

A PHONOPRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF ELF SPOKEN INTERACTIONS

Linguistic and paralinguistic features in specialized migration contexts

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Abstract – ELF cross-cultural interactions occurring in specialized migration settings are often characterized by ‘gatekeeping’ asymmetries between the participants involved, challenging successful communication. The ‘phonopragmatic’ approach is here applied to the analysis of naturally occurring dialogues among ELF users with the aim of investigating how ELF speakers engaged in intercultural encounters differently appropriate the English language, not only according to their own native linguacultural and paralinguistic ‘schemata’, but also to specific pragmalinguistic purposes and processes. The phonopragmatic analysis is applied to a number of case studies – illustrating unequal encounters between asylum-seekers, language mediators and legal advisors, taking place at an important centre for legal counselling and assistance to refugees and performed through ELF and Italian Lingua-Franca – with the ultimate objective of exploring the occurring prosodic and auditory processes activated in such cross-cultural dynamics. The investigation of prosodic strategies employed for a pragmatic purpose by ELF speakers from different L1 backgrounds is focused on (i) ELF redefinition of existing native prosodic and acoustic correlates (in terms of stress, intonation, speech rate, and disfluency) in the pragmalinguistic use of an ELF variation; (ii) resulting L1 phonological transfers affecting the conversational composition and progress; (iii) the cross-cultural mediation of meaning, experience and intentionality in terms of phonopragmatic strategies and resulting lexical, syntactical, and stylistic performance; and (iv) the role played by prosody and paralinguistics in the negotiation of speakers’ attitudes, emotions, and socio-cultural ‘schemata’ in spoken specialized discourse related to medical and legal integration, mediated migration narratives, socio-cultural divergences, and cross-cultural representations of traumatic experience.

Keywords: ELF migration contexts; ELF variations; World Englishes; intercultural mediation; phonopragmatics.

1. Research rationale and objectives

Processes of intercultural mediation in specialized immigration domains are here explored focusing on the phonopragmatic dimensions of cross-cultural legal-bureaucratic and asylum-seeking exchanges through the participants’

ELF variations characterized by: (i) different strategies of appropriation of the English language according to L1 linguacultural ‘schemata’ and pragmalinguistic processes revealing ‘gatekeeping’ and status asymmetries among the participants in interactions (Guido 2008); and (ii) possible illocutionary intentions and perlocutionary effects in speakers’ prosodic strategies actualized in speech segmentation and acoustic variations (Searle 1969, 1983; Selkirk 1984).

Various theoretical perspectives and assumptions sustain and justify the rationale behind the research objectives of this study, i.e. (i) ‘gatekeeping’ asymmetries between the participants in interactions occurring in immigration domains, where communication is often characterized by challenging pragmalinguistic accommodation strategies and cross-cultural miscommunication (Guido 2008); (ii) the theory of speech acts and illocutionary intentions (Searle 1969, 1983) conveyed by the speakers through the adoption of prosodic strategies of speech segmentation and acoustic variations (Nespor and Vogel 1986; Selkirk 1984); (iii) the interface between the multimodal construction of meaning and its perlocutionary effects on receivers from different socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds in ELF intercultural interactions (Seidlhofer 2011).

The research objectives aim at enquiring into the use of prosodic and paralinguistic strategies by ELF speakers from different L1 backgrounds in immigration domains, accounting for (i) the influence of existing L1 prosodic and acoustic correlates and phonological transfers into ELF variations; (ii) the construction of meaning and understanding in cross-cultural mediation through phonopragmatic strategies applied to the negotiation of speakers’ attitudes, emotions, and socio-cultural ‘schemata’; (iii) miscommunication and communication breakdown resulting from status asymmetries in unequal encounters during intercultural mediation processes.

2. Phonopragmatics: methodological attitudes and design

The phonopragmatic approach (Sperti 2017), here applied to migration contexts and domains, is a pragmatic-oriented phonological investigation of the speaker’s linguistic and paralinguistic behaviours – naturally aimed to realize illocutionary acts and to produce listener’s perlocutionary effects – in cross-cultural oral communication, with critical attention to ELF variations.

The interface between prosody and pragmatics in analysing cross-cultural communicative settings reveals a culture-oriented discourse construction performed by speakers in ELF oral interactions. In other words, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary effects are affected by different culture-

based linguistic and paralinguistic features in ELF derived from L1 interferences that interactants mutually actualize in conversation.

The main objective of this investigating approach is to describe: (i) how speakers' suprasegmental and paralinguistic features are influenced by underlying pragmatic reasons; (ii) how they affect the mutual occurring of speech acts in conversational interactions and their resulting perception and interpretation, and (iii) how native syntactic and stylistic patterns are transferred to the use of different ELF variations and to which extent they impact on the phonopragmatic production and perception of the English messages transmitted in intercultural encounters and, as a consequence, improve or hinder the cross-cultural mediation process.

Therefore, spectral, pitch and formant PRAAT analysis (Boersma, Weenink 2017)¹ of conversation turns and acts occurring in mediation processes in immigration settings is here employed by considering phonoprosodic parameters used in different ELF variations. Firstly, the phonopragmatic analysis has been applied to the selected case studies accounting for different acoustic and prosodic parameters, such as: pitch frequency; pitch contour; speech rate; vowel and tonic syllables duration; pause duration at phrase boundaries and acoustic intensity. Secondly, the acoustic data have been interlaced with register and conversational dynamics² revealing specific and well-defined pragmalinguistic fulfillment or gaps.

3. Research context and method: investigating ELF mediation processes

The data presented in the following pages, in support of the phonopragmatic model, here applied to the multimodal analysis of intercultural encounters, represent naturally occurring and real exchanges, representative of an underestimated universe, which moves in the new Italian multicultural society and needs the serious and conscious attention from experts as well as non-specialists. An ever-changing world where diverse individuals, lives and experiences overlap and negotiate mutual representations, feelings and attitudes, by means of expanding, creative and easily exploited communicative strategies involving ELF variations.

The data under scrutiny have been recorded in completely unconstrained, spontaneous and natural conditions; however, they have also

¹ Praat ("talk" in Dutch) is a free and continuously updated scientific software programme designed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink at the University of Amsterdam; it is used for the acoustic analysis of speech (<http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/>).

² The taxonomy applied in the phonopragmatic analysis derives from Guido's (2004) adaptation to Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) Conversation Frame.

been collected in a manner that preserves and safeguards the privacy of both participants and non-participants in the interaction. This aspect is particularly important, especially in workplaces involving refugees and asylum-seekers. Despite the privacy constraints, the data collected allow for a complete and scientific investigation of different types of inferences that have emerged from the analysis.

Note-taking and observations in an ethnographic research conducted by means of data-driven methodology are here particularly useful to study the prosodic and paralinguistic features of spontaneous speech in intercultural exchanges across many subjects and over an extended period of time (in this case, the data were collected during a 14 months of fieldwork). The present research, therefore, involved prolonged and intensive fieldwork in the typical intercultural setting under study, which after a considerable lapse 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. Actually, in this case the researcher (i.e. the author of this paper) operated in the fieldwork as language mediator. At the beginning, the participants involved in the interactions stopped perceiving her as an external element in the workplace, but after a short period of time probably they even forgot the reason why she was there and her presence was not perceived as awkward and unpleasant.

The recorded data that represent the corpus for the present research have been classified and analyzed 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. 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) and an intercultural mediator (henceforth IM) are seated together. However, the data will show that in most cases this is still a theoretical perspective in considering intercultural mediation while in practice this kind of encounter often occurs 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 male African citizens. Their linguistic competence of English is extremely 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 are illiterate and employ an ELF variations 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 lingua-cultural 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.

In the initial stage of the experiment, the audio recordings were acoustically screened and transcribed according to the following linguistic and paralinguistic parameters:

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

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

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

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

4. Case study 1: Asylum-seeking representations and unequal socio-cultural 'schemata'

The first case-study is particularly interesting for its phonopragmatic framework since it is carried out on a controversial cross-cultural encounter in ELF between a Ghanaian asylum-seeker (AS) and his Italian legal advisor (LA) about his serious physical condition, with the assistance of a language mediator (IM).

In the selected extract (as well as in the whole exchange), especially the lawyer (more than the mediator) employs phonopragmatic and pragmalinguistic strategies to be more effective and persuasive as she tries to convey her illocutionary intents also through a variation of paralinguistic means, which are here investigated by a PRAAT speech analysis (employed for the investigation of prosodic and acoustic parameters such as spectral, pitch, and intensity levels, and for the labelling and segmentation of intervals and of time points on multiple tiers), as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

What follows is a segment of the speech analysis:

- (1) LA: He says that **if** you don't accept to come inside the hospital **they cannot** give you more hospitality and **also** you **cannot** come to eat to *mensa* **if they** are not sure for the other **if** you **want** to stay with **them** (.) you **must** have *fiducia* (.) and you **have to** come to the hospital (..) **ehm and then** (.) after a certificate you **can** come back (..) the doctor in **** doesn't answer and so::

today he is in the hospital **but** he doesn't answer to the telephone (..) **so** you **must decide** what you **want** to do (..) **because** he says that (.) **if** you come back to come in the hospital (..) they **can** give you the opportunity to come with them (.) to meet a doctor (.) to make this test (.) **if** all is ok you **can** come back with **them** and remain inside **** (..) **if** you don't **decide** to make this test and this cure (..) you **cannot** come to sleep and to eat

[Silence of 14s]

- (2) LA: **If** it's only for one day two day (.) I **think** is better to come in the hospital for one day two day [IM: a couple of days] what kind of problem you **can** have? They **could** certificate (.) you come back (.) live inside the **** till you have better accommodation (..) you **can** sleep you **can** [AS: this better] **because** we **can** try to have a good condition for you (.) **because** I **can** call him another time then [AS: why? Why? I'm not sick! You **can** give me] NO::! I **know** that you are not sick (.) we **know because** we read this certificate and **so** we **know** that you are not sick (.) **but they need to** have a new certificate **because** this is from two of February today is nineteen (.) **so before to come** (..) before to come they **need to** have a new certificate where **is write** that there are not any problem [AS: How much time?] after one day two days you **can** come [IM: You **don't have to** stay in ****] in **** (.) live with them (.) eat and **then I can** call again Mister ***** and say 'When this man come back he **need to** remain inside the house for all [IM: during the day] during the day (.) and he **need to** eat more time during the day' (.) **if** we **can** change the condition *no?* to stay inside **but if** they ask you to make this test (..) for one day (.) two day (.) come inside the hospital (.) you are not **eh** [AS: **if** one goes to hospital he doesn't come back] yes yes after one day two day (.) they **may** call all the test [IM: check-up] check-up **ehhh radiografie** (.) **if** all it's ok and you **can** come back in **** (.) live in **** (.) for six months [AS: no no no] in **** and then you come back here in **** [AS: no no I don't] in the tenth of this month (.) of the next month [AS: why I **cannot** go in the **** hospital?] **but** you don't **have to** change everything (.) you have the new appointment in **** in the tenth of March and you **can** come in **** you **don't have to** change everything (.) is only one day two day to make this test and then the tenth of march [AS: antie antie antie I **can't** go] the tenth of march you **can** come back in **** (.) you **can** remain with your doctor (.) is only for one time (.) for one time (.) **then** you have appointment in March and in March you **can** come back to your doctor [AS: no no I] **eh** Mister ***** I say you what is the situation (.) now where you come to sleep? Now (.) WHERE (.) you (.) come (.) to sleep? I **want to know** [AS: **eh ehe**] where? [AS: I **will** be there] *Dove?*
- (3) AS: I **will** be running in the streets [AS: In the street?] yeah
- (4) LA: **Ah because** you have the condition to (.) the health condition to sleep inside the street?
- (5) AS: In **** like everybody I **should** leave during the day
- (6) IM: But after you don't stay during the day out (.) you stay in the house **we** **spea::k** with **him** [AS: why] **if** you do this exam in **** when you come back you **can** stay [AS: why not here? Why not here?] in **** on the night on the day too [AS: why not here?]
- (7) LA: It's not possible (.) I called **them** and they say 'it's not possible (.) **because** we wrote a certificate some days ago (.) **so** for us for our hospital now it's not possible (.) it's possible only the tenth of march (.) in ****' so (.) the

- only possibility to have immediately a certificate (.) is to come in **** (.) remain in **** for one day two days (.) **then they** give you a certificate [AS: I'll never go] you are a free man you **can decide** for your life **but** this is not a good decision [AS: no no] for your life is not a good decision (.) **listen me** [AS: no no I **can't** go to ****] *e va be' allora* now this evening where you come to sleep? (.) Where?
- (8) AS: Anywhere! I **can** stay in the station
- (9) LA: In the station?
- (10) AS: Yes
- (11) LA: **So** (.) **if** you now you go out to the hospital some days ago (.) and now you come to sleep inside the train station?
- (12) AS: What **can** I do? [LA: you **can** come in the hospital] no no
- (13) LA: Is only a certificate! [AS: what kind of certificate? What kind of certificate?] no no is not a good decision (.) you are not in the condition to refuse (.) all the people are in the street (.) **so** it's a big possibility for you to live in **** centre (.) you **must be patience because** step by step you **can** have a better situation **but if** you **decide so** you **can** have only (.) more problem for you (.) for you (.) not for us (.) for us is not different
- (14) AS: My problem is for you
- (15) LA: For ME? It's the first time I meet you
- (16) AS: Yeah wait (.) no **understand** me (.) I'm saying like my problem is is (.) concerning Italy (.) you **know** what to do [LA: **but listen me!**]
- (17) I **know** all the foreign people in **** (.) and they are all my friends (.) **but if** you listen me (.) **if** you go out (.) **if** you go in the street [AS: **Mmm**] with your condition (.) you **can** have more problem for **your sick** (.) you **cannot** find any place to sleep for more (.) for a long long time [AS: don't worry] and **so** what (.) what you **have to** obtain (.) [AS: don't worry don't worry] and is only **because** you don't like to stay in the hospital for ONE DAYS! [AS: it's not one day it's not one day] for one day (.) **but** it's free (.) sorry (.) **but hospital** is not a prison (.) hospital is not a prison **if** you **decide** to go out to the hospital (.) you **can** go out (.) hospital is not a prison [AS: no::] **so if** after one day two days you **decide to left** them (.) you **can left** (.) **but** now **if** they say 'come to the hospital (.) make this test and then with the new certificate (.) he need a new one certificate (.) more recently (.) **ok?** And then with this certificate you **can** sleep and live with them (.) like other people [AS: **ah::** don't worry don't worry] like other people (.) **if** you come now you **can** have more problem than now [AS: no:: they tell me to go out no:: I **can't** do what you are asking me to do] you are a big man you an adult [AS: ye:s] you **can decide** alone [AS: **ehh**] **but I think** this is not good for you
- (18) IM: We advice you to go in the hospital of ***** for a couple of days
- (19) AS: Tell me to go to **** in the hospital I'm fine here [...]
- (20) AS: If you **need to** have some help (.) come in our office (.) **because** we **want** to help you (.) **ok? But** we are open only (.) in Thursday morning (.) **so if** you go away now (.) you **can** come back after one week (.) **but I know** what is the situation inside the train station (.) I **know** that is not a good solution [AS: I will never go to that place]
- (21) IM: Listen to us! Our advice [AS: hei sister sister I don't go] ok (.) you are free (.) do what you **want** (.) only solution that we **can** give you in this moment (.)

is this (.) hospital of ***** for a couple of days (.) <we don't have other solution now> **so** (.) go!

- (22) *LA*: Only to obtain a certificate [*AS*: why not here? Why not here?]
- (23) *IM*: **Because** there is no bed FREE!
- (24) *LA*: Is full! Is full!
- (25) *AS*: Who said that?
- (26) *LA*: Hospital!
- (27) *IM*: Now we speak with hospital in *****
- (28) *LA*: Is **full**! So **if** you **need to** have immediately <like them ask> a certificate you **have to** come <in another hospital> (.) listen us (.) why are you so hard?
- (29) *AS*: No no I'm not hard [*LA*: yes yes] no
- (30) *LA*: If I say you this is only to help you (.) <only to help you> listen me (.) we have big experience with foreign person and we **know** (.) is very hard to live without an accommodation (..) after some days you are no clean (..) after some days you have not a place to sleep [*AS*: this is the reason I'm telling you] you **can decide** [*AS*: no I'm not deciding you're deciding] no you **decide** no:: YOU (.) this is our system (.) is not beautiful (.) **but** is this (.) **so** inside this system you **must** accept [*AS*: no no **they decide**] something for yourself not for us <for yourself> and [*AS*: no no no] then you **can** obtain some help [*AS*: no no no]
- (31) *IM*: In this moment all we **can** do is this [*AS*: **Ahh** thank you thank you]
- (32) *LA*: We **cannot** make other **because** you don't give us the possibility to help you
- (33) *IM*: If you **want** come back come back ok **think** about it
- (34) *AS*: No (..) auntie no no (..) you **know** (..) >don't make it that you don't **know** you **know**< [*LA*: **But** is only to obtain a certificate] [...]
- (35) *IM*: *Vabbe'* (.) we are here
- (36) *LA*: **If** you **need** some help (.) you **can** come back

4.1. Acoustic analysis

The intercultural mediation process under analysis is a typical example of an 'unequal encounter' based on persuasive aims and pragmalinguistic power asymmetry. The main emerging peculiarity of the dialogue is the unbalanced distribution of conversational moves corresponding to a considerable employment of paralinguistic tools in the performing of speech acts. To fulfil her illocutionary goals, the LA activates different phono-prosodic strategies as revealed by the acoustic analysis (cf. Figure 1 below). A wide variety of prosodic resources are employed to focus on lexical and semantic items with a pragmatic aim, including pitch accent placement, pauses and silence, phrase boundary placement, prominence, pitch movement variations and focus marking (as signalled in the transcription).

As an ELF user, the lawyer tends to transfer her L1 phono-prosodic features to spoken interactions: she operates evident L1 variations involving intonation (patterns of pitch rises and falls and pattern of stress), rhythm, contrastive stress (used to mark words, phrases or clauses), pauses (used to

signal pragma-syntactic boundaries), speech and articulation rate, intensity, distribution of theme vs. rheme information in intonation units, all of which are typical of her Italian-Apulian variety.

Moreover, the LA tends to manage the whole interaction without the help of a language mediator (even if present). Therefore, her linguistic and paralinguistic effort is totally devoted to fulfil her illocutionary goals, i.e. giving new information to the AS and finally persuading him to accept her solutions, yet neglecting the cross-cultural gap between her Western perspective in considering medical and assistance treatments and his non-Western ‘schemata’, which probably a language mediator may have been able to fill.

Besides, the phonological analysis reveals a shift in the LA’s phonopragmatic attitude throughout the exchange. Figure 1 is an telling example of the opening prosodic and phonological behaviour shown by the LA in her several cues:

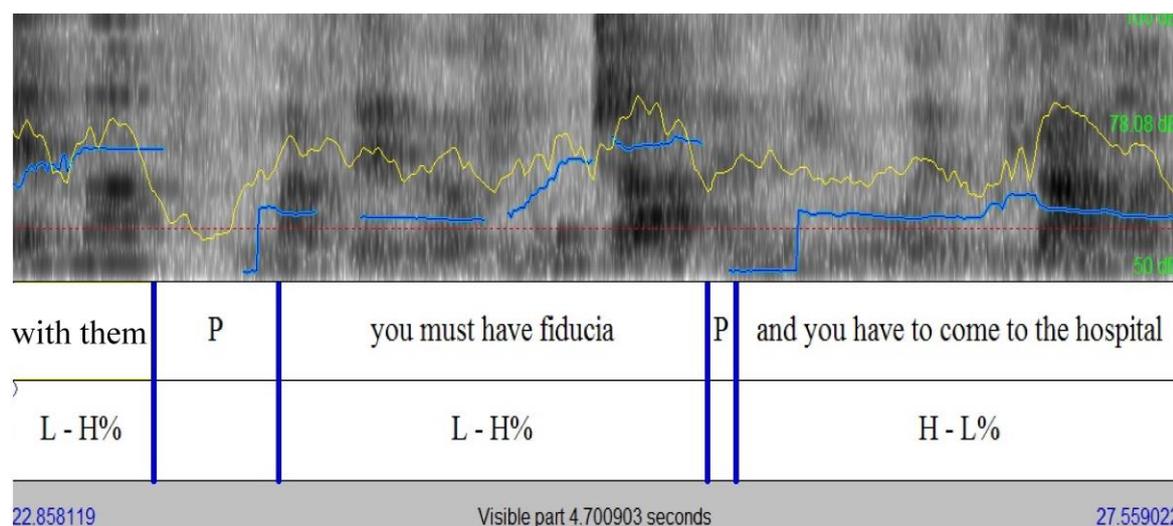


Figure 1

The utterance waveform, the f_0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of an utterance in turn (1).

The acoustic analysis shows to what extent prosodic signals can be used to measure and detect intentionality in speech. In this case study, it is also necessary to underline that the lawyer’s ELF variation (marked by a number of Italian intonational and paralinguistic transfers) is here employed with the aim of enabling and simplifying the accessibility of her persuasive message about crucial medical and bureaucratic issues, which are noticeably problematic for the migrant. The phonological and prosodic dimension of this passage is crucial, as marked by a phonopragmatic use of timing and L1 intonational phrasing transfer, pauses and maximum pitch (perceived also in terms of intensity) on key-directives employed by the LA (as also underlined

in Figure 1 on words such as *fiducia, come, hospital*).

The LA's phonopragmatic behaviour is particularly interesting because it reveals a gradual change of attitude throughout the encounter: from (1) to (4) the paralinguistic patterns employed to convey her illocutionary aims are characterized by regular tonal trend, low intensity and slow speech rate. After perceiving the AS's opposition, the LA changes her paralinguistic position: from (11) to (17) her voice is creaky with a great increase in speech rate, intensity and pitch movements, signalling her personal emotional involvement, communicative distress and illocutionary failure. Spectrogram in Figure 2 is an interesting example of this marked phonopragmatic behaviour:

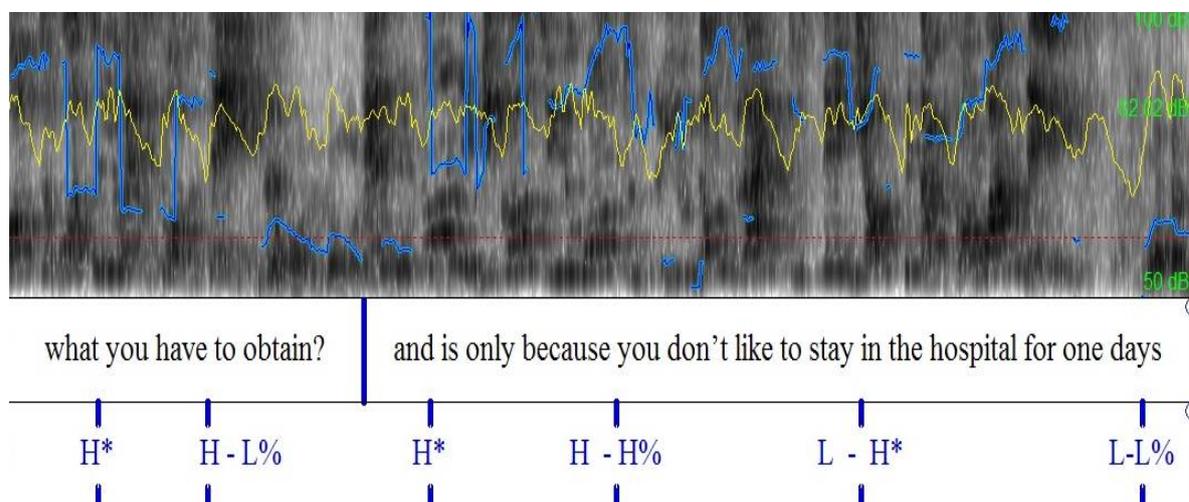


Figure 2
The utterance waveform, the f_0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of an utterance in turn (17).

On the other hand, the AS adopts an unusual (only apparently) phonopragmatic attitude: his replies are limited to several repetition in overlapping speech, moving from very short and unvoiced disfluencies (throughout the exchange as a steady vocal background) to dispreferred backchannels, often produced by means of high volume and frequent tonal pitch movements, in order to produce effective perlocutionary impression on the LA.

4.2. Conversational analysis

The phonopragmatic analysis is useful to reveal hidden and invisible communicative dynamics among interlocutors. This is particularly interesting when investigating intercultural encounters and mediation processes. At the basis of the exchange in case study 1 there is a serious socio-cultural divergence in conceiving medical treatments and representing asylum-

seeking status. The conversational analysis confirms and supports this ethical perspective and consolidates the previous phonopragmatic outline.

The exchange is marked by the LA's very extended eliciting moves in (1) and (2) that sound like a monological comment of the AS's current situation. His frequent overlapping speech and underneath backchannels interrupt the LA's challenging moves in (4), (9), and (11) and dispreferred responses in (7) and (13). The rhetorical strategy performed by the Italian lawyer in order to persuade the asylum-seeker to undergo the necessary hospital treatments is repeatedly constructed and deconstructed during the conversation, with correspondent phonopragmatic changes, as for instance in the very long cues in (17) (20), and (30).

On the other hand, the IM's role in the exchange can be rightly considered controversial. Her intervention is quite limited (probably by choice) and her moves in (6), (18), (21) are prescriptive and summoning, which is not particularly peculiar to an intercultural mediator.

4.3. Register analysis

As far as register and discourse management are concerned, the whole exchange is characterized by the frequent repetition of the same concept, namely the Italian medical protocol for infectious diseases.

The LA's long utterances are cohesively and coherently constructed by means of parataxis and coordination (she often uses *if, because, but, and, so* in the logical building of past and future events and prescriptions), and declaratives (e.g. *I say you what is the situation*). Moreover, the 'schema'-biased conversational framework is also marked by an interesting contrast between *they/them* and *we/us* in the Italian officers' representation of relations and power status.

The use of deontic modality (i.e. *can, need, don't have to, must, will*) confirms the LA's illocutionary aim in creating a mutual commissive framework around the AS's personal experience. In addition, the reciprocal use of mental verbs, such as *know, decide, want, think, understand*, by the three speakers involved, signals the epistemic quality of the conversation, based more on cross-cultural evaluation/judgement processes than on factual/action events.

As for verbal aspects, present simple is usually used to refer to past or present events, without distinction. However, it is noteworthy the use of continuous aspect as tool for conscious self-representation of current events and physical state by the asylum-seeker who actually is an ESL speaker.

Sentence structure and lexis are very simple. The Italian ELF variation applied to specialized migration domain results in popularized structures aimed at enhancing persuasion and reliance (e.g. *certificate, checkup, sick, doctor, hospital, *be patience, sleep, eat, condition, only solution*). Besides,

code-switching in (7) and (35) underlines the LA's and the IM's disappointment about the mediation failure.

5. Case study 2: 'schema'-biased attitudes in integration processes and practices

The second case study under examination is a particular case of mediation process in ELF carried out mainly by an Italian intercultural mediator (IM) with the help of a legal advisor (LA) to a Nigerian asylum-seeker (AS).

It is especially interesting to observe that, in the following passage, different socio-cultural 'schemata' about migration and asylum experience, and especially assisted repatriation, emerge from the participants' conversational exchanges.

The intercultural encounter is an example of informative mediation process, because the mediator supplies information to the asylum-seeker, introducing the unpleasant subject of return after asylum rejection and then developing it. In other words, the long encounter is based on a focus interview aimed at evaluating the real conditions for a voluntary repatriation:

- (1) *IM*: Do you **know if** there in **** the situation is dangerous now?
- (2) *AS*: (..) Everything (..) you **know** everything is a problem there (.) **but** to me **if** I'm staying around this place (.) anything come across me could take me danger (.) **so** for me to living here **so** (..) that's the problem (..) yeah anything you **want** (.) you **can** write I don't **know** (..) up to now **they** kidnap (.) **they** still continue in **** kidnapping right now **so hhh**
[...]
- (3) *IM*: Do you have legal problems in ****?
- (4) *AS*: Yes (.) I told you my story the problem I had before **so** what (..)
- (5) *IM*: **Mmm**
- (6) *AS*: **So** it's safer than here (.) **but** in my country (.) I ran out of my country **because** of some problem I have (.) **understood** what is (.) **so** now the police problem (.) my problem now is over **but they** kidnap people in **** (.) **they** kidnap (.) and **they know** my address **so if they** come across me anything up to me come to me that (..) **so::** anything up to me in my country kidnapping or people or any society (.) in my country is safer to live than **like** this (.) no document
- (7) *IM*: **Mmm** (.) **but** you don't have a trial (.) an appeal
- (8) *AS*: I have it before (.) I had it before (.) **but** you **know** I'm not sure the appeal is going to take place (..) I have three month now don't recognize in the country (.) I **cannot** go to (..) **so:: tss** (..) my life is in danger also here
[...]
- (9) *IM*: What kind of (..) degree do you have?
- (10) *AS*: I have six years (..) school
- (11) *IM*: Elementary?
- (12) *AS*: Yes
- (13) *IM*: Have you done formation courses in Nigeria?

- (14) AS: No
- (15) IM: In Italy?
- (16) AS: No
- (17) IM: Ok (.) your native language is?
- (18) AS: Yoruba
- (19) IM: So (.) in Yoruba you **can** write (.) read and (..) speak?
- (20) AS: Yeah (.)
- (21) IM: Other languages?
- (22) AS: No
- (23) IM: English
- (24) AS: English yeah
- (25) IM: You **can** write (.) you **can** speak (.) you **can** read?
- (26) AS: Yeah
- (27) IM: Italian?
- (28) AS: **Eh**?
- (29) IM: Italian?
- (30) AS: **Eh** (..) I **can** speak it little not too much **but** (..)
- (31) IM: Ok (.) what kind of job did you make in *****?
- (32) AS: *Negotio* (.) *negotio*
- (33) IM: **Ah** (.) driver
- (34) AS: No (.) that was my father's business [IM: **ah**] today is *negotio* (.) that's my own profession (.) *negotio* (.) that's where you are selling the (..)
- (35) IM: *Abiti*?
- (36) AS: Yes (.)
- (37) IM: Shopper?
- (38) AS: Yes shop (.) yes **so** the tanker driver was my father business
- (39) IM: Ok (..) **would** you **like** to follow some formation courses in your country?
AS: When I go back yes
- (40) IM: What kind of jobs **would** you **like** to do?
- (41) AS: I just **want** to go back school (.) to study to go back school (.) to school (..) that's what I **want** **eh** (..) or *negotio* this **maybe** this *commercio* [...]
- (42) AS: Yes (.) **because** I'm just here five years (..) now I have problem **so** in Nigeria also there is problem **so** up to day **they** still kidnap in Nigeria up today **so but** now I'm living here **so** I don't have not my document **so** I'm tired (.) I'm not fine again (..) **so that's why** I **decided** to go back (..) **because** I don't have protection
- (43) IM: Do you risk to be arrested?
- (44) AS: If I go back they arrest me in the airport [...]
- (45) IM: Are you fine? Are you well?
- (46) AS: Now?
- (47) IM: With your health
- (48) AS: I'm not ok (.) I'm not fine (.) just I'm not fine **so is better for me** to go where my family live (.) who care for me (..)
- (49) IM: **Mmm**
- (50) AS: I **know** you tried (.) you tried and **so** thank you (.) thank you very much **but so it's better for me to decide** to go back [...]

- (51) LA: Ok **eh** *allora* to come from the airport till **ehh** your village (.) your city (..) **they** pay for you everything (.) **ok?** **So** there are not any problem (.) **they** buy ticket or pay (..)
- (52) AS: **They want** to give me to Nigerian immigration?
- (53) LA: Nigeria immigration?
- (54) IM: What do you mean?
- (55) AS: **If they want** to help me (.) is better to give me to the embassy of Italian in Nigeria (.) **but** then **if they** give it to Nigerian immigration (.) now is finished (.) nothing for me (..) I don't have anything (.) **if they want** to help me not give it to Nigerian immigration or Nigerian government (.) no I'm here (.) **if they want they** help me in the Italian embassy in Nigeria or **they** help me here
- (56) LA: *Ma tu vuoi tornare in Nigeria?*³
- (57) AS: Yes (.) yes I **want** to come back (.) **but** anything **they want** to do for me (.) **they should** help me with the Italian embassy in Nigeria (.) anything **they want** to do to help me [LA: **eh**] **but** Nigerian immigration
- (58) LA: 'Immigration' what is?
- (59) AS: Nigeria
- (60) LA: Immigration like government? Nigerian government?
- (61) IM: What do you mean with 'immigration' (.) sorry?
- (62) AS: *La questura* (..)
- (63) IM: **But they** left you in Nigeria (.) you are free (..) not in *questura* (.) in a place that you **want**
- (64) AS: Yes (.) **but you don't understand** (..) **if they want** to assist me to me to stay a better life in Nigeria (.) a good life in Nigeria (.) anything **they have to** give it to Italian embassy in Nigeria (.) **so if they** give it to Nigerian immigration or Nigerian government (.) all this thing (..) I **cannot** get anything [...]
- (65) AS: I'm tired (.) I **don't know** what to do (.) November (..) the time is very far **tss** (..) [...]
- (66) AS: Is finished here?
- (67) LA: No wait some minutes **because e::h** there are another form **so if** you **prefer** you **can** sign (..) and then **we can** complete it too with the same information [...]
- (68) AS: **So** October?
- (69) LA: No (.) November it's impossible (.) for October (..)
- (70) AS: **But** you **will** give me a copy of this one?
- (71) LA: **Eh** yes
- (72) AS: Is it possible?
- (73) LA: *Sì* [...]
- (74) LA: Yes now when it's ready (.) I **will** send it tomorrow morning and then (.) **we will** meet (.) the third of September
- (75) AS: Ok

³ **But** do you **want** to come back to Nigeria?

5.1. Acoustic analysis

Here the phonopragmatic analysis reveals that the focus strategies applied, as well as the variations of ELF used (Nigerian and Italian variations of ELF), are different from those examined in the previous case-study.

More precisely, the previous extract is an example of a typical mediation process where the IM assists the LA in preparing the AS's reconstruction and entextualization of his personal experience in Italy, after the rejection of his asylum request. The use of ELF (rather than Standard English) by both the intercultural mediator and the legal advisor is aimed at – as usual in an ELF communicative context – enhancing the intentionality of their utterances, neglecting standard forms and structures. The IM's main objective is to provide the AS with a better accessibility to legal and bureaucratic issues regarding the long and complex asylum-seeking procedure, which is completely new to his socio-linguistic and cultural background.

As a consequence, once again, phonopragmatic strategies are exploited by the speakers with the illocutionary aim of underlining crucial parts of the message, and to make the process of understanding legal-bureaucratic procedures easier and more effective for their receiver. In addition, together with the L1 pragmalinguistic influence on ELF, the speakers' involvement is also signalled by a change in either speech rate (in terms of numbers of words per minute) and pitch range (i.e. in terms of low/high frequency variation of voice).

The phonopragmatic analysis conducted by considering different levels of investigation and by means of the acoustic and spectral study shows that the phonological and prosodic dimensions of this passage are influenced by the conversational dynamics of the exchange. After an evidential opening from (1) to (8) and the surveying interview, the AS, elicited by the IM's series of questions, finally reveals his attitude and viewpoint in (42): Figure 3 shows an interesting tonal pattern commonly used by the man during the exchange, especially around phonopragmatically marked utterances:

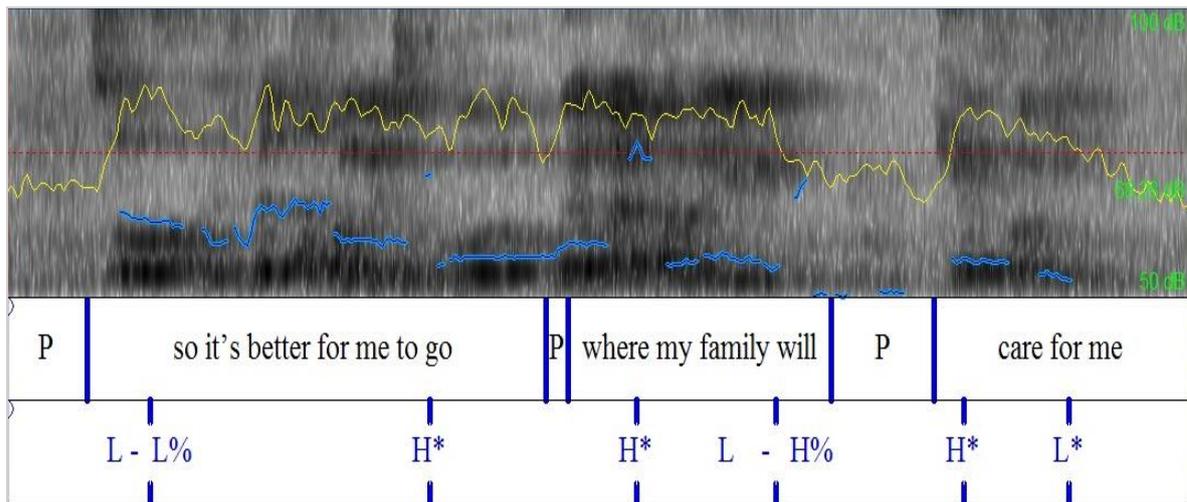


Figure 3

The utterance waveform, the f_0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of an utterance in turn (48).

Sometimes, the AS's paralinguistic behaviour appears ambiguous: he mainly employs a condescending tone, but his interlocutor, the IM, is not always able to interpret his attitude towards the issue of the conversation: in (6) and (8) the increasing speech rate reveals tension and irritation. After the interview, the AS's same phonological attitude persists towards the LA in (55) and (64). Figure 4 shows, instead, a more assertive pattern, which appears to be more introspective than perlocutionary:

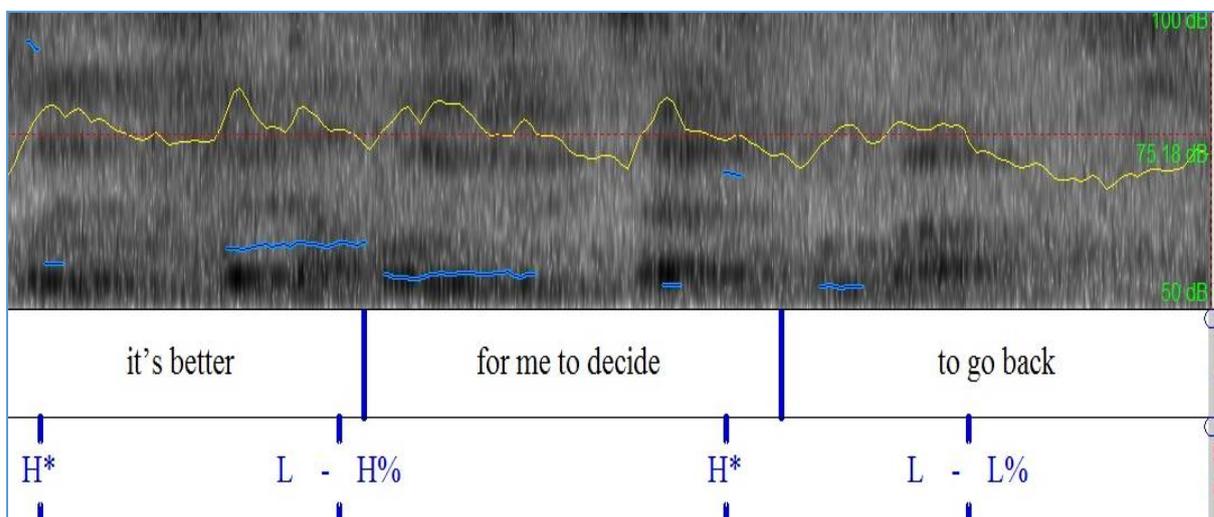


Figure 4

The utterance waveform, the f_0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of an utterance in turn (50).

On the other hand, the IM uses an authoritative tone as she takes on the leading and 'gatekeeping' role of the exchange: her mainly questioning and

eliciting moves are signalled by means of regular falling-rising contours and high intensity to sound more persuasive and engaging (e.g. in (40), (43), (45) and (61)).

5.2. Conversational analysis

The same dynamic pragmatic framework is further supported by the conversational pattern woven throughout the interaction between the IM and the AS. Hence, the phonopragmatic analysis reveals the multimodal construction of meaning and pragmatic intensions realized through a mutual exchange of acts (i.e. the mediator's illocutionary force affected by Western-oriented perspectives and socio-cultural backgrounds on the asylum experience, triggering the migrant's perlocutionary effects of signalling communication breakdown and mediation failure).

In this long exchange, the LA and the IM exchange their roles during the mediation process: the LA appears only in (51), after a long interview carried out by the IM with a usual series of elicitation in order to collect information about the AS' legal position, before giving place to the LA who re-gains the 'gatekeeping' position from (51) to (67).

As a consequence, the moves in (1), (3), (7), (43), (45), and (47) are all eliciting and focusing means to build the AS's personal story and asylum experience after rejection in order to establish the effective desire and willingness to voluntarily come back in his country. Nonetheless, the AS's backchannels in (42), (48), (50), (55), (57), (64), and (65) reveal the AS's psychological distress, amplified by a negative and traumatic migration experience, where denials, marginalization and isolation derive from opposed and conflicting perspective in considering socio-cultural experience such as migration, family relationships and sense of belonging to one's own country, divergent in Western and non-Western cultures, as the IM's and the LA's challenging moves in (49), (54), (56), (61) and (63) underline.

Indeed, the Italian officers seem to perceive the AS's anxiety and discomfort, which are not the required assumptions for voluntary repatriation, but eventually still resume the Western stereotypes and socio-cultural schemata about migration experience and personal values, legal procedures and protocols supported by the LA in (51) and (67).

5.3. Register analysis

Again, phono-prosodic attitudes correspond to lexical choices, in terms of novel lexical and morphological features and popularization processes on the one hand, and morphological and lexical simplification strategies on the other.

The IM's register is characterized by ELF accommodation strategies (e.g. *legal problem, a trial, an appeal, buy ticket, you are free*) and very brief questions aimed at improving her illocutionary goals, i.e. collect as much information as possible about the AS's personal experience to entextualize his narrative for the request of assisted repatriation.

On the other hand, the AS's backchannels show a dispreferred position about the IM's perspective underlined by frequent textual markers (e.g. *so, but, if*), verbs indicating mental processes (*decide, want, would like, understand, prefer*), and conative contacts (e.g. *you know, yeah, ehm*).

The application of prosodic and acoustic devices, especially by the LA and the IM, is not limited only to lexical and non-lexical elements (such as modal verbs; hedging cues and ELF syntactic patterns; conatives and disfluencies: *ok?, ah, mmm, hhh*), but it is extended also to paralinguistic elements involving kinesics, proxemics and voice quality (such as the legal advisor' and mediator's fixed gaze and their standing and upright position; and the migrant's lower gaze, seated position and uncomfortable posture and gestures). This reveals the speakers' willingness to fulfil their illocutionary goals of persuading and imposing their perspective on the one side, and of signalling distress, anxiety and a confused attitude on the other hand.

6. Case study 3: intercultural divergences in the perception and interpretation of legal-bureaucratic procedures

In the following exchange, an Italian mediator tries to gather accurate and relevant information from a Nigerian young man whose asylum application has been rejected. The mediator is aware of his troubled past of job exploitation in the Italian countryside as a farm worker; the whole encounter is based on this assumption. The following exchange, therefore, is particularly challenging because the mediator is alone during the preliminary encounter with the Nigerian AS and aims at reconstructing his personal experience, according to Western socio-cultural 'schemata':

- (1) LA: **So if** you stay in **** and in **** is sure that you work more time (.) that you have not contract (.) *no?* Is sure (.) **so** there is a specific project in **** who **can** help the person with this kind of problem (.) **ok?** **So we can try** to listen your story about your job condition and **then we can** go together to this project to **understand if** it's possible to take a permit to stay for this problem (.) **ok?** (..) Now you **can** speak with our intercultural mediator and **so:**
[...]
- (2) IM: Now **we can try** to reconstruct rebuild your story in Italy (.) **because we have to** find **if** (.) there are cases of exploitation in your job (.) when you have

- worked here in Italy [AS: Yeah] **ok?** Let's start from **** when you arrived here in Italy (.) **ok? So** (.) you arrived in Italy (.) where?
- (3) AS: Lampedusa
- (4) IM: Lampedusa (.) and then
- (5) AS: Lampedusa to Ragusa
- (6) IM: Ragusa?
- (7) AS: Siracusa
- (8) IM: Siracusa (.) then
- (9) AS: **They want** to (..) *questura* in Trapani (..) in Trapani I get *foglio di via*
- (10) IM: **Mmm** (.) ok (.) and then you went when?
- (11) AS: **They** give me *foglio di via* then I went to **** (..) I left Trapani to *****
- (12) IM: Ok (.) what have you done in *****?
- (13) AS: I've just been looking for job (.) people standing in the (..) and looking for job (.) I still leaving in *****
- (14) IM: And then (..) have you found a job?
- (15) AS: Yes (.) sometimes **if** you get it today (.) tomorrow no get (.) only to pay or to rent a house in ***** (.) **because you know** there is not a good job (.) **eh**
- (16) IM: Ok (.) what kind of job?
- (17) AS: **So** (.) sometimes in some people's house (.) sometimes someone called me (..) yeah
- (18) IM: **Mmm** (.) ok (.) do you remember who called you? For job (..) African people
- (19) AS: No:: (.) Italian
- (20) IM: **Mmm** (.) and then you **have to pay** for this (..) money?
- (21) AS: Yes
- (22) IM: And (..) do you remember their names?
- (23) AS: Yeah (.) yeah (.) I get one of their names (..) **because** I don't have document (.) he have to pay me three hundred euro (.) *trecento euro* (..) they never paid me because I don't have any document
- (24) IM: Ok and **ehh** where this happened?
- (25) AS: In ****
- (26) IM: In *campagna*
- (27) AS: Yes (.) *campagna* (..)
- (28) IM: And (..) do you remember the name of this man?
- (29) AS: Yes (.) I have the telephone number (.) **I know** him in *campagna*
- (30) IM: **Ah** (.) ok (.) last summer?
- (31) AS: Last year (.)
- (32) IM: **Eh** (.) ok **so** (.) you have worked in *campagna* in *****
- (33) AS: Yes
- (34) IM: **Ehm** how much time?
- (35) AS: I begin the work in October 20**
- (36) IM: And finished when?
- (37) AS: March (.) March 20**
- (38) IM: Ok (.) and during this period (..) °they have never paid you°
- (39) AS: **They have never paid me**
- (40) IM: **But** three hundred euros only (..) for all this period?
- (41) AS: Yes
- (42) IM: Only three hundred euros
- (43) AS: Yes (.) only three hundred euros (.) *non c'è ora* (.) *quando stanco* (.)

mattina sette (.) lavoro (.) sometimes it was seven o'clock (.) sometimes three o'clock (.) sometimes four o'clock (.) **but they** don't **want** to give me the money

- (44) *IM*: And where did you live?
 (45) *AS*: I'm living in *campagna* (.) yeah
 (46) *IM*: With him
 (47) *AS*: No (.) no (.) no
 (48) *IM*: In an abandoned (..) house
 (49) *AS*: Yes (.) *bravo*
 (50) *IM*: **E::h** (.) with other people
 (51) *AS*: Yes with other people
 (52) *IM*: Without light (.) without water
 (53) *AS*: Without light (.) without water
 (54) *IM*: **So** you have a person that transport you from the from the abandoned house to work?
 (55) *AS*: Yeah (.) no (.) it not **so** far to work
 (56) *IM*: **Ah** ok (.) and this man that you pay is an African man
 (57) *AS*: No (.) is an Italian (..) ****
 (58) *IM*: Ok (.) how much money?
 (59) *AS*: *Giornata* is thirty euro (.) in **** you work for *cassetta*
 (60) *IM*: **So** sometimes you started in the morning till afternoon or evening
 (61) *AS*: Yes
 (62) *IM*: And what kind of fruits? Tomatoes?
 (63) *AS*: No (.) salads (.) olives
 (64) *IM*: When you stayed in this house
 (65) *AS*: Yeah
 (66) *IM*: The food? Where did you find the food?
 (67) *AS*: I went to **** to collect food
 (68) *IM*: And now you live in *campagna*?
 (69) *AS*: Yes (.)
 (70) *IM*: Do you have any evidence that you worked there?
 (71) *AS*: Yes (.)
 (72) *IM*: What kind of evidence?
 (73) *AS*: I have the telephone number (.) I have a *carta*
 (74) *IM*: And you (..) **they** paid you one euro for *cassetta* (..) and in **** where did you live?
 (75) *AS*: Abandoned house (.)
 (76) *IM*: Like in ****?
 (77) *AS*: Yes
 (78) *IM*: And how many *cassetta* did you=
 (79) *AS*: =Sometimes fifteen *cassetta* (.) sometimes twelve (..)
 (80) *IM*: **But** (..) fifteen euros (..)
 (81) *AS*: Yes (.)
 (82) *IM*: And then you received this money (..) at the end of the day?
 (83) *AS*: Yes (.) no (..) of some week
 (84) *IM*: At the end of the week
 (85) *AS*: Yeah
 (86) *IM*: **Ehm** (.) ok (..) with other people?
 (87) *AS*: Yes (.) many people

- (88) *IM*: And you worked Monday till (..) (..)
- (89) *AS*: Sunday (..) Monday to Sunday (.) throughout the week
- (90) *IM*: **But** there there were bad people? (..) who exploited you?
- (91) *AS*: Yes (.)
- (92) *IM*: What kind of people?
- (93) *AS*: The *padrone* is the farmer (.) is Italian (.) and then he have one (..) one black man
- (94) *IM*: **So** there were white people and black people together?
- (95) *AS*: No:: (.) is black people and the owner is a white man (.) the farm owner
- (96) *IM*: Ah (.) and these black people were friends of this (..)
- (97) *AS*: The owner yes (.)
- (98) *IM*: And then you went away from *****
- (99) *AS*: I went away when the condition is too bad
- (100) *IM*: Why?
- (101) *AS*: **Because** the place where I was sleeping is not good (.) and everyday the rain beating (.) you **know**
- (102) *IM*: **Eh?** (.) Who beat?
- (103) *AS*: The rain (.) the rain
- (104) *IM*: **Ah** ok (.) ok (.)
- (105) *AS*: **Because** this work begin in January
- (106) *IM*: Yes (.) yes (.) so nobody beat you?
- (107) *AS*: No (.) nobody beat me (.) I'm not well (.) I'm sick
- (108) *IM*: **But** condition like this (..) you found in other place where you worked (.) **so bad (..)**
- (109) *AS*: No (.) no=
- (110) *IM*: **Because** sometimes for you is not bad **but** for the Italian law this is not right (.) **ok?**
- (111) *AS*: Yeah
- (112) *IM*: **So try** to remember (..) [...]
- (113) *IM*: Ok (.) **so we can try** to reconstruct your story and then next **week we try** to talk with this new project (.) now **we have to** write your story in Italian
- (114) *AS*: **It's better for me** to come back next week
- (115) *IM*: Yes
- (116) *AS*: Ok

6.1. Acoustic analysis

At the beginning of the encounter, the LA starts by means of an assertive eliciting move in (1), which is pronounced in a falling tone and at a slow and articulated rate interrupted to frequent pauses. This phonopragmatic behaviour is requested by the demanding task assigned to the IM, namely inquiring into the AS's personal past events.

Therefore, from (2) to (112) the IM's moves are all clearly aimed at investigating and reconstructing the latter's asylum experience. Figure 5 can be seen as a representative example of a dialogic exchange between the IM and the AS, which is clearly influenced by the former's inquiring tone:

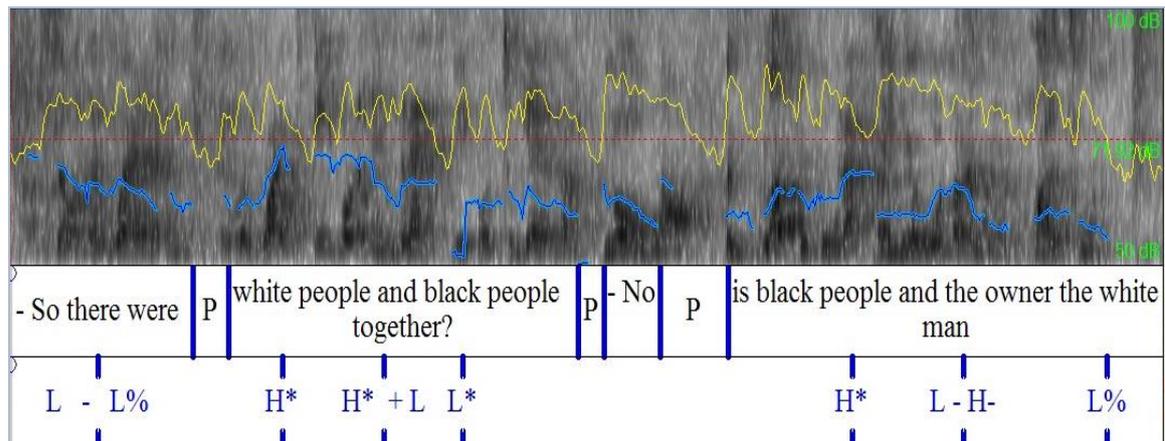


Figure 5

The utterance waveform, the f_0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turns (94)-(95).

Nonetheless, throughout their conversation, the IM perceives that the AS's narrative of his past experience in Italy is not satisfying as expected, and her final eliciting moves are mainly characterized by a tonal transfer from the Italian variation she speaks, typical of the South-eastern part of Italy. In Figure 6 the IM's utterance is marked by rising-falling-rising tone typical of the Italian question pattern; moreover, the marked use of pauses before phrase boundary signals a deliberate perlocutionary intention:

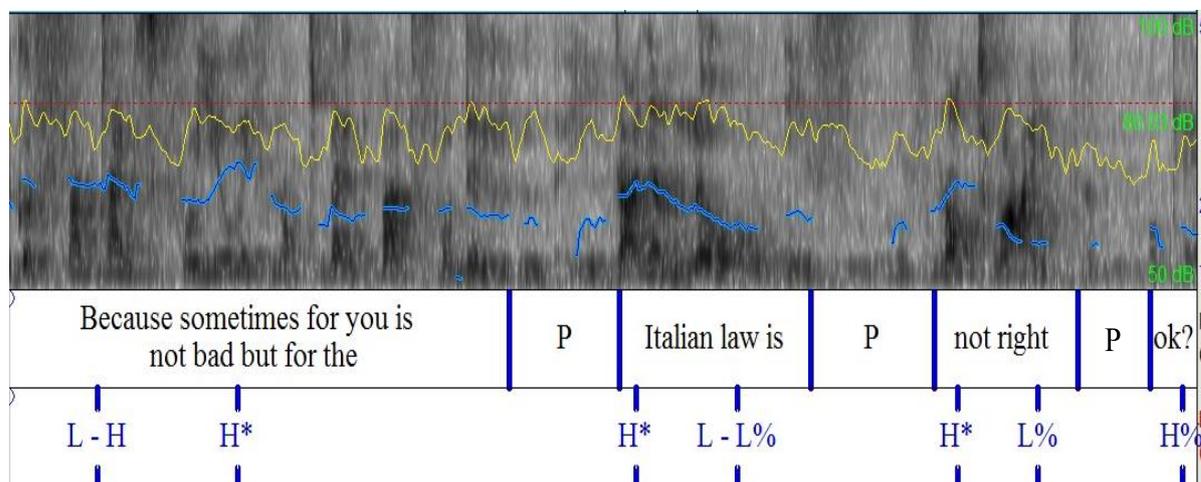


Figure 6

The utterance waveform, the f_0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (110).

On the other hand, the AS's phonopragmatic behaviour appears neutral and detached, which is perceived as ambiguous and misleading by the western-biased the IM's perspective. Her frequent disfluencies in formulating questions and comments signal an uncontrolled management of her 'gate-keeping' role in leading the mediation process. Most probably, different

socio-cultural ‘schemata’, activated during the exchange by both speakers involved, affect the mutual judgemental process of this intercultural exchange. A mutual lack of confidence and suspicion is perceivable during this exchanged.

6.2. Conversational analysis

The move/act analysis is again a practical tool to detect the unequal biases emerging from cross-cultural encounters. The exchange under scrutiny consists of an unsuccessful ‘gate-keeping’ interview (Roberts & Sayers 1987) conducted by the IM who, as seen in the previous paragraph, tries to carry out a series of eliciting moves in order to obtain important information about the AS’s past, as overtly confirmed by the declarative move in (2). Yet the latter, apparently uncooperative, regularly replies with preferred responses, descriptive of his job experience in the Italian countryside.

However, the long series of the AS’s preferred responses (from (15) to (88)) induce the IM to introduce a Western perspective concerning human and workers’ rights, above all in (90) and in (108), further supported in (110), echoing the LA’s turn in (1). However, turn taking here is pragmatically inconsistent and asymmetric: the IM’s approach is affected by the LA’s directives related to strictly legal issues since she is implicitly willing to make the AS aware of his critical position in the foreign country where he in vain asked for asylum. Therefore, the mediation process is unable to fulfil the initial illocutionary purposes and concludes with a downgrade closing in (113), supported by the AS’s rejection finalizer in (114).

6.3. Register analysis

In the first part the IM, who aimed at investigating the AS’s past, neglects textual accuracy. Her questions are often incoherent and ‘schema’-biased (Guido 2008) since they do not respect the AS’s *accessibility* and *informativity* (van Dijk 1980) about the legal consequences related to court denials and job exploitation. The register is quite low and informal, often marked by ELF accommodation strategies.

Besides, status asymmetry between the IM and the AS is mainly conveyed by the ‘gatekeeping’ interrogation tone used by the Italian mediator. However the IM downgrades her leading position through the employment of stylistic and textual devices such as the use of *we* as well as of modal verbs; yes-no and wh-questions alternated to rhetorical questions (e.g. in (54), (56), (60)) – where the textual marker *so* acquires a conclusive value aimed at entextualizing the AS’s declarations; disfluencies (e.g. *mmm*, *ah*, *eh*); and marked textual structures (e.g. *Now we can try to reconstruct, ok?, But condition like this (..) you found in other place where you worked, so*

we can try to reconstruct your story).

What the IM really wants is to help the young man; she is visibly careful and fairly committed as it becomes evident in her use of the present tense for past actions, conatives, hedges and acknowledging moves. Nonetheless, the IM's repeated attempts inexorably fail; her discourse strategy is pragmatically unproductive and does not cause the expected results on the AS, namely verifying his legal position and providing him with useful information for humanitarian protection. Moreover, after the IM's overt declarative in (110), performed with hesitations and pitch emphasis, the AS dispreferred vague reply (cf. *yeah*) shows his uncooperativeness and not completely explicit attitude probably due not so much to reticence as to socio-cultural 'schema' divergence, derived from different lingua-cultural background.

7. Conclusions

Mediation processes in immigration domains require a significant communicative effort, especially from the mediator's side. This type of activities involves a certain amount of suprasegmental and rhythmic features, such as employing a measured pace that is appropriate for his/her interlocutors, who often are refugees or trauma victims, and other paralinguistic and extralinguistic features (voice quality, facial expressions, posture, gestures, eye movements and gaze, body movements and space management). Since cross-cultural mediation exchanges are spontaneous and urgent, they also show a greater emotional and attitudinal involvement in the topic of discourse or in the interaction, which may emerge in different ways as speakers modify and affect their speech prosody according to linguacultural transfers from L1, as well as pragmatic conveyance of intentionality.

In the three case studies under analysis, speakers tend to modulate their prosodic patterns and intensity level, and to change quantity and duration of pauses as well as their pitch range and focus by applying different speech rates and prominence. This use of prosody may result in perception difficulties, if not in misunderstandings, for any speaker involved in intercultural conversations, especially when different ELF variations are spoken as a means of communication with low level of proficiency and accuracy, and speakers' native languages possess intonational systems, which differ considerably from each other.

Moreover, the data provided in this paper for the phonopragmatic analysis has revealed that L1-affected ELF variations (rather than Standard English) are constantly employed in mediation processes or in intercultural

exchanges involving migrants and officials or experts. If the use of ELF is aimed at enabling and simplifying the semantic accessibility of legal-bureaucratic procedures and concepts by migrants from different linguistic-cultural backgrounds, it is also true that it may even cause miscommunication and misinterpretation of the message. Furthermore, the pragmatic control of intonation patterns in conveying attitudes and emotions account for idiosyncratic perceptive interpretation of emphasis on salient parts of the utterance as well as of silence and other paralinguistic and extralinguistic cues (e.g. shifts in intensity or speech rate).

Therefore, the advocated follow-up of this research could include a more detailed investigation of the effects produced by the illocutionary acts emerging from mediation exchanges and partly analysed in this study. This could help to explore the perlocutionary effects and potential misunderstanding triggers by all the participants involved in these kinds of cross-cultural interactions. Mediators' training should take into account that intentionality is always interpreted according to perceived auditory schemata in perception, which are affected by receivers' linguacultural and pragmalinguistic backgrounds. In this case, therefore, the phonopragmatic analysis may be useful not only to measure and detect the employment of phono-prosodic strategies revealing speakers' illocutionary acts, but also to make future mediators aware of the mechanisms underlying mutual positioning and perception, as well as possible triggers for misinterpretations, in order to avoid and prevent them.

The approach applied in this study may provide useful basic tools for the improvement of the mediators' education and training, not only in legal-bureaucratic contexts. More attention and research investigation need to be devoted to this crucial and necessary figure in intercultural communicative settings with the aim of developing adequate and varied practice programmes in mediators' education and training.

The results of this study have confirmed that prosody is one of the most relevant communicative means speakers and listeners use both in the production and in the interpretation of speech acts, along with the choice of lexical and syntactical items, paralinguistic and extralinguistic tools. At the same time, the phonopragmatic analysis has also shown how difficult and challenging investigating (spontaneous) spoken discourse can be. Hence, further investigation should aim at analysing the role of socio-cultural and pragmatic factors in the use of prosodic patterns as well as in the effects of illocutionary acts in the cross-cultural mediation processes, in terms of perlocutionary effects on interlocutors.

Considered from this perspective, the phonopragmatic approach could be a useful pedagogical strategy applied to the training of any kind of intercultural mediator – especially in a prevailing ELF-oriented attitude and

expanding scenario – who, in order to play a successful and effective mediation role, should consider not only the pragmalinguistic processes involved in conversation (in terms of a correct semantic and pragmatic disclosure of the linguistic message), but also paralinguistic and extralinguistic approaches and phonopragmatic habits deriving from different L1s and transferred by each speaker to his/her respective use of ELF.

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