterns are tagged to enable availability and usability. However this challenging operation requires an accurate and meticulous procedure since the extraordinarily creative, unpredictable and variable nature of ELF variations hinders a straightforward and precise categorisation of prosodic, lexical, syntactic and textual features.

Moreover, spontaneous data may be a useful tool for perceptual investigation aimed at verifying – within other speakers' categories, native speakers of English included – what the present research has revealed in terms of speakers' unequal distribution of illocutionary intents and their respective perlocutionary effects on the receivers. In this sense a series of experimental acoustic designs may be suggested to speakers of different linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds to assess and further investigate the phonopragmatic habits and patterns identified through the previous research method.

Probably data concerning language mediators are the most relevant to set the scene for future considerations and insights in the study of intercultural mediation, especially with the aim of suggesting efficient training programmes for future ELF mediators, since they represent, among the participants involved in these interactions, the ones who can be induced to consciously reconsider their linguistic and paralinguistic behaviours.

In this perspective, the professional figure of the mediator may be designed as absolutely equidistant from the migrant (whose real intents and requests he/she is called to understand) and the expert (who is likewise guided to the acceptance of the migrant's own schemata through the mediator's intervention). This triangular disposition of roles and attitudes may be achieved only by means of a proper and effective interdisciplinary training of mediators which can take into account the significant insights and evaluations revealed by the phonopragmatic investigation of ELF encounters.

Silvia Sperti holds a Ph.D. in English Linguistics applied to Intercultural Communication from the University of Salento (Italy). She is a Lecturer in English Language and Translation at Roma Tre University. Her research interests and publications focus on the investigation of phonopragmatic and socio-cultural dimensions of intercultural communication in specialized discourse, with special attention to ELF variations in cross-cultural interactions and mediation processes.

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