

## 4. Phonopragmatic Analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<p>[ ]</p> <p><b>underlining in black</b></p> <p><b>CAPITALS</b></p> <p>◦ ◦</p> <p>(.)</p> <p>(.)</p> <p>::</p> <p><b>hhh</b></p> <p>&gt; &lt;</p> <p>&lt; &gt;</p> <p>=</p>	<p>Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech</p> <p>Prominence associated to pitch accent</p> <p>Louder speech</p> <p>Raised circles enclose quieter speech</p> <p>Pauses</p> <p>Micropauses</p> <p>Vowel elongation; the more colons the more lengthening</p> <p>Aspiration</p> <p>Speeded-up talk</p> <p>Slowed-down talk</p> <p>Immediate "latching" and turn-taking</p>
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*Table 1.* Transcription notation adapted from Edward's (1997) system.

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

## 4.2. Phonopragmatic dimensions: Case study 1

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

#### 4.2.1. Acoustic analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

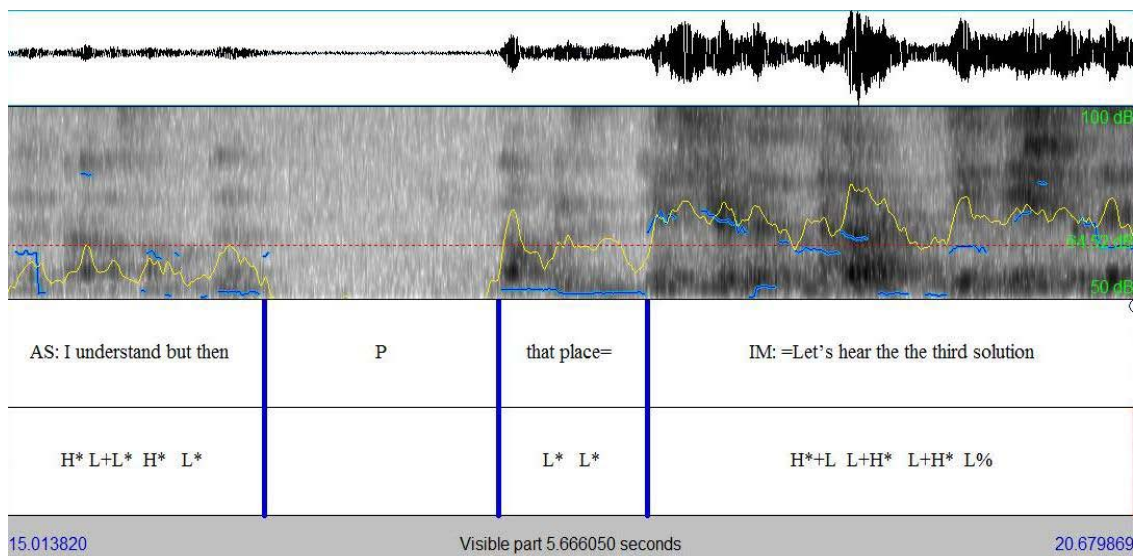
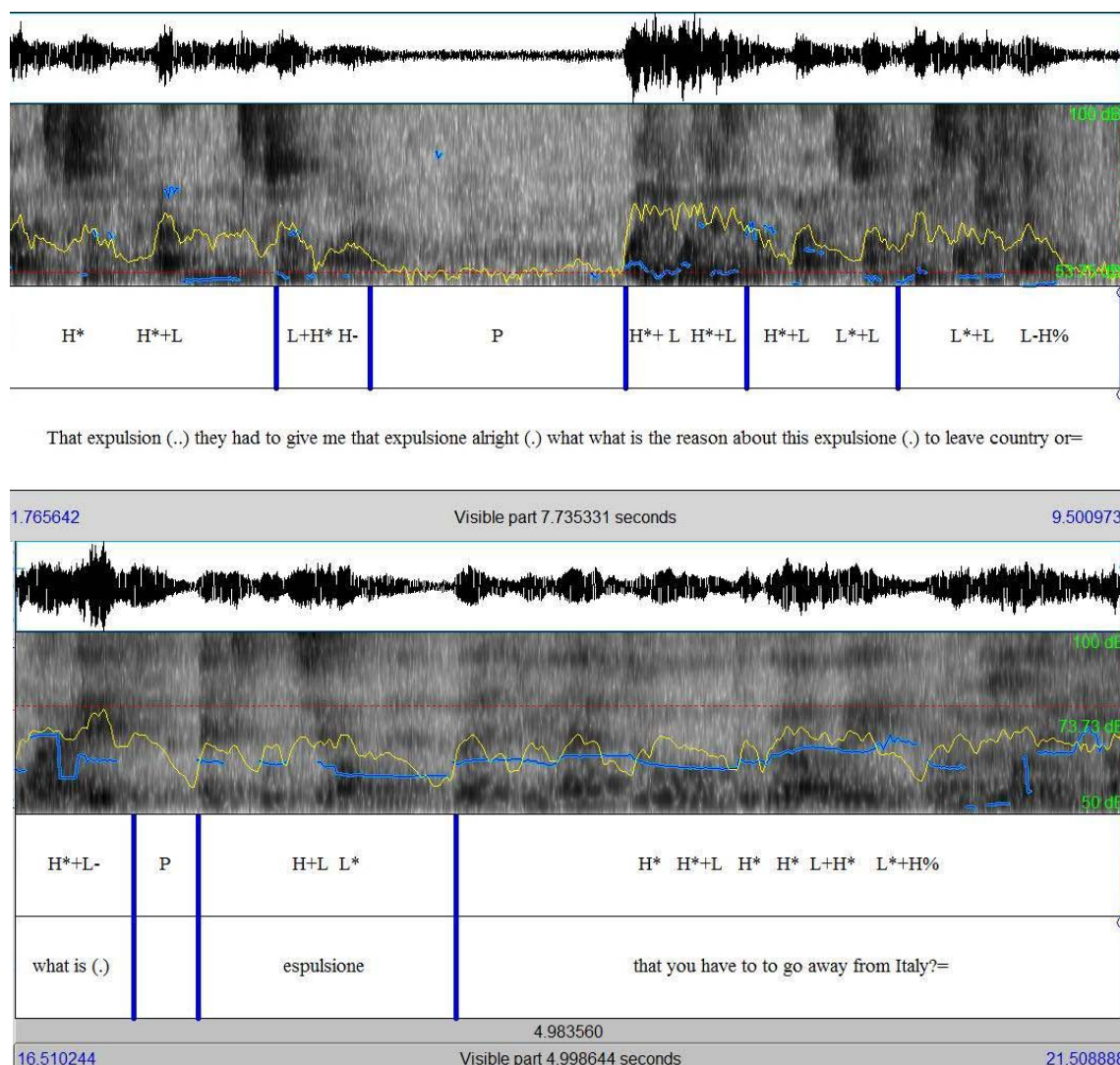


Figure 1. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (36) and (37)

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

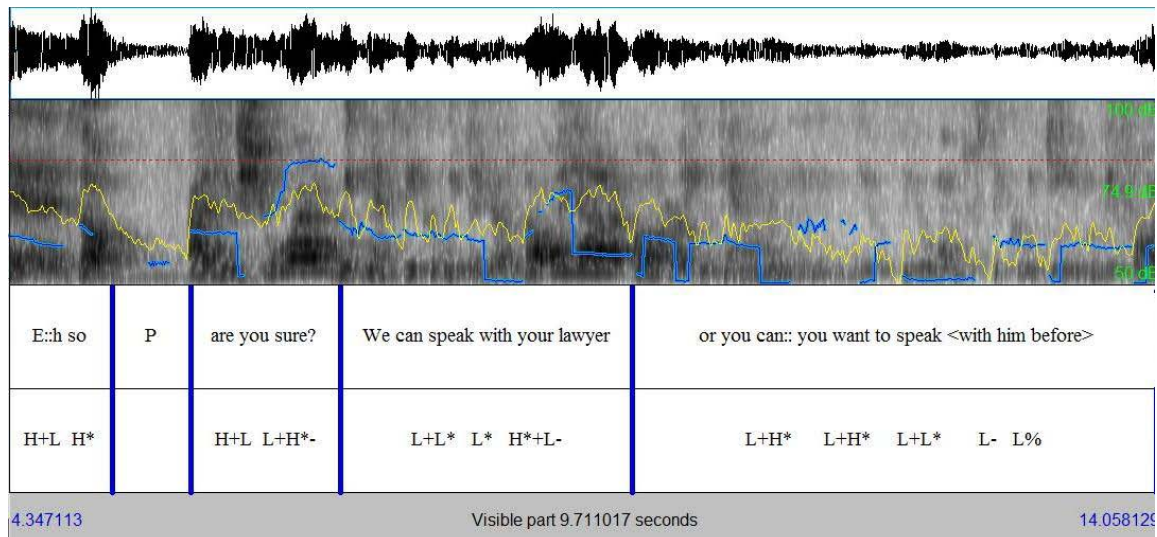


Figure 4. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (75)

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

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

#### 4.2.2. Conversational analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4.2.3. Register analysis

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(40) *AS*: Yeah

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

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

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

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

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

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

(47) *AS*: Yes

[...]

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

(49) *AS*: Ok

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

(51) *AS*: Next Thursday?

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

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

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

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

#### 4.3.1. Acoustic analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

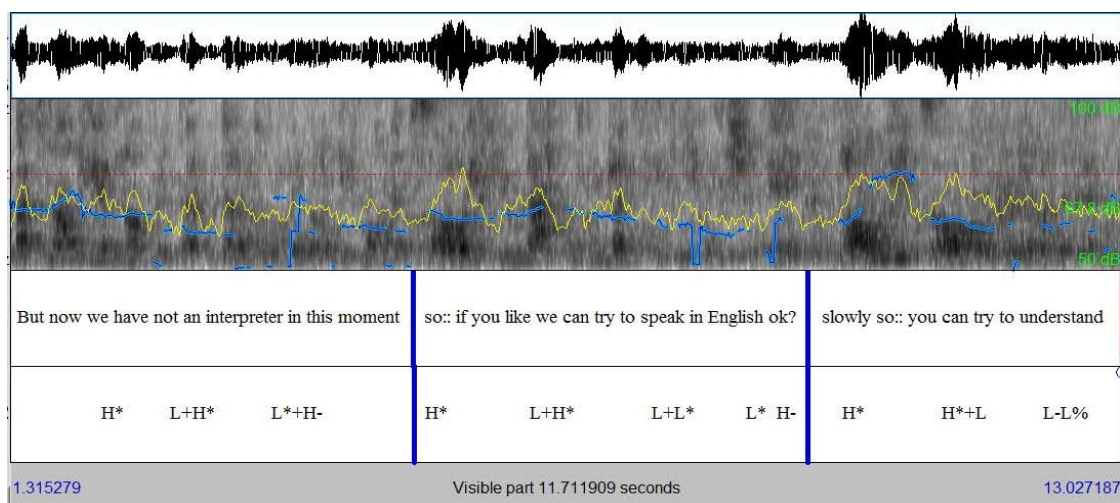
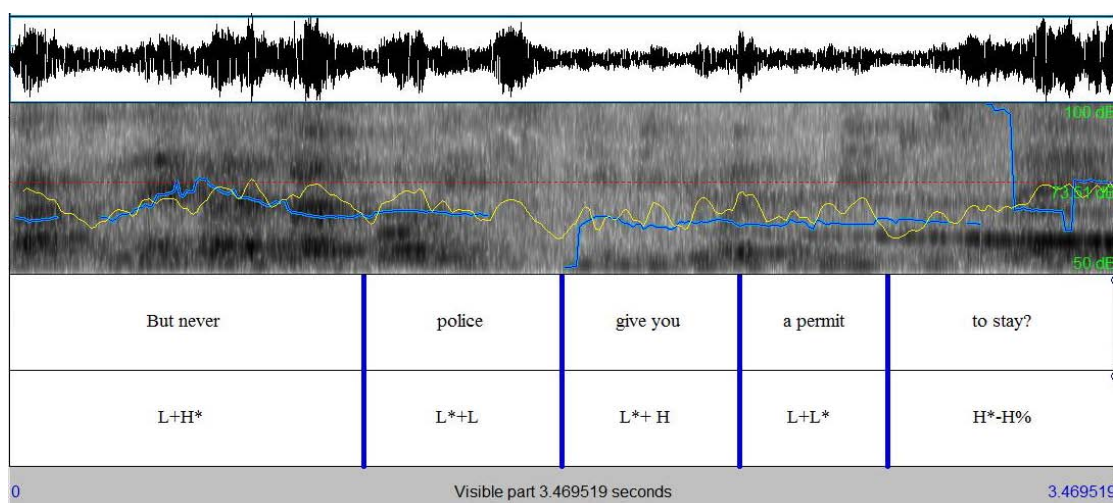


Figure 5. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (12)



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

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

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

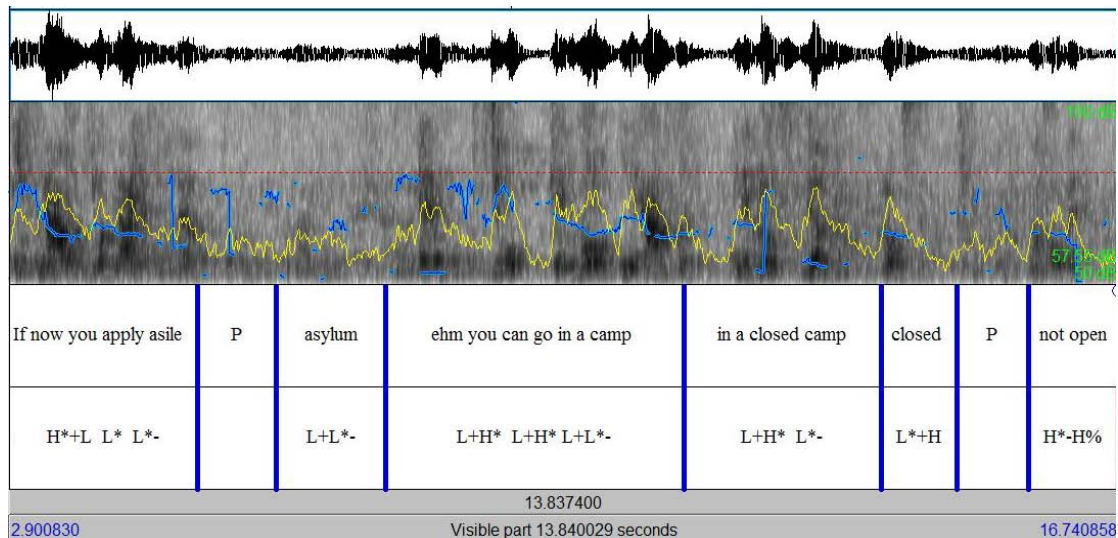


Figure 7. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (39)

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

#### 4.3.2. Conversation analysis

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 4.3.3. Register analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(21) AS: I lived with an old man

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

(23) AS: No

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(33) AS: **Mmm?**

(34) IM: In the hospital?

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

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

(37) AS: Yes

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

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

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

(41) AS: **Mmm**

(42) IM: Ok (.)

[...]

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

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

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

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

(46) AS: No

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

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

(49) IM: Your story

[...]

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

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

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

(53) LA: Sì

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

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

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

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

{...}

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

(59) AS: (..) yes

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

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

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

(63) AS: This is the number

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

(65) AS: Sì

{...}

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

{...}

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

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

#### 4.4.1. Acoustic analysis

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

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

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

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

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



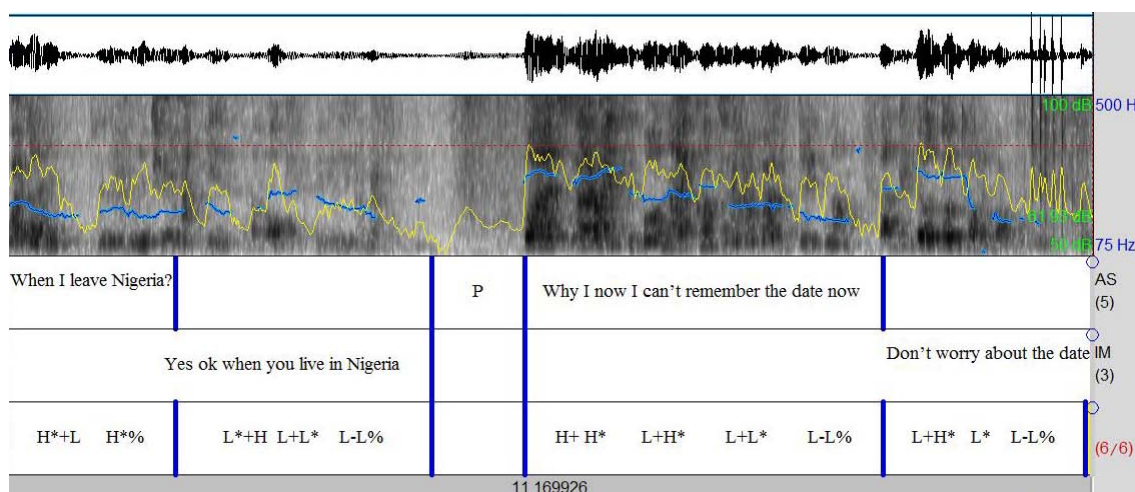


Figure 8. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (2) - (5)

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

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

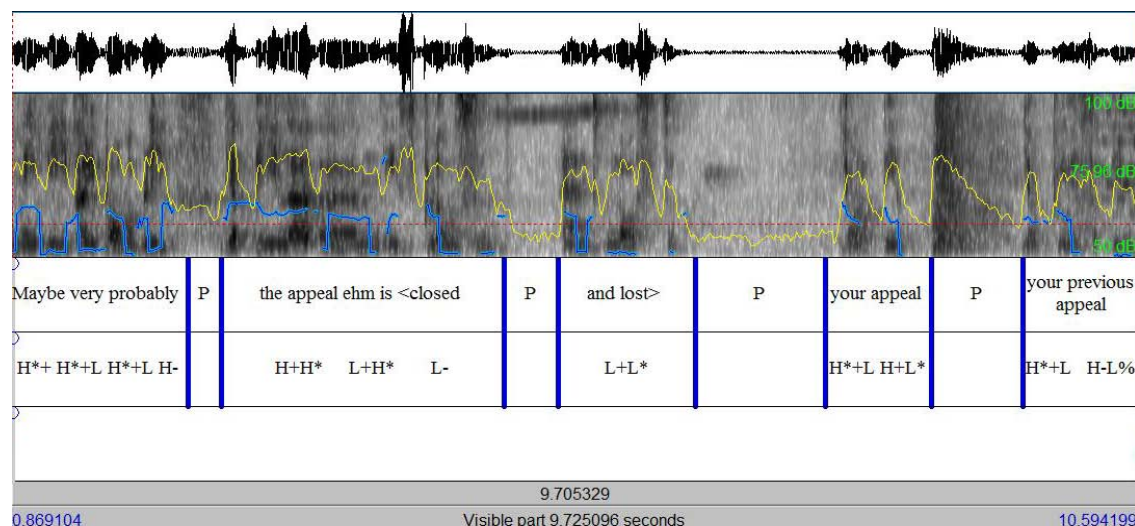


Figure 9. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (66)

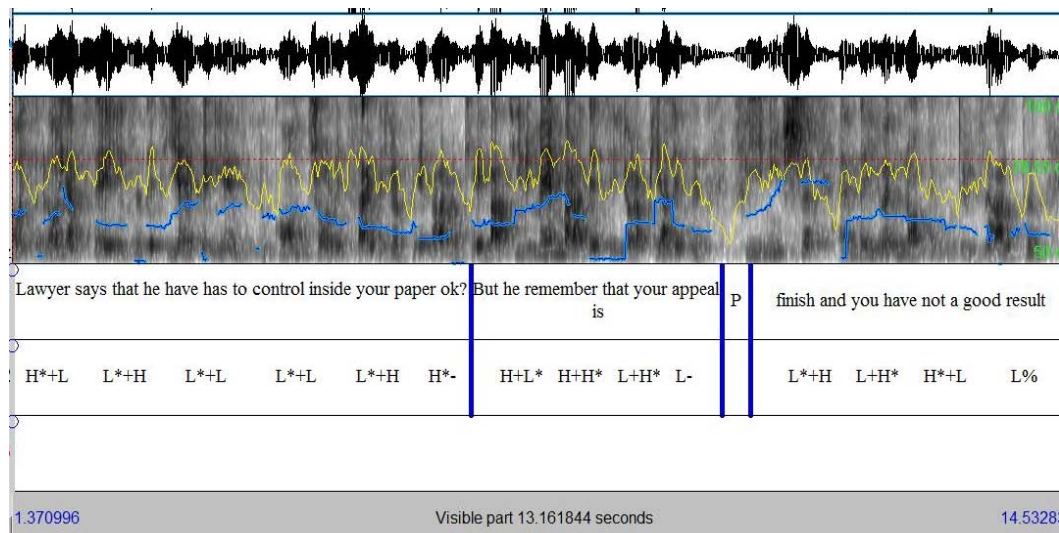


Figure 10. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (67)

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

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

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

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

#### 4.4.2. Conversation analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4.4.3. Register Analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

[MI3 laughs]

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

(167) MI3: Ok

(168) LA: Ok

(169) MI3: Thank you

(170) LA: *Ciao*

#### 4.5.1. Acoustic analysis

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

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

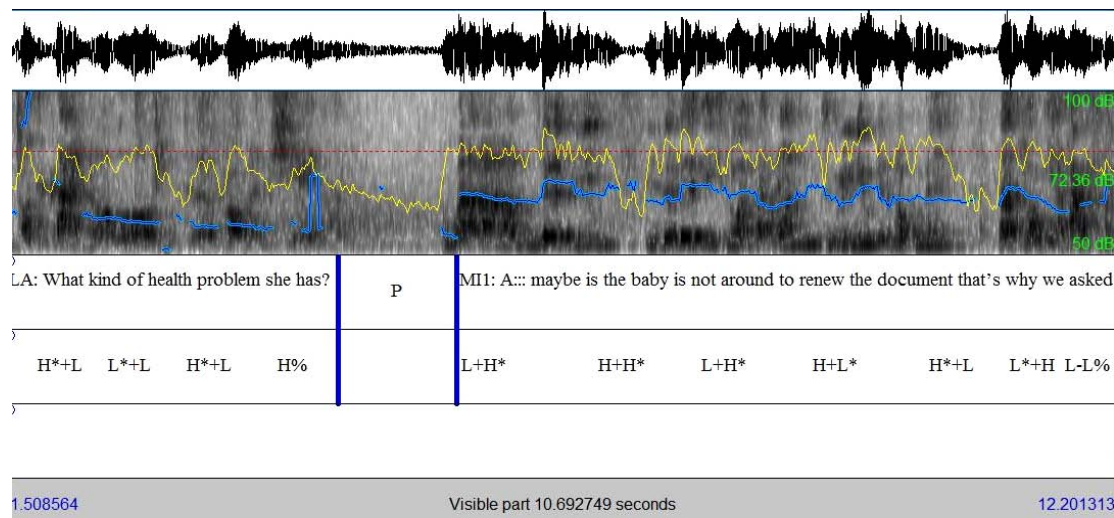


Figure 11. The utterance waveform, the *f0* contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (36) and (38)

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

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

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

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

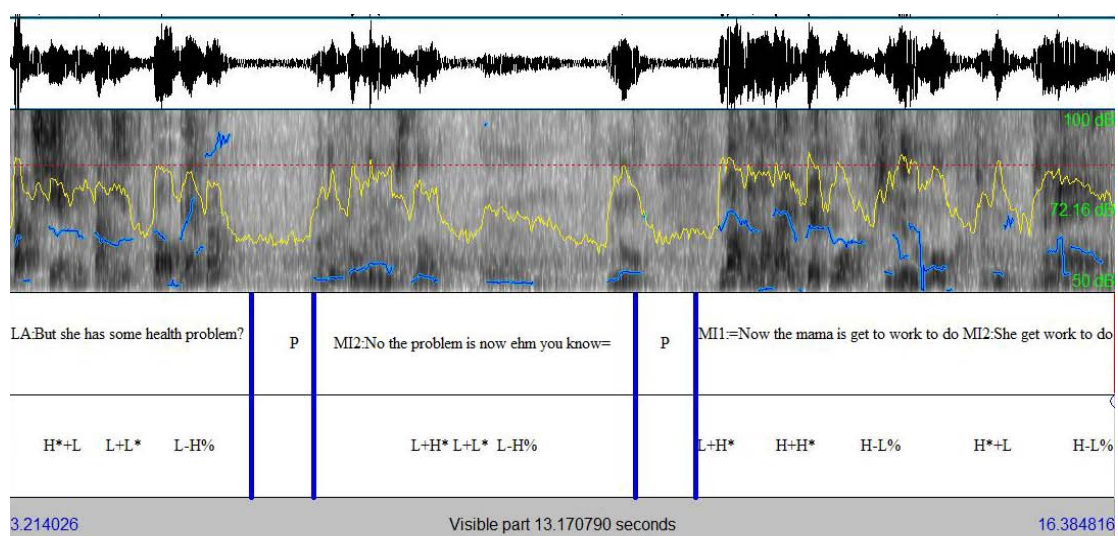


Figure 12. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (59) - (62)

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

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

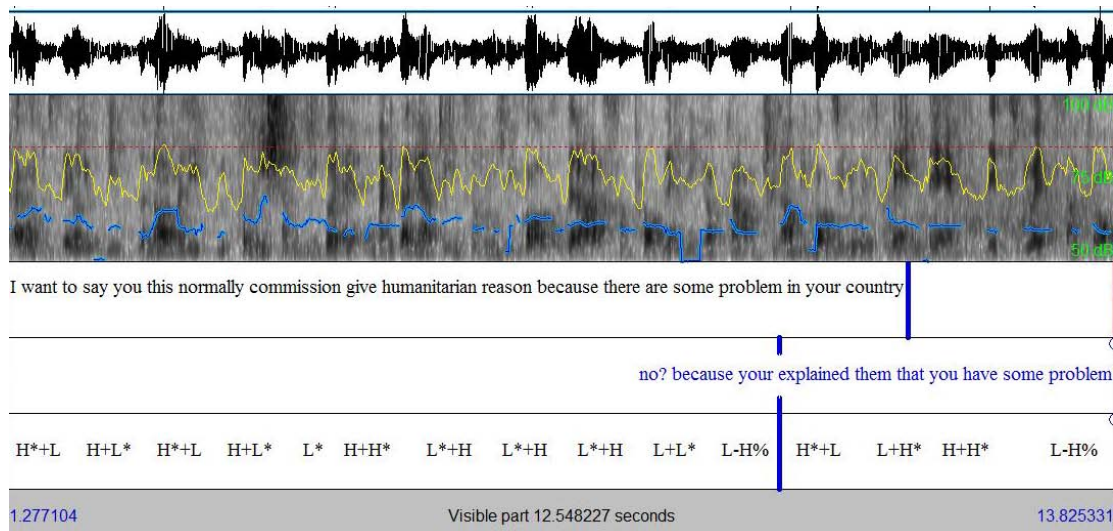


Figure 13. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (73)

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

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

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

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

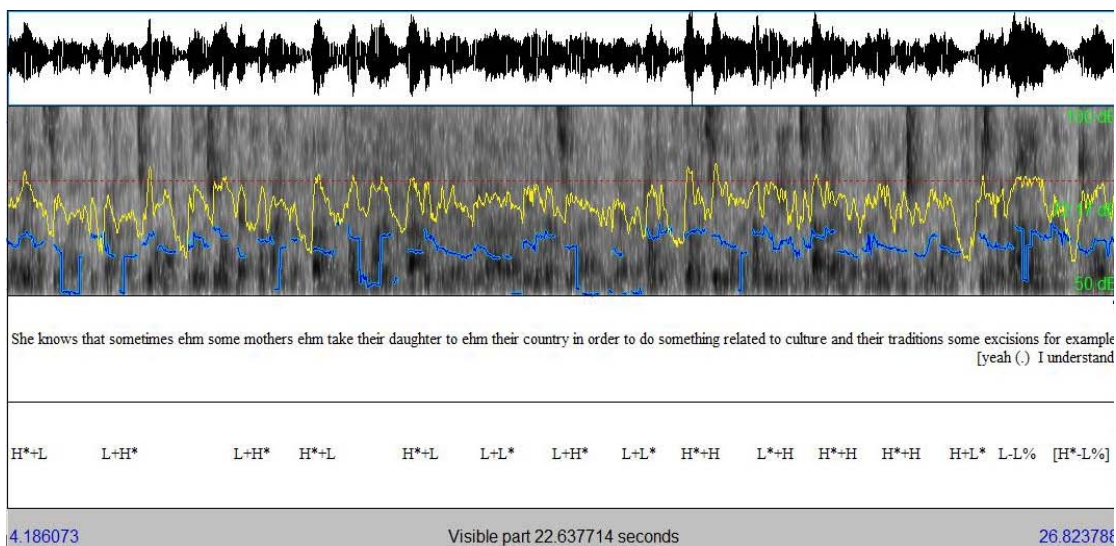


Figure 14. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (157)

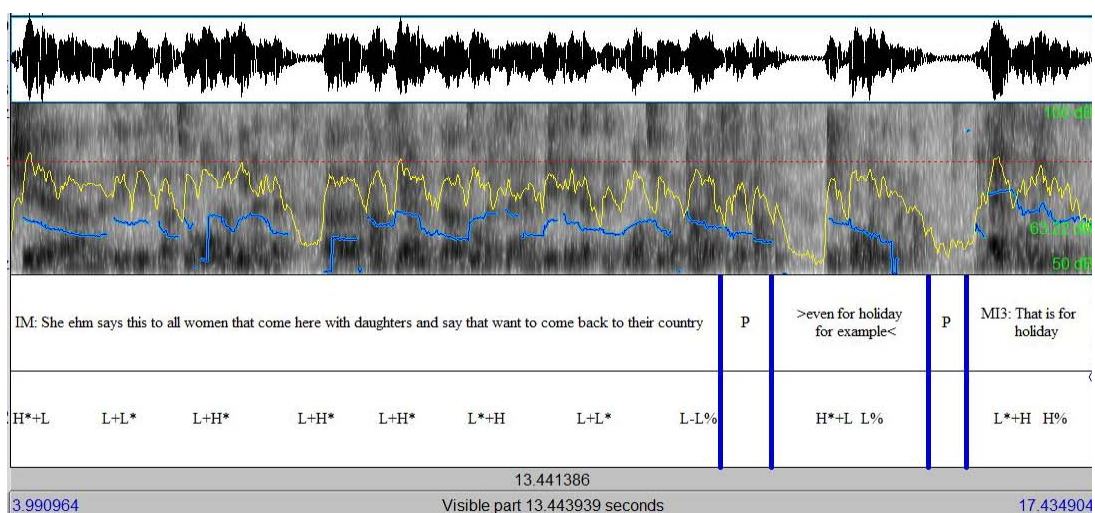


Figure 15. The utterance waveform, the f0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (163) and (164)

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

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

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

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

#### 4.5.2. *Conversation analysis*

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4.5.3. Register analysis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

hedges (*I think that you, but I think it's better, maybe they can, I don't know, is better* (.) *I think is better, I want to know if*); and conative questions (*ok?*).

MI's variation of English is influenced by L1 transfers (namely tonal aspects derived from her native language, Niger-Congo Ga)<sup>24</sup> characterized by stressed brief sentences, rarely interlaced by paratactic conjunctions or *if*-clauses. MI1 especially deserves attention to the *intentionality* and *informativity* of her utterances since this is clearly aimed at resolving her doubts.

Therefore, MI1 and MI2 try to disclose their pragmatic aims since their first utterances by means of textual strategies such as: reformulation (e.g. *they* become *we* in (5)), hedges (*they want* vs. *they want to know, we just want*); mutual turn-taking where they mutually complete and reinforce their respective utterances and moves; declarative sentences with an interrogative and eliciting function (e.g. (44), (48), (51), (53), (57), (110), (114)).

IM's register is in line with LA's conversation management even though *politeness* and *formality* prevail: she attempts to give importance and value to her statements and questions, first of all by means of a syntactic observance of standard rules (e.g. in (10), (24), (32), (88), (90), (92), (128), (130), (132), (135)).

Moreover, her rhetoric abilities are mainly observable in the last part of the exchange where she has to mediate between LA's illocutionary aims and MI3's pragmatic inclinations.

Questions and statements in (134), (135), (137), (141), along with their patronizing and inquisitive tone, are actually what Iaiia & Sperti (2013) define '*fake eliciting*' since obviously she does not expect to receive a proper answer by only a sort of tacit acknowledgment of her visions and evaluations. As such her rhetorical devices (*what do you think?*, *\*you will be happy... \*if she will stay?*, *living your life, what do you think?*, *she will visit, after that she will come back, we know that it's better, if you will try, because maybe you can't find*) are simply aimed at expressing her judgmental and prescriptive view.

LA's call to a gender encounter as well is aimed at the perlocutionary effect of having the Ghanaian woman speak and reveal what her Italian interlocutors suspect.

Moreover, through IM's words, LA tries to alarm and dissuade the woman (e.g. in (156), (157) and (158): *because it's illegal* (.) *ok?*, *\*if you*

<sup>24</sup> Ga has seven oral vowels and five nasal vowels which have three distinctive vowel lengths: short, long or extra long. Moreover Ga is a tonal language (like many West African languages) characterized by two tones, high and low. Hence these acoustic correlates influence stress attribution in the use of English as a second language or ELF.

*will do something like this and someone here in Italy will know it (.) you'll have a lot of problems)* before closing with a downgrading attempt to be empathic and accommodating (in (163) *here we are all women and we know, if you need to talk to us for this reason you can come here and we can talk*) by means of hedging strategies (*something like excision for example*) and hesitations (*is very painful ehm in a woman's life*).

Yet, their attempt fails and the woman's paralinguistic level once again prevails on words and utterances, by means of smiles and giggles (apparently inappropriate to the serious topic at issue).

Probably here the Ghanaian woman has been influenced by the paralinguistic dimension of the encounter more than the linguistic one: seen from her perspective, being alone in front of two foreign experts introducing taboo issues such as FGM, could not facilitate the expected approach and response to IM's eliciting attempts. On the other hand, IM is particularly involved in the issues concerning FGM and its risks and her moves are emotionally produced: hesitations, fillers, fast speech rate, smiles; these features may hinder the interlocutor's *acceptability* and accommodation, conveying instead anxiety.

#### 4.6. Phonopragmatic dimensions: Case study 5

In this significant ELF exchange, a bureaucratic aspect gives the chance to the Italian LA (supported by an Italian mediator) and the Sierra-Leonean AS to tackle through ELF serious problems of integration and post-traumatic psychological disorders.

- (1) AS: Last time I **have been there (.) you know (.) so I don't know** what it is the problem
- (2) LA: **Maybe (.)** that (.) when (..) this kind of permit to stay (.) °humanitarian reason° (.) every time that you come to the police to **remove it (.) they have to ask ehm** to the commission (.) **if** it is possible to **remove** the permit to stay (.) ok? So (.) maybe that the answer from the commission is it's not arrived (.) till now (.) so (.) they **must** wait this answer (.) before to **remove (.)** to prepare the big one permit to stay (.) because for other person it's the same (.) **ok?**
- (3) Every time that you **remove** this kind of permit (.) [AS: *sì*] (.) police **must** ask to the commission (.) "it's possible to remove for another year?" (.) **ok? Because** every year (.) every year they **have to** ask before to the commission (..) **if** commission say "ok (.) you can remove it" (.) they prepare your permit (.) **if** the commission say "ok there are not **ehh** other problem in \*\*\*\* (.) **so** we **remove** this permit for **a lot of** year **so** now it's **suffiscent**" (.) or you change this permit in a

permit for job (.) **if** you have a job (.) or <you lost your permit> (.) **so** (.) **this is the procedure** every time (.) **ok? So** (.) here the person with **eh** the receipt of the month of May (..) you are a receipt with the month of June (..) **so** there are some person who are waiting for a lot of time (..)

(4) AS: **So** (.) what is the problem (.) you **know** about (..) about (..) about (..) the one year

(5) LA: **Eh** (.) **so** you have a permit (..)

(6) AS: **So**=

(7) LA: =**But** the procedure (.) I explained to you (.) the procedure=

(8) AS: =**But** (..) have you understand?

(9) LA: **Mmm**

(10) AS: They told me that fifteen days

(11) LA: **Mmm**

(12) AS: After the past of fifteen days I **don't know** why (..)

(13) LA: I **know** (.) B\*\*\*\* (.) **but** to ask **if** there are specific reason (.) **but normally the problem is this** (.) that they **must** wait the answer from the commission before to renove (.) **but** I **can** ask **if** there are some other problem (.) **if** [yes (.) **if** there are some other problem] (.) **ok** (.) **ok** (.) we **will** meet again next week (.) *va bene?*

[...]

(14) LA: *Ma stu stai bene?* B\*\*\*\*? About your health situation (.) it's all **ok?**

(15) AS: Not **so** fine (..) my stomach

(16) LA: *Ma tu ce l'hai un dottore* (.) **ah** B\*\*\*\*? Have you a doctor? Personal doctor?

(17) AS: I **don't understand**

(18) LA: **Ehm** (..) have you the health (..) **e::hm** [*IM*: card] card?

(19) AS: I have the card

(20) LA: And on the card is not write the name of (..) the:: doctor? **Ah?**

(21) AS: Yeah (..)

(22) LA: *Ce l'hai qua?*

(23) AS: Here? Not (.) I've lost (.)

(24) LA: *L'hai perso? L'hai lost?*

(25) AS: I've lost

(26) LA: **So** you **must** make **ehmm** (..) **denuncy** a::nd ask another time **because** everyone **need** to have a doctor and some time you **must need** him to make some control (.) **ok?**

(27) *IM*: **If** you have problem (.) stomach (.) or (..) I don't **know** why (.) **check**

- (28) LA: **So** (.) you **must** go to the **denuncy** office of the police and say them that you lost your *libretto sanitario* (.) they give you a paper and with this paper you **can** go again to the office of (..)
- (29) AS: Only the *scheda*
- (30) LA: *Ah solo la scheda hai perso?* {Have you lost only the card?}
- (31) AS: Only the *scheda* (..)
- [...]
- (32) IM: **But** in the paper *c'è scritto* the name and address (.) you **can** go to him (.) **ok?**
- (33) LA: *Allora* (..) next week (..) **come** here with your book (.) sanitary book (.) sanitary document **so** we **can** help you to ha::ve **so::me** health assistance (..) **ok?** *Va bene? Ti ricordi* (.) B\*\*\*\*? {Will you remember?}
- (34) AS: Yeah (..) **but** (.) **but** (.) what I don't **know** (..) I don't (..) I don't **understand** (..) this is difficult in my life (.) **do you understand?**
- (35) LA: **Mmm** (.) **but** never you think to come back in \*\*\*\*?
- (36) AS: No
- (37) LA: **Because** there are some specific project (.) they **can** give you some money **e::h** they **can** pay the flight to come back (.) and to start again your life in your country (.) they **think if** you have not a (..) a very con **ehm** situation you **can think** about this (..)
- (38) AS: I don't have money I don't have any idea how to get some money **do you understand?**
- (39) LA: **Mmm** (.) **mmm** (.)
- (40) AS: **That's why** I come to them (.) **you know** (.) I don't have money (.) for example (.) **if** (.) **if** it is not possible **ahh** it's difficult **you know? Hhhh**
- (41) LA: **So** you permit to stay is not a big problem (.) for now **ok?** (.) **Because** you have a permit (.) you have the slim (.) **so** you have **only** to wait <some time> and then you **can** obtain it (.) **but I say you the situation is not good** (.) from a lot of year you stay here **but** you have not a job (.) a regular job (.) you have not accommodation (.) you have some health problem (.) **because** (..) you say me that you have this problem of (..) stomach **no?**
- (42) AS: Well I'm not very well (..)
- (43) LA: **So if** you **like** (.) we **can try** to help you to come back in \*\*\*\* at home (.) **because** there are some project and this project **can** give you some money (..) to **ehm** start your life again in your country **ok?** **If** you say "I **want** to buy some animal or I **want** to buy a shop (.)" **ok?** "To **try** to have have this kind of job in my country" (.) **ok?** <They **can** help you to buy it> (.) they **can** give you **eh** (..) some money like one thousand euro **but** they don't give you directly this money **but**

- [AS: **but no ehm**] they buy this for you this (..) **eh** (.) **thing** (.) **ok? So** (.) and they pay for you the flight to come back in \*\*\*\* (.) there is a specific (..) [AS: sorry (.) sorry (.) just a moment]
- (44) AS: I told you all my parents=
- (45) LA: =**but** you have some uncles (.) some=
- (46) AS: They don't care about me my life (.) my future (.) my life is here
- (47) LA: **Ah** (.) ok (..) is your life [IM: ok ok] it's only to give you this information [AS: so] (.) **but**=
- (48) AS: =**So** (.) I'm living in a (..) bad life (.) nobody to help (..) bad life (.) **but if** I=
- (49) IM: =**But** you have documents
- (50) AS: I **wanna b e** my destiny in this country (.) **do y ou understand?**
- (51) IM: Ok you have document
- (52) AS: **If ahm** is not my destiny I kill myself
- (53) IM: No no no:: I **think** your problem now is only the job **ok?** (..) You have permit of stay (.) you have slim (.) and then you have this kind of permit to stay (.) **it's good for you** (.) **it's ok** (.) only problem your is (.) job (.) **ok?** (..) Come back next week and bring the paper (.) other papers **ok?**
- (54) AS: Yeah
- (55) IM: Ok
- (56) LA: All your paper (.) **we want** to to see all the paper (.) **because** (.) **because** there are some specific house (..) <for the person who has some health problem> (.) **ok? So if we can** (..) see your document (.) health document (.) **we can** ask **if it's possible** to obtain hospitality inside this house (.) a house for refugee people inside a system of assistance and protection of refugee (.) **so** you has this permit for humanitarian reason and **if** you give **us** this document about your health situation (.) **we can try** to ask **if** it's possible to stay inside this project <with house (.) with someone who **can** help you to find (.) job> (.) with some course (.) **ok? So** is a situation (.) **is a ve ry good situation** (.) **it's not sure we can try** to obtain **e::h** the possibility to stay inside this house (.) **ok?** There is one center (.) one house of this (.) in \*\*\*\* (.) **eh?** Near \*\*\*\* **so** (.) **we can try** (.) **but** you **must** give **us** this document (.) **ok?**
- (57) AS: That document=
- (58) LA: =Health document about [IM: *libretto sanitario*] (.) *libretto sanitario* (.) some health certificate (.) or **we can** (..) **we can try** to obtain some visit inside the hospital **so if some doctor declare** that you have some health problem (.) °**we can try** ° (.) **we can** obtain a place



inside this house (..) **ok?** **So** (.) we **can try** to have a better situation for you (.) better accommodation

(59) AS: My life is just (..) crazy

(60) IM: Come next week with all papers (.) **ok?**

(61) AS: (..) No problem

#### 4.6.1. Acoustic analysis

The acoustic/auditory investigation helps to determine AS's prosodic behaviour and above all LA's paralinguistic correlates in support of her illocutionary acts.

AS's prosodic features are challenging since his voice is uncertain, sometimes even inexpressive, he often sighs, while his tonal profile is quite regular avoiding important pitch movements and major deviations in pitch range.

On the other hand, LA's intonational behaviour is particularly marked and totally dependent on the pragmalinguistic aspects of her messages (further analysed in the next sections).

Figure 16 and 17 actually exemplify LA's tonal patterns in conveying her messages to AS in two distinct turns, namely (13) and (33):

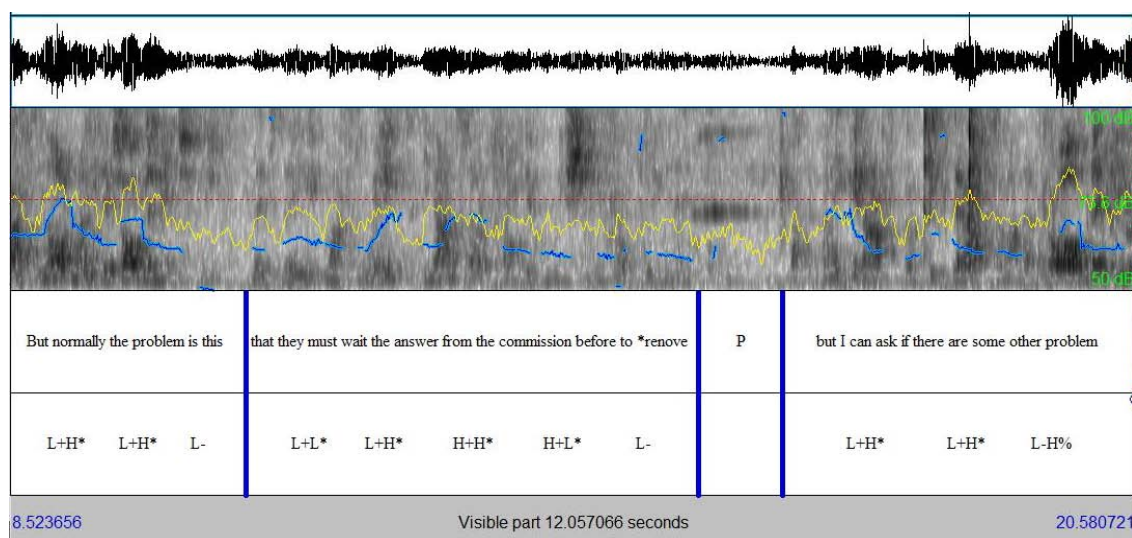


Figure 16. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (13)

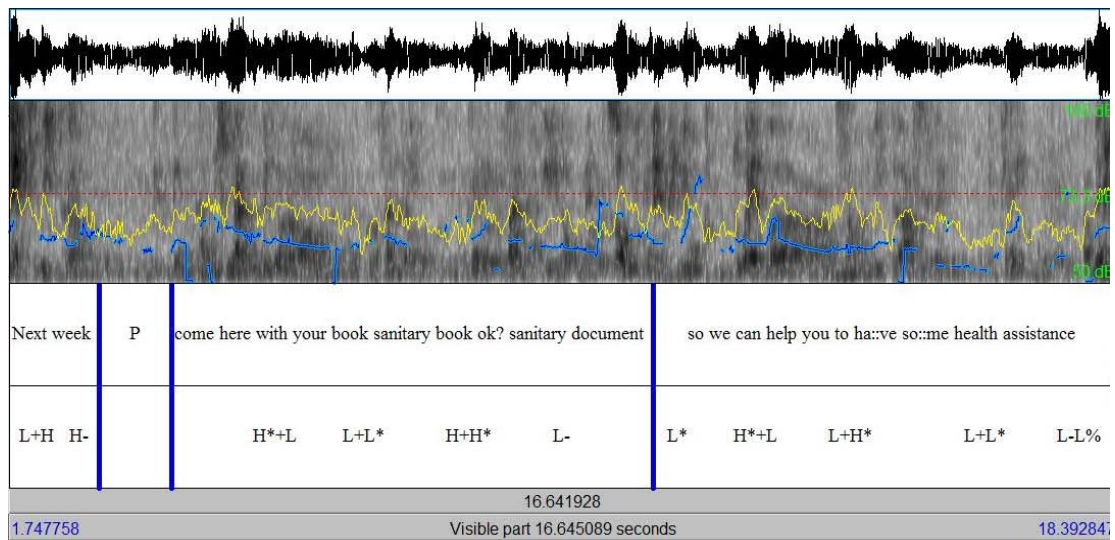


Figure 17. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (33)

In the first case, LA wants to assure AS that his bureaucratic procedure is regular occurring through her frequent pitch movements in the final part of the utterance, after the pause, which are aimed at signalling her availability to help him (cf. the rising tone on ‘*other problem*’ and the pitch accent on ‘*I can ask*’).

In the second case, LA has changed her attitude towards AS since the man has just admitted his psycho-physical problems. LA’s tone is now accommodating and less authoritative, even though still patronizing.

The conclusive tone on ‘*health assistance*’ aims at convincing AS that her suggestion is reasonable and feasible.

Figure 18 instead represents the spectrogram of LA’s turn in (43):

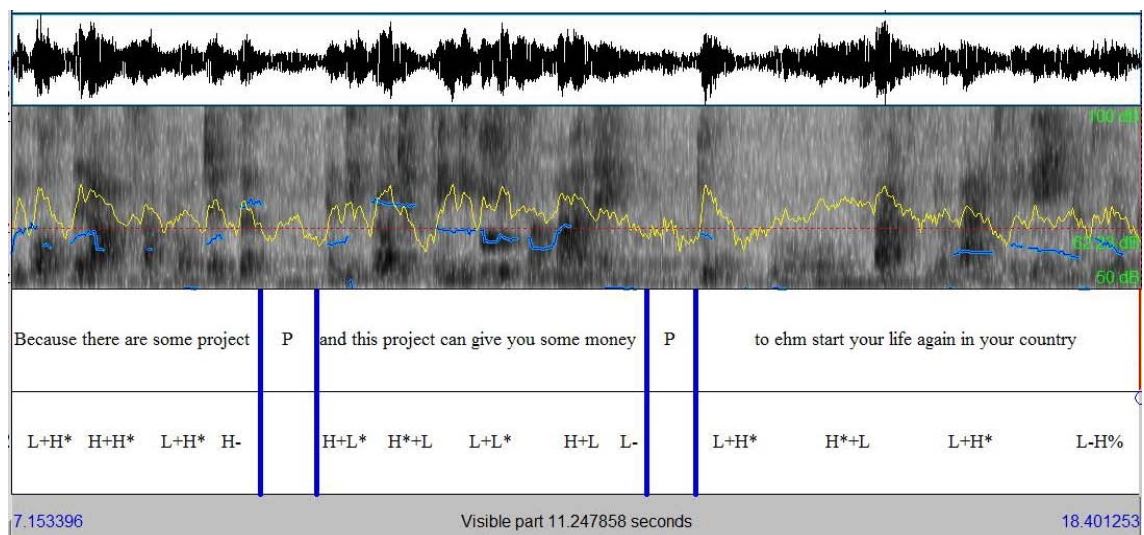


Figure 18. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (43)

Pauses, high intensity, hesitation and pitch movements in this part of the turn (but also in the rest of LA’s long act in (43)) are aimed at convincing AS of the advantages he can derive from assisted repatriation. The final

rising tone at the end of the utterance (on ‘*your country*’) requires a positive backchannel by AS who – anxious and upset – however tries to interrupt LA’s turn by means of overlapping speech and finally gains the floor in (46) as shown in Figure 19:

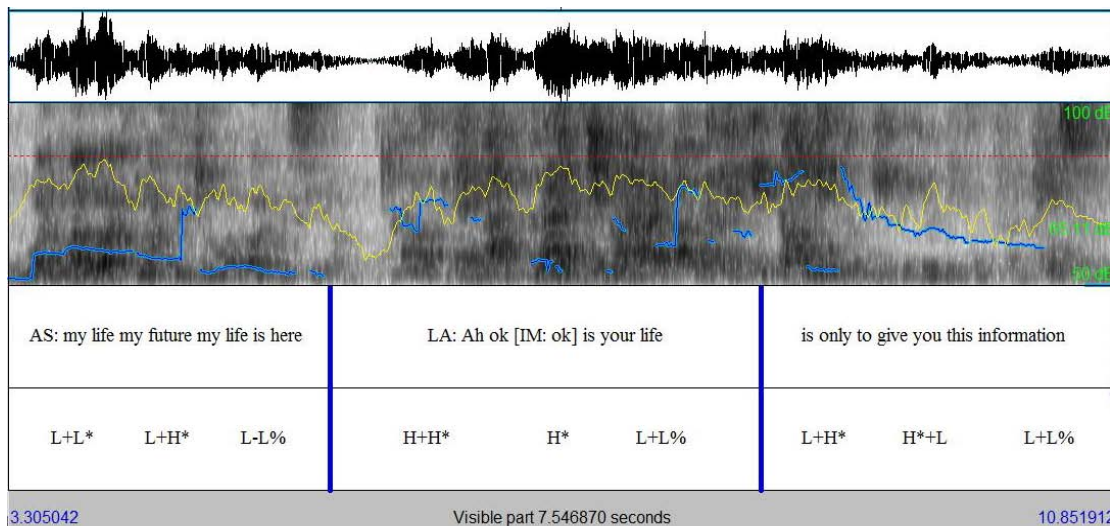


Figure 19. The utterance waveform, the  $f_0$  contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (46) and (47)

Here AS eventually expresses his emotions and attitudes about the conversational topic by means of prosody and the use of pitch movements which he reapplies to the following turns as well (cf. turns (48), (50), (52)) before re-establishing his usual inexpressive tonal behaviour till the end of the exchange.

LA’s disappointment (associated with the high tonal pattern of IM’s overlapping downgrade move) is audible in her lowering tonal movement at the end of the utterance (cf. ‘*this information*’).

#### 4.6.2. Conversation analysis

Despite his apparently lack of English fluency, AS is initially in charge of the exchange by means of insisting eliciting moves in (1), (4), (8), and (12) which annoy LA who, in (7) and in (13), upgrades and blames AS for his non-assertive attitude.

Actually, LA extensively explains the legal and bureaucratic procedure underling the renewal of the residence permit in the informing move in (2), further supported in (3).

However, AS’s evidently submissive reaction makes LA activate a downgrade move in (14) by using Italian (as an unconscious thinking aloud, repeated also in (16)).

AS’s admission of his health problems marks a turning point in the conversation dynamics since, as seen above, LA’s linguistic and

paralinguistic behaviour clearly changes IM's behaviour as well, as she intervenes in the conversation and reveals her biased and patronizing attitude towards AS. Actually, from (18) to (34) LA and IM try to infer AS's healthcare position by means of a series of eliciting moves and corresponding directives: especially in (26), (28), and (33) LA uses commissive and prescriptive acts and her attitude is particularly emphasized not only by her prosodic features but also by the final phatic contact in Italian (cf. *Va bene? Ti ricordi?*).

However, AS relaunches and reopens the exchange in (34) which produces an immediate, but dispreferred perlocutionary effect on LA who in (35) suggests the possibility of the assisted repatriation. LA's long persuading arguments in (37), (41) and (43) are intentionally constructed to predict a better future for AS in case he opts for going back home, avoiding listening to his complaints in (38), (40) and (42). However AS's dispreferred response in (46) and (48) (further dramatically supported in (50) and (52)) obtains a perlocutionary effect on IM who, emotionally involved, contradicts what LA has just outlined in (41), and thus in (53) she proposes to AS a novel viewpoint (that of residence for medical purposes), also supported by LA's long comment act in (56).

In this sense LA's commissive act in (58) represents a hedging strategy (reinforced by IM's summoning move in (59)) which however aims at convincing AS that an acceptable solution can be provided to his critical situation with her assistance. His perlocutionary effect is signalled by the last acknowledging moves (59) and (61) which disclose – at least apparently – AS' persuasion and agreement, and eventually the confirmation of LA's higher-status position.

#### 4.6.3. Register analysis

De Beaugrande & Dressler's (1981) text linguistics and Halliday's (1994) register analysis help to reveal how socio-semiotic and linguistic functions are activated in the field of ELF cross-cultural communication, through an inextricable correlation of linguistic and paralinguistic dimensions.

In the present case study, AS's ideational function emerges as a confused organization of concepts and ideas corresponding to precise needs which he tries to convey through the interpersonal communicative relationship he establishes with LA.

Actually, since his first utterance in (1) he refers to another situational dimension (*last time I have been there (.) you know*) conveyed through the use of present perfect underlining the still ongoing effects of that event on his daily life – namely the appointment at the immigration office of the police station. The same sentence structure is actually repeated later in (40)

where he once again makes appeal to LA's understanding of his vulnerable condition (cf. *that's why I come to them (.) you know, ahh it's difficult you know? Hhhh*).

Actually, as already pointed out through the acoustic analysis, AS's utterances are prosodically marked by pauses and disfluencies, often associated to sighing, low voice and deep breath; hence his textual performance is pragmatically affected by this prosodic and paralinguistic participation.

As seen above, LA's paralinguistic profile is on the contrary often characterized by high intensity and loudness applied to very long sentences with rare pauses which cannot give AS the possibility of replying and backchannelling. The Sierra Leonean young man, however, tries to interrupt her (*So=*) but his utterance is suddenly overlapped by LA's speech (*=But the procedure (.) I explained to you (.) the procedure=*). Evidently LA has misunderstood AS's concern about his papers (*They told me that fifteen days, After the past of fifteen days I don't know why (.)*). At this point the lawyer realizes that the young man needs more attention and in the end IM as well intervenes to mediate between them (*I think your problem now is only the job ok?*).

The register analysis therefore once again confirms the role organization throughout the exchange. *Cohesion* and *coherence* are as usual ideational and textual expressions of LA's conceptualizations of filters and background knowledge. Her long and complex sentences confirm her leading role through *formality* and *politeness* strategies.

LA's lexis is simple and refers to the semantic field of immigration law and welfare (e.g. *refugee, assistance, protection, humanitarian reason(s), center, health, system, hospital*). However her lexical and syntactic choices do not belong to specialized register and in order to be understood she applies textual and lexical strategies aimed to simplification, generalization and popularization (sometimes despite ELF creative process: e.g. *the police, the commission, the big one \*permit to stay, a permit for job, better accommodation, health situation, some control, a paper, sanitary book, the \*denuncy office, \*some specific house, stay inside this project, \*some course*).

Common textual strategies applied by LA are: repetition (e.g. *every year (.) every year, to start again your life in your country*); declaratives (*this is the procedure, but normally the problem is this*); hedges (*but I can ask, but I say you the situation is not good (.), is a very good situation (.) it's not sure we can try*); conative and phatic questions (e.g. *ah?, no?, ok?*); code-mixing and code switching (*ma tu ce l'hai un dottore (.) ah B\*\*\*\*? Have you a doctor? Personal doctor?, L'hai perso? L'hai lost?*; applied also by IM: *in the paper c'è scritto*).

Moreover, the use of an explanatory direct speech in (3) and (43) is particularly interesting as an ‘acting’ move aimed at enhancing credibility for AS.

Casual, hypothetical and consecutive conjunctions (in pink in the transcription) connect ideas and illocutionary statements; whereas modality once again works on the interpersonal function conveying judgmental and prescriptive messages (cf. turn (3), (13), (26), (57)).

In this exchange, IM has a very limited but important role since LA is willing to manage the conversation alone with AS who is evidently confused and bewildered. Moreover LA misinterprets his emotional state and suggests him a programme for assisted repatriation, disregarding his need for explanation and assistance in the bureaucratic procedure for documents.

Interestingly, LA applies hedging strategies in (56) and (58) to mitigate her prescriptive and directive acts by means of the personal pronoun *we*; verbs like *try*, *want*, *ask*, *can*; downgrading and hedging expressions (such as *if it's possible to stay*, *if it's possible to obtain*, *is a very good situation*, *it's not sure we can try*, *the possibility to stay*, *we can try to obtain*, *we can try to have a better situation for you*).

The same behaviour is identified in IM who, especially in (54) (probably worried by AS's commissive in (53)), avoids *formality* and social distance to persuade his interlocutor that the situation is under control and advances a positive perspective to his receiver (cf. *I think your problem now is only the job ok?*, *it's good for you* (.) *it's ok* (.) *only \* problem your is job* (.) *ok?*). *if you have problem* (.) *stomach* (.) *or* (..) *I don't know why* (.) *check*).

On the other hand, LA's illocutionary aims may be justified by AS's bipolar behaviour which alternates positive statements (*My life* (.) *my future* (.) *is here*) to negative commissives (*I kill myself*); therefore the Italian experts take care of his case and try to encourage him, also being influenced by the prejudices about his psychic conditions (*because because there are some specific house* (..) <*for all the person who have some health problem*> (.) *ok*, *some visit inside the hospital so if some doctor declare that you have some health problem* (..)).

In the second part of the exchange, the so-called ‘baby talk’ (slow speech rate and articulation, clear and rising intonation, frequent pitch movements)<sup>25</sup> and the use of majestic ‘*we*’ are employed with successful outcome on the AS's perception and reaction (cf. e.g. turn (62)).

<sup>25</sup> Actually studies on the vocal expression of emotion (e.g. Scherer 1981) suggests that the increasing of pitch level and pitch range at the level of prosodic contours is typical of ‘motherese’ (mother's speech). This prosodic behaviour seems to enhance the communicative efficacy of speech to children and gain their attention.

Besides, western socio-cultural schemata emerge as far as assisted repatriation is concerned since LA shows that she avoids respecting her interlocutor's *acceptability* and *accessibility* in terms of social values and shared knowledge (cf. in (43): *If you say "I want to buy some animal or I want to buy a shop (.)" ok? "To try to have have this kind of job in my country"*; in (45): *=but you have some uncles (.) some=*; promptly replied by AS who perceives the *tenor* interferences regarding his personal and intimate family roots: *(sorry (.) sorry (.) just a moment*, in (44): *I told you all my parents=*, in (46): *they don't care about me my life (.) my future (.) my life is here*).

The same schema-biased behaviour occurs for medical assistance: in (56) *there are some specific house (.) <for the person who has some health problem> (.) ok?, inside a system of assistance and protection of refugee, with someone who can help you to find (.) job>, so is a situation (.) is a very good situation; or in (58) *some doctor declare that you have some health problem, better situation for you (.) better accommodation*, LA, supported by IM in (60), expresses her culture-bound perspective and problem solving. Here, however, as knowledge is not-shared, AS is not able (or not interested) to rebut LA's statements and positively replies in (59) and (61).*

#### **4.7. E LF di mensions: phonol ogical, l exical, s yntactic a nd pragmatic findings**

The case studies examined so far, but indeed the entire set of data collected during the fieldwork, provide a series of results that cast light upon a multifaceted reality concerning ELF communicative settings and dynamics involving participants from different linguacultural backgrounds. ELF speakers actually show evidence that it is impossible for them to get detached from their native linguistic and paralinguistic features, while they produce and perceive ELF variations.

This is particularly evident in a communicative domain that involves interactants in specialized settings – which is the case of immigration contexts – where technical constraints inevitably meet non-specialists' communicative and pragmatic needs.

The five case studies have revealed ELF attitudes and frequent behavioural patterns represented by peculiar linguistic and paralinguistic common attitudes emerging during the exchanges.

In this perspective the participants' attitudes can be interpreted as 'accommodation strategies' activated "for both affective reasons and to ensure comprehensibility" (Jenkins 2011: 929): ELF speakers can thus be identified since "their use of English is fluid and flexible, responding

adeptly to the nature of the particular communicative context” (Jenkins 2011: 929).

In an attempt to summarize these features (signalled in the transcriptions in bold red for single lexical items and underlined in red for ELF syntactical clusters), a list of the main findings is here provided. It is quite interesting to notice that they concern pragmalinguistic tendencies characterizing both Western and non-Western participants in the previous case studies and in those transcribed in the whole corpus: once again this unusual aspect may be considered consistent with the speakers’ mutual attempt of facilitating intercultural communication through ELF. The Italian variation of ELF, in particular, reveals a constant phonopragmatic adjustment process which is inevitably influenced and marked by a correlation of L1-derived linguistic and paralinguistic features, which can be identified in the list below:

- Phonopragmatic aspects:
  - neutralization of the interdental fricatives [θ] and [ð] (for which most substitutions are possible, such as /f/ and /v/ and above all /t/ and /d/);
  - reducing of vowel and diphthong variety according to the L1 system (e.g. neutralization of /ɜ:/, /ə/ in /e/ or /ɔ/; /əʊ/ in /ɔ/);
  - neutralization of ‘dark /l/’ ([ɫ]) in favour of ‘clear /l/’;
  - neutralization of “rhotic retroflex approximant” [ɻ] in favour of alveolar trill /r/;
  - neutralization of the aspiration for /p/, /t/ and /k/ in initial position in a stressed syllable (e.g. the first /p/ in ‘paper’);
  - neutralization of the distinctive feature of the glottal fricative [h] in initial position, pronounced as voiceless;
  - neutralization of length contrasts (e.g. ‘live’ vs. ‘leave’);
  - consonant length or gemination (e.g. ‘**letter**’, [ˈlɛtə], [apˈpointment], [apˈplɪˈkeɪʃən]);
  - syllabic isochrony (i.e. Italian is a syllable-timed language where accented and non-accented syllables have equal duration, while in English, a stress-timed language, they differ in duration giving rise to phonological events such as contractions, main and secondary stress, and elision);
  - L1 Intonational patterns for declaratives and interrogatives.
- Lexical aspects:
  - neologisms or loans (e.g. *\*expulsione*, *\*asile*, *permit of stay*, *permit to stay*, *\*translator*, *\*reappeal*, *\*remove* [rɪˈnuv], *\*denuncy*, *\*personaly*, *\*complicate* (adj.), *\*sussidiarian*, *\*fingerpring*, *\*citorship*, *\*autonomy* (adj.));



- semantic mismatch (e.g. *close* instead of *closed*, *advice* instead of *inform*, *slim* instead of *slip* (receipt)).
- Morpho-syntactic aspects:
  - dropping of third person –s (e.g. *\*he decide*, *\*he need*, *\*she take*, *\*he live*, *\*he remember*, *\*she get*, *\*he want*);
  - use of present simple for past events;
  - use of verb base form for past participle (e.g. *\*have you understand?*, *\*is write*, *\*is not problem*);
  - use of verb base form for continuous aspect (e.g. *\*I'm apply*, *is get*);
  - non-standard word order and dropping of auxiliaries for the interrogative form (*do/does* or *did*) (e.g. *\*have you not?*, *\*when you arrive?*, *\*why you go?*, *\*never you think?*);
  - divergent use of auxiliaries for the negative form (e.g. *\*you have not to*, *\*to don't come*);
  - 'it' dropping (e.g. *\*is this*, *\*is like*, *\*in questura finish*, *\*is better*);
  - non-standard verb-subject agreement (e.g. *\*this is the questions*, *\*there are another possibility*, *\*there are some specific house*);
  - non-standard agreement with modals (e.g. *\*can left*, *\*can leaves*);
  - non-standard determiner-noun agreement (e.g. *\*some organization*, *\*a lot of person*, *\*six month*, *\*two different passport*, *\*some health problem*, *\*some person*, *\*some course*, *\*some visit*);
  - non-standard comparative formation (e.g. *\*more easy*, *\*more better*);
  - divergent use of verb prepositions and wh-words (e.g. *\*given to you*, *\*say us*, *\*listen me*, *\*how long time ago*, *\*go Nigeria*);
  - non-standard word order (e.g. *\*interview have you not?*, *\*you have not other paper?*, *\*to make come her back*);
    - divergent *if*-clause formation (e.g. *\*if she will stay*, *\*if you will do*).
- Pragmalinguistic aspects:
  - code-mixing from English to Italian (for communicative efficacy);
  - code-switching from English to Italian (because of lexicon unavailability)
  - use of L1 non-lexical utterances as backchannels (e.g. *ah ah*, *mmm*, *eh*);
  - use of *no?* and *ok?* as question tag with phatic and conative value.

However, such accommodation strategies may also cause ambiguities and become a source of misunderstanding since, even though they are meant to convey – consciously or not – an illocutionary force and to enable mutual comprehension, they may be inappropriately perceived and interpreted. This is the case, for instance, of L1 intonational patterns which are usually transferred (especially by Italian experts) to ELF syntactic structures (especially yes/no and wh- questions). Therefore the inadequate decoding of these utterances by their interlocutors may be due to interpretative mismatches derived from their L1 intonational schemata concerning not only semantic meaning but also pragmatic values (in terms of attitudes and feelings that for instance a question can convey).

Moreover, clusters like *\*I think is better to speak before me* (cf. case-study 2, turn (54)) may give rise to misunderstanding due to a non-standard use of prepositions (in this case *before*) and word order: actually non-western asylum seeker has no knowledge of the western turn-taking conventions.

Therefore, investigating ELF dimensions in specialized immigration contexts often reveals interesting insights into the current evolution of English used in international contexts, which is different from the more frequently explored academic settings where, as Phillipson (2003: 167) points out, “competent speakers of English as a second language are more comprehensible than native speakers, because they can be better at adjusting their language for people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds”.

The encounters here analysed instead involve non-native speakers who often have not formally learnt English in educational settings and thus they are not trained to face intercultural spoken interactions: this may be the reason why investigating ELF used within cross-cultural immigration settings becomes an extremely challenging task in the attempt to enquire into the extent to which in such a fragmentary and multifaceted communicative scenario interactions may be successful or not.

#### **4.8. Conclusions: Investigating specialized ELF Dimensions**

The phonopragmatic analysis also includes a qualitative investigation of paralinguistic cues (i.e. different paralinguistic habits regarding body language, voice quality, proxemics and gestures) which are considered fundamental for the aims and objectives of the present research as well as for the mere linguistic realization of the message. The most common paralinguistic behaviours observed during the fieldwork are summarized in

the following table, according to the participant's role assumed in the cross-cultural encounters:

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Main paralinguistic behaviours</i>
Las	High tonal patterns, overlapping speech, non-lexical items; seated position, bodily closeness, standing upright; fixed gaze, gesticulating.
Ass	High and low tonal patterns, overlapping speech, pausing; seated position, bodily and interpersonal distance, lower gaze; uncomfortable posture and gestures, in tears; changeable kinesics.
IMs	High voice intensity; standing upright, moving around; interpersonal proximity to LA; gesticulating, smiling.

Table 2. Common paralinguistic behaviours observed during the fieldwork

In conclusion, the main and most significant results derived both from the phonopragmatic analysis of case-studies and from the examination of the complete corpus of data collected can be summarized as follows:

- As for phonological and prosodic behaviours, independently from idiosyncratic linguistic features deriving from the considerably different dialectological provenience of the participants involved, the ELF encounters are always characterized by an evident transfer from the L1 linguistic structures to the use of English variations. The intonational profiles of the Italian LAs and IMs are always marked by Italian pitch movements according to the typological differences of each utterance. In the transcription much attention is concentrated, for their different communicative roles, to (i) the use of silence at boundary tones (signalled by (.) and (..)), (ii) the final vowel prolongation (signalled with ::) as well as (iii) the frequency of disfluencies (such as *ehm*, *mmm*, *ah*, *eh*), stuttering and stammering as hesitations, and (iv) the overlapping speech (signalled with [ ] and =) to show attention, dispreferred moves and turn-taking. Moreover as for segmental aspects, ELF mispronunciation is regular: e.g. absence of vowel reduction, mispronunciation of diphthongs, absence of th- trait (pronounced as [d] or [t]).
- Deontic and epistemic modalities are widely used by LAs and IMs (especially verbs like *can*, *will*, *must*) and are again influenced by Italian uses of modal verbs. Modal verbs are employed for pragmatic and illocutionary reasons of intentionally conveying their messages and obtaining perlocutionary effects on their receivers. Modal verbs

always signal judgement, commitment, and involvement in the represented actions and are used consciously to perform the expected communicative intentions. In ELF contexts, where linguistic and lexical difficulty is considerable, their value is even amplified because speakers (above all LAs) charge them with pragmatic aims, especially the conveyance of urgency and pressure on the receivers (namely ASs).

- Exploring ELF textuality is particularly interesting. In the previous case-studies discourse is always mediated from Italian specialized complex lexical and syntactic structures to ELF popularization processes (characterized by simplification, repetition and paraphrasing – Gotti 2005).

Code switching from Italian, or a variety of ILF, to ELF is another effect of the pragmatic aims and intentions which move participants on the challenging floor of intercultural interactions. LAs tend to express specialized concepts (legal, procedural and bureaucratic) first of all in their language or in ILF and, after verifying the inability of their interlocutors to repair the message, they code-switch to ELF applying popularization strategies or asking for the intervention of an IM.

Generally LAs' sentences are complex with a preference for hypotaxis, while often IMs and ASs apply a standard English sentence-structure if they are competent, otherwise their ELF sentences are really simple and paratactic.

- Pragmatic strategies are also revealed in stylistic tendencies and preferences, such as the frequent use of conative contacts with the interlocutor and the employment of hedging structures, as the wide use of *ok?* and *va bene?* signals.

Popularization processes are activated to improve intelligibility, thus code-mixing and Italian words and expressions are often used by LAs in the lexical register of specialized discourse about asylum policies and rights. Sometimes even ELF neologisms are used (such as *\*personaly*, *\*sussidiarian*, *\*renove*) which even show their communicative efficiency and are easily acquired and used by ASs too.

- As far as ELF accommodation strategies and code-mixing are concerned, a series of phonetic, lexical, syntactic, and textual accommodation strategies are applied, mostly by Italian speakers (as already pointed out in 4.7): dropping third person –s, use of present simple for past events, no auxiliaries for interrogative forms, 'it' dropping, question formation with no auxiliaries (do/does or did).

A really common ELF habit in the context under examination is the practice for LAs and IMs to mix and switch languages in their conversations with each other and with ASs.

Code switching from Italian to English and back again is distinguished from borrowing, which is also included as data in the present research, and interference, considered as the involuntary influence and transfer of linguistic and paralinguistic structures from L1s. Besides, data also show a distinction between code switching and the use of a code-mixing.

LAs and IMs employ code switching to signal the difficulty in finding the word they need in ELF, hence an Italian word is used in place of the temporarily inaccessible English word (e.g. *permesso di soggiorno, questura, prefettura, sussidiaria*), for purposes of clarification, or to avoid potential misunderstandings, or to provide better explanations to ensure ASs' understanding. However code switching also signals the attitude towards the use of ILF in intercultural communication, which is considered the middle passage toward the necessary competence in the Italian language required by the Italian law for refugees and long-term migrants.

In other cases, switching into Italian is a peculiar trait of trainees who interrupt the conversation to speak with each other, thus excluding AS from their considerations and consultation.

Code-mixing instead is activated mainly when the migrants' ILF variation is insufficient, forcing LA to continue the conversation in ELF, although very often it is opened in Italian or ILF.

- Besides, conversation analysis shows a high degree of floor holding by LAs who tend to impose and extend their speech acts during the exchange, or to complete the answers of their interlocutors proposing questions that prompt a specific, expected answer. In other cases, LAs ask for the collaboration of IM who, however, is suddenly replaced by LA himself/herself who prefers to manage alone an ELF exchange with AS, thus bypassing IM. Sometimes this behaviour may be due to mistrust or scepticism towards IMs' competence and ability; in other cases instead the high proficiency level of mediators – who speak standard English and are graduates or postgraduates in foreign languages – even hinders the successful ELF interaction: in fact, ASs and migrants show their embarrassment by addressing directly their legal advisors and ignoring IM. In both cases however it is evident once again that what influences and affects linguistic and paralinguistic choices, attitudes and behaviours are always the intentionality and pragmatic purposes of fulfilling mutual communicative goals.

- ELF exchanges have been also analysed taking into account the conversational investigation based on speech acts and moves. Data concern intercultural encounters which mostly start with LA's Opening move; whereas other moves, such as Summoning, Eliciting and Focusing, may be repeatedly activated to attract the interlocutor's attention and induce a reaction, both by LA and AS.

In mediation processes it is interesting to observe the IM's role in managing other moves such as Backchannel, Supporting, Challenging and Repairing, which are often employed in cross-cultural exchanges characterized by a very dynamic, and sometimes dramatic, evolution, above all when levels of discomfort and distress are so high that IMs have to intervene supporting and repairing the communicative channel interrupted between LAs and ASs.

As a consequence, turn-taking and the mechanism of 'adjacency pairs' (as the alternation of preferred or dispreferred utterances), which should signal the end of one interactant's turn followed by the beginning of another participant's, in spontaneous and intense speech, are often regulated by overlapping and interrupted conversational moves.

- Moreover, as explained in the previous sections, exchanges under investigation have been analysed taking into account the theory of speech acts and their illocutionary and perlocutionary force. Actually Searle (1969) re-elaborated Austin's (1962) taxonomy of Speech Acts<sup>26</sup> considering the important role of intentionality in their selection and performing by speakers.

LAs and IMs often perform speech acts with the aim of producing a concrete and prompt reaction from their interlocutors, such as *Representatives* (introduced by verbs such as 'believe', 'find'); and *Directives* to get ASs to do something (e.g.: 'advise', 'ask'). On the contrary they tend to limit *Commissives* (e.g. implying a promise or a danger), and *Expressives* (e.g. apologising or thanking, performed instead by ASs) even though their attitudes and implied messages may be detected in any case by other implicit linguistic and paralinguistic cues.

It is therefore useful to examine how speech acts are performed in intercultural communication according to socio-pragmatic, cognitive and cultural differences which may hinder the conveyance of the

<sup>26</sup> Searle (1969) focused on the speaker's illocutionary role, thus overcoming Austin's (1962) theory of Performative Acts and suggesting a new perspective on his taxonomy by concentrating his attention to the speaker's mind and purposes realized in his/her utterances according to a specific socio-cultural communicative setting.

communicative intentionality, thus inducing ambiguities and misinterpretations.

- Moreover, it is necessary to consider that often intercultural communicative encounters occur on ‘unequal bases’ (Guido 2004a). Indeed Guido (2004a: 381) defines ‘unequal encounters’ as “a confrontation between two persons, one of whom is perceived as socially, culturally, or ethnically/racially superior to the other. An example of this type is represented by the gate-keeping interview, [...] [where] the ‘gatekeeper’, [...] believes to have the social, cultural, or ethnic authority to decide who are the other persons that are ‘admitted through the gate’ to receive a benefit”. Data confirm these communicative attitudes that inevitably produce perlocutionary reactions and interfere with the proper and successful mediation process, which should be considered the main and prevailing objective of a legal advisor as well as of a mediator in the accomplishment of their cross-cultural task.

- In some cases, LAs and IMs adopt communicative strategies marked by a pragmatic behaviour aimed at repositioning or repairing possible perceived status asymmetries in the performance of speech acts. Therefore hedging, downgrading and upgrading strategies are often activated for achieving different effects of ‘modulating’ or ‘reinforcing’ the illocutionary force of a speech act, such as of requesting or giving difficult and unpleasant news (e.g. by means of embedded ‘if’ clauses, hedges to avoid or hide personal commitment or the impact of his/her utterance, and upgrading moves by means of lexico-semantic and syntactic devices used to ‘increase’ the urgent illocutionary force of the speech act, such as: *listen!*).

- In addition, paralinguistic patterns are here considered as vehicles of emotional state as well as communicative and turn dynamics. Varying pitch range and rhythm, or other features such as loudness, pausing, and length, may regulate conversational interaction and especially in frequent cases of overlapping speech it may rule the participants’ turn-shift to gain or hold the floor of the conversation.

Another important aspect which was observed is the interactive relationship between linguistic messages and non-verbal cues and signals as an essential element enabling communication in ELF conversations. In the previous intercultural dialogues many utterances are not composed of words, but of non-lexical items. However, even if the research and investigation of the pragmatic functions and values of prosody in non-lexical utterances have been neglected, data reveal the

importance of non-lexical utterances where meaning can be conveyed just by prosody.

Therefore, intercultural mediators should be made aware during their training of the importance of all communicative devices and their possible interpretations, since non-verbal signs help ELF speakers when they lack the appropriate linguistic means to express meaning and intentions.

Actually, interactants' reactions towards non-verbal signals, such as back-channelling, may differ significantly across cultures and idiolects. Especially listening and replying may vary from passive receiving to interactional and participated interplay. This is reflected also in the prosodic activations of paralinguistic signals and especially back-channels, fillers and disfluencies (e.g. *mmm, ah ah, eh, ehm, tsch*) which are very common in the interactions reproduced in the corpus and indeed used very frequently in place of linguistic utterances. Besides, syllabification often characterizes non-lexical items (e.g. *mmm mmm, ah ah ah, yeah yeah*). Two-syllable items, often combined with other paralinguistic gestures (such as kinesic and proxemic ones), may signal the speaker's intention to fulfil a listening and cooperative role, to indicate that the participant is following and considering what he/she is listening to.

In a certain sense, non-lexical items may communicate more than words emotions and attitudes, doubts and perplexity, persuasion and commitment, but likewise they risk a high probability of being misinterpreted.

LAs are most likely to insert back-channels at IMs and ASs pauses or phrase boundaries. Such behaviours aim therefore at encouraging their interlocutors to continue their turn. IMs, on the other hand, tend to use more back-channelling signals and fillers simultaneously while AS is speaking, probably to encourage and try to gradually ease the communicative situation for him/her. Obviously in ELF interactions participants transfer their native timing and back-channelling habits for listening and turn-taking into their use of English also in interethnic encounters, facilitating the possibility of being misunderstood. Moreover such behaviours might generate opinions and, as a consequence, mutual generalizations and stereotypes about ethnic groups (in association with gender or age group as well) and their communicative appearance, with the result of defining national communities of speakers as inattentive and absent, or as impatient and aggressive, or extremely loquacious (as e.g. some ASs define Italian people).



- The analysis focused attention also on the essential communicative role of conversational silence and pausing, which has long been ignored in the field of linguistic research. However, some scholars, such as Basso (1970) argued that silence is inevitably communicative and “it is not the case that a man who is silent says nothing” (Basso 1970: 213). Indeed for its ambiguous and significant nature silence is difficult to define in the linguistic analysis since, in Samarin’s words – who claims that by disregarding silence, scholars risk ignoring a great amount of communicative contribution – “silence can have meaning. Like the zero in mathematics, it is an absence with a function” (Samarin 1965: 115).

Nevertheless, silence has been studied especially in the field of psychological and psycholinguistic approaches and perspectives, which investigate the use of silence and pausing in conversation and in speech sequences according to social and psychological correlates, such as social class, age, gender, and personality (e.g. Chafe 1985; Scollon 1985; Jaworski 1993; Zuo 2002; Nakamura 2004).

From a prosodic cross-cultural perspective, silence appears as a syntactic tool performing two different functions: syntactic boundary-marking and hesitation.

Since these two functions may assume different forms in spontaneous speech and live communication, silence and pausing are not universal and may change cross-culturally as well as intra-culturally. Therefore according to Jaworski (1993: 24) who considers silence as “probably the most ambiguous of all linguistic forms”, silence may be interpreted differently by participants and can also lead to communicative problems.

The prosodic function of pauses is applied by speakers to define and mark boundaries of significant speech units and turns. Pauses therefore belong to the prosodic and paralinguistic system of language and work along with other paralinguistic correlates of speech, such as voice intensity, pitch and intonation. Moreover silence and hesitations are evident markers of cognitive and semantic activity. In spontaneous speech – as confirmed in the previous analysis – silence tends to precede words, instead of following them to signal and convey emphasis, impression or hesitations due to difficulties in expressing into ELF what the speaker has in mind.

Obviously, data reveal different positive aspects of silence, first of all the fact that textual planning is indispensable in speech production as it often results in a mutual advantage for both speaker and listener, since in exchanges where the amount of pausing, turn-taking and feedback is limited, listeners have great difficulty in following the ongoing ELF talk and interpreting it properly.

African ASs often make use of long pauses which Western interlocutors may perceive as embarrassing and uncomfortable because silence generally carries negative connotations in their native culture perspective and the longer it is the more it can raise doubts and suspicions in the hearers' mind about their honesty and ability to reply.<sup>27</sup>

Data in the corpus show similar behaviours by ASs who sometimes do not answer LAs' or IMs' questions or even turn around their back, thus hindering the building of social interactions, accessibility and accommodation strategies; moreover they prevent their interlocutors from perceiving and comprehending emotional states, whereas their behaviours may be misinterpreted as a device for self-protection and turn avoidance, or as impoliteness, distance, bad mood or shyness.

- Apart from prosodic paralinguistic information, analysis also takes into account the remaining considerable data concerning body and facial expressions.

Gaze and eye-contact play a fundamental role in face-to-face interaction: participants engaged in the following intercultural conversations look at one another to manage turn shift, to signal interest, intentions and attention, and to verify receiver's understanding and acceptance. In Western culture, e.g. gaze is often used as a means of indicating the next speaker who is called to take the turn.

ASs very often avoid eye contact, which their Western receivers typically perceive as unpleasant and rude, thus they usually attempt to repair and re-gain contact and gaze.

Body posture is another factor influencing reactions and turn taking. LAs sometimes are seated behind a table while in other cases they are upright in front of their interlocutors. ASs instead tend to change their posture during an exchange, probably to signal their interest or their need to gain the floor. IMs seldom are seated in an equidistant position from LAs and ASs, but this proxemic behaviour should be avoided since it signals a biased attitude towards participants while IMs who are tasked with mediating, have to guarantee impartiality and neutrality.

<sup>27</sup> However, pauses are not universally cognitive and unconscious. Studies show that silence can also be used as a precise and deliberate means of social control, such as in Nakane (2007) who describes how in Akan communities in Ghana, and Igbo communities in Nigeria, people use silence to signal a form of punishment towards those who violate social norms (not so different indeed from some similar uses of silence in Western communities when people, hurt in their feelings, consciously use silence as a form of punishment toward their interlocutor and do not talk to each other on purpose).

Again taking a breath and leaning forward may also communicate an involuntary reaction or a desire for a turn. In Western cultures leaning back usually indicates the end of a turn and the wait for an answer.

As far as head movements are concerned, Western participants often nod to show agreement and commitment, and they quickly shake their heads from side to side when they disagree and signal the desire to reply. Participants in cross-cultural encounters should take into account that gestures do not have the same meaning in all cultural codes, and, as already seen in the previous chapters, methods used to show involvement and attention (as well as their opposites) vary across cultures with the possibility of leading to ambiguity and misinterpretations. IMs in particular should be aware and sensitive to the intercultural multi-modal conveyance of the message, considering their own behaviours as well as those of the other participants involved in the interaction, interpreting with caution and without cultural biases what they are observing.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. *Concluding remarks*

This ethnographic research developed from the awareness that ELF in intercultural communication within immigration contexts, especially in southern Italy, need urgent and careful consideration.

The well-known – and almost – collapsing aid system incessantly operating along the Sicilian coasts is only the first and more visible step of a long migratory process which inevitably entails different kinds of communicative contacts taking place between Italian authorities and experts, on the one hand, and asylum seekers and migrants on the other.

This research has actually focused on the investigation of intercultural encounters involving legal and bureaucratic specialized discourse employed in a centre for legal advice of the southern Italy specifically dealing with asylum seekers and refugees, where legal experts operate with the linguistic assistance of intercultural mediators. More precisely, the participants involved in the interactions were speakers from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds, using ELF to fulfil their communicative goals.

As a consequence, the specialized discourse conveyed through ELF spoken interactions has been here explored by means of a novel phonopragmatic approach, ultimately aimed at identifying ‘gatekeeping’ asymmetries between the interactants in immigration domains, in terms of power-status arrangements and conversational leading roles.