

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 19th 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.⁶

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

⁶ 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.⁷

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.

⁷ 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 20th 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”⁸ 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,

⁸ 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 19th century and the early part of the 20th 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 20th 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 20th 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 20th 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