

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

frames to enhance mediators' intercultural communication competences in ELF.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.2. Intonational and Prosodic Pragmatics of cross-cultural interactions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3. Paralinguistic aspects of intercultural mediation processes

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3.1 Paralinguistic implications: kinesics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3.2. *Paralinguistic implications: proxemics*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

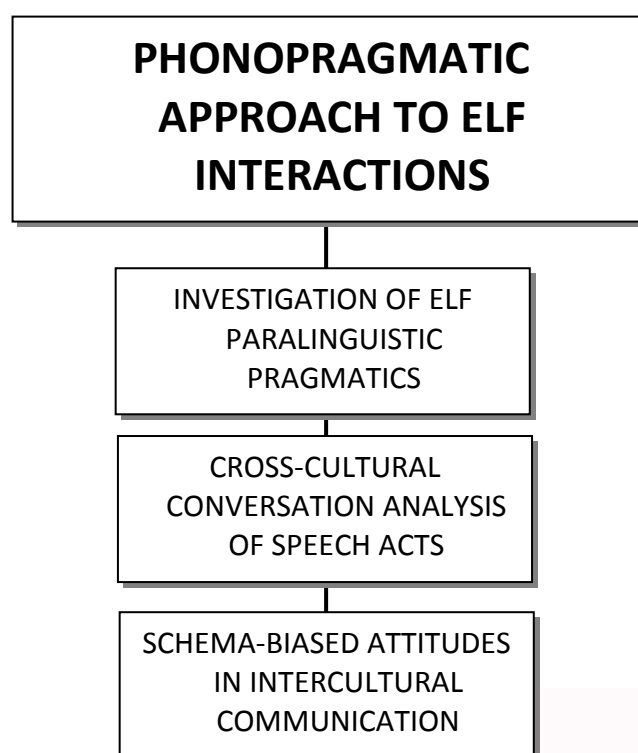


Diagram 1. The Phonopragmatic Model.

3.4. *Phonopragmatic Analysis: The Methodological Approach*

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

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

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

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

3.4.1. *The acoustic analysis*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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3.4.2. Conversation analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.4.3. Register analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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