

ELF INTERCULTURAL MEDIATION IN ASYLUM-SEEKING CONTEXTS A phonopragmatic approach

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Abstract – The paper aims to investigate ELF intercultural mediation by means of the phonopragmatic approach, here applied to the analysis of legal interactions in immigration settings characterized by ‘gatekeeping’ asymmetries. More precisely, the research hypothesis is that ELF users involved in intercultural encounters differently appropriate the English language not only according to their own different native linguacultural ‘schemata’, but also to specific pragmalinguistic goals and intentions. Nonetheless, this dynamic process often interferes with the achievement of successful communication through mutual accommodation strategies usually applied by ELF users. The phonopragmatic approach, therefore, aims to explore the possible prosodic and auditory processes involved in such cross-cultural dynamics, with particular attention to the speakers’ illocutionary and pragmatic intentions and the performing of speech acts. Hence, a corpus of recorded data from cross-cultural interactions, in ELF and Italian Lingua-Franca, between asylum-seekers, language mediators and legal advisors is here explored by means of a cross-linguistic acoustic, conversational and register analysis with the ultimate aim of investigating (i) how existing L1 prosodic and acoustic aspects are redefined in the use of an ELF variation; (ii) to what extent the resulting L1 phonological transfers affect the ELF variations (in terms of phonological phrasing, syntactic and lexical choices); (iii) how meaning, experience and understanding are mediated and cross-culturally constructed in interactions through phonopragmatic strategies; and (iv) the role played by prosody and paralinguistics in the negotiation of speakers’ attitudes, emotions, and socio-cultural ‘schemata’.

Keywords: ELF phonopragmatics; intercultural mediation; cross-cultural transfers; multimodal analysis; intercultural pedagogy.

1. Theoretical Background and Rationale

Spontaneous cross-cultural interactions between asylum-seekers, language mediators and legal advisors are the research fieldwork at the basis of this paper whose leading aim is to explore ELF variations (often associated to Italian Lingua-Franca realizations) employed by officials, mediators and migrants during cross-cultural exchanges involving specialized spoken discourse on legal counselling and assistance.

Various theoretical perspectives and assumptions sustain and justify the rationale of the research objectives, 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 (Selkirk 1984; Nespor, Vogel 1986); (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).

Such theoretical grounds are thus at the basis of the research objectives aimed 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.

More precisely the pragmalinguistic implications of the dialogic interactions will be explored with the objective of investigating the role played by the illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions (Searle 1983) in the cross-cultural phonopragmatic realizations of the oral interactions, accounting for linguacultural discrepancies in the different ELF variations (Guido 2008) used by the participants in the interactions. Dialogic turns and speech acts are also analysed to identify and justify cross-cultural miscommunication due to both phonopragmatic realizations causing socio-cultural and pragmalinguistic inaccessibility and unavailability to the meaning conveyed through ELF.

Moreover, processes of intercultural mediation in specialized immigration domains are here explored focusing on the phonopragmatic dimensions of cross-cultural legal-bureaucratic and post-traumatic reports through the participants' ELF variations characterized by: (i) different strategies of appropriation of the English language according to native 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 identified in speech segmentation and acoustic variations (Searle 1969, 1983; Selkirk 1984).

2. Phonopragmatics

The phonopragmatic approach (Sperti forthcoming), here applied to immigration 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 through ELF.

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. 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 phono-prosodic parameters used in different ELF variations. 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

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

rate; vowel and tonic syllables duration; pause duration at phrase boundaries and acoustic intensity.

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

3. Method and analysis

In the present study a qualitative method was applied to three case studies (Seliger, Shohamy 1995) selected from a corpus of recorded spontaneous speech occurred during cross-cultural interactions between migrants, mediators and legal advisors in a Italian public center for assistance and counseling to asylum-seekers and refugees, involving ELF and Italian Lingua-Franca variations.

The acoustic analysis of the legal-bureaucratic discourse (carried out by means of PRAAT software – Boersma, Weenik 2017) of the selected case studies has been applied to phonopragmatic realizations of speech acts showing relevant linguistic, stylistic and phonopragmatic features of the intercultural mediation process through ELF.

More precisely, the three case studies have been explored from: (i) a *phono-prosodic* perspective, based on the autosegmental-metric approach (Pierrehumbert 1980; Ladd 1996), investigating prosodic parameters (such as pitch level and range, intensity, stressed syllable duration, number and mean duration of pauses, speech rate, intonational phrase, and pitch contour), as well as other paralinguistic and extralinguistic features (such as facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye movements and eye gaze, head and hand movements, voice quality); (ii) a *conversational* perspective (Sinclair, Coulthard 1975; Stubbs 1983; Coulthard, Brazil 1992), considering and analysing how actually the identified phono-linguistic strategies match with the speakers' performing of speech acts, turns and moves in conversation aimed at achieving pragmalinguistic goals, producing unavoidable perlocutionary outcome from their receivers; and (iii) a *register* perspective (Van Dijk 1980; de Beaugrande, Dressler 1981; Halliday 1994), taking into account lexical, rhetorical and stylistic choices, such as the use of tense and aspect, deontic vs. epistemic modality, conversational hedging, popularization and simplification of terminology, accommodation strategies).

Therefore, the phonopragmatic model is based on the synergic application of different analytic methodologies in order to fulfil a detailed and complete outlook of the spontaneous oral discourse in intercultural dimensions as well as its related pragmalinguistic mechanisms.

The following data have been collected, classified and transcribed in order to preserve participants' and non-participants' privacy, though keeping their natural production as spontaneous and non-induced conversational exchanges.

In defense of each speaker's privacy – whose acoustic cues have been saved as intelligible – proper names, places, cities and towns, easily recognizable, have been erased and signaled throughout the text by means of asterisks (four * for places, five * for proper names).

As for the speakers involved, in a typical specialized intercultural mediation encounter an official operator or consultant (in this paper a legal advisor, henceforth LA), a migrant (an asylum-seeker, an international protection holder or a refugee, henceforth AS) and an intercultural mediator (henceforth IM) are seated together².

Moreover, acoustic data have been treated and transcribed taking into account the following linguistic and paralinguistic parameters:

- Phonological and paralinguistic correlates (in black bold, in capitals and/or underlined in the transcriptions);
- the use of modal verbs and marked verbal productions (in bold ‘Calibri’ font);
- key-textual structures (in bold ‘Arial’ font);
- stylistic tendencies (lexical and rhetorical, in bold ‘Arial Narrow’ font);
- ELF accommodation strategies and code-mixing (single lexical elements in bold ‘Verdana’ font and ELF syntactical clusters in double-underlined font);
- Italian lingua-franca expressions (in italics).

In the extracts some passages have been delated (as signaled by [...]) since they were considered potentially damaging to the participants’ privacy or useless towards the objectives of this research (e.g. exchanges in Italian, phone calls, external interferences or interruptions).

However, in the general attempt to represent spontaneous cross-cultural interactions and simulate their live taking place it is important and relevant to signal in the transcription the occurring of the abovementioned interferences, because they are able to reproduce an adequate and faithful snapshot of what really happens or may happen in a center for legal counseling to refugees or asylum-seekers, in order to completely evaluate methods and procedures through which the mediation service is currently supplied and point out strengths, errors and vulnerabilities that may trigger further investigation on intercultural mediation and its qualitative implementation.

Paralinguistic aspects (such as pauses, stress and focus, non-lexical elements, tonal prominence, overlapped speech and voice quality) are constantly signaled in the transcription by means of symbols and diacritics according to the notation adapted from the transcription system elaborated by Edward (1997) and summarized as follows:

- [] → overlapping speech;
- underlining → emphasis;
- ° ° → quieter speech;
- (.) → micropause;
- (..) → pause;
- :: → elongation of prior sound;
- hhh → breathing out;
- >< → speed-up talk;
- <> → slowed-up talk;
- = → latching.

² However it is necessary to underline that in most cases this triangular representation of the intercultural mediation is completely idealistic, since in practice it often happens in completely irregular and atypical communicative settings and manners, as it actually occurs in the following case-studies.

4. Case-study 1: socio-medical integration in ELF encounters

The first case-study is carried out on a cross-cultural encounter in ELF between a Ghanaian asylum-seeker (AS) and his Italian legal advisor (LA) about important medical tests and check-ups necessary for his request for international protection, without the assistance of a language mediator.

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

What follows is a segment of the speech analysis:

- (1) LA: During the morning have you your breakfast?
- (2) AS: No
- (3) LA: No? **Mmm** [...] *Don **** lo conosci* (.) **eh?** The **preit** {*priest*}?
- (4) AS: **Mmm** (..)
- (5) LA: Not the *diacono* (..)
- (6) AS: There all one only one (.) there he call anyone (.) only one make everything (.) says 'colazione colazione' (.) there only one (.) that place I don't want (..)!
- (7) LA: [...] I spoke to some doctors in order to permit you to stay in an adequate place when (.) an adequate structure when you **can** eat (.) and you **can** receive (..) *le cure* (..) care (.) You **can** live inside that center (.) **ok?** A **best** center (.) **mmm?**
- (8) AS: **Mmm** (..)
- (9) LA: I spoke to the *Prefettura* also and **eh** (..) to make this request but they told me that this request have been (..) have been made before (..) **ok?** (..) So **we** are waiting to find another place (.) a **best** place to live (.) **ok?** Now **we can** call the **preit** {*priest*} in the C**** to find a solution with him **trying** to understand that you **can** eat there and in the same time **we can** call to the *Prefettura* to understand if they **found** a solution (.) **ok?**
- (10) AS: Inside I don't go in that place! ****is not a good place THERE (..) [LA: But is only till you have the possibility to come in another place (.) **ok?**]
- (11) LA: **Ehee** (..) so (.) it's not a definite solution for you (.) it's only till the (..) the Prefettura obtain answer for you to come in another place (.) **ok?** So (.) now **we can** try to speak with the **preit** {*priest*} with the man who stay inside the center (.) because it's not the chief (.) **ok?** So (.) I **can** try to speak with the real chief of the center to explain better your **personally** situation and then I **can** call the *Prefettura* to know if they have an answer for you (.) **ok?**
- (12) AS: Yes (.) tonight I take it (..) almost to go to Roma to live (.) there **I'm looking** for place to live (..) [LA: **I know** (.) **I know**, it's not so easy (.) it's not so easy (..)]
- (13) AS: They have money and I live in the street like this (.) **eh** (..)? **Mmm** (..)
- (14) LA: °*Mo proviamo a chiamare qua* (..) °
- (15) AS: Who he's? **WHO** (.) who there?
- (16) LA: M****. *Il diacono* (..) C**** (.) C**** (..)
- (17) AS: C****? **NO** (.) **NO!** I don't want anything to do with him (.) I better sleep in the street (..) **I cannot** (..) **NO** (..) **NO** (..) Why? (..) **You know** (..) **you know** (.) he tell me to go out from there (.) always somebody (.) somebody (.) somebody (..) **mmm** [LA: I tried to speak with (..) **I know** it's not a good situation] I don't want to meet him! This is nobody's case! **Do you understand?** **Eheee** (.) It's only this one way (.) one way (.) one way (.) any time (.) any time! For my sickness! **I cannot** sleep! [...] **Mmm** (..) I take the number (.) The office number (.) for what?
- (18) LA: Because I **need to** speak with her (.) the doctor (..)
- (19) AS: **Mmm** (.) **mmm**

- (20) LA: So (.) if she **can** give you her telephone number (.) tomorrow morning when we will meet again I **can** call her to have some news (..) and then she **has to** give you the result of your test (.) **ok?** So (.) come in her office (..) do you remember where is?
- (21) AS: **Mmmm** (.) yeah (..)
- (22) LA: **Ok** (.) so **come** immediately and **ta(..) eh** take the result and her telephone number (.) and **we will** meet again tomorrow at ten o'clock in my office (.) **ok?**
- (23) AS: Ok

4.1. Acoustic analysis

This segment of speech is an example of an atypical intercultural mediation process based on persuasive aims and pragmalinguistic power asymmetry and performed without the mediator's assistance. To fulfil her illocutionary goals, actually, LA activates different phono-prosodic strategies as revealed by the acoustic analysis: a wide variety of prosodic resources are employed to focus on lexical and semantic items with a pragmatic aim (such as pitch accent placement, phrase boundary placement, prominence, pitch movement variations and focus marking signalled in the transcription).

The lawyer, indeed, as an ELF user, 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, typical of her Italian variety.

Moreover, the LA has decided to manage the whole interaction without the help of language mediator. 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 would have been able to fill.

Figure 1 is an excellent example of the prosodic and phonological tools employed by the LA in her several cues:

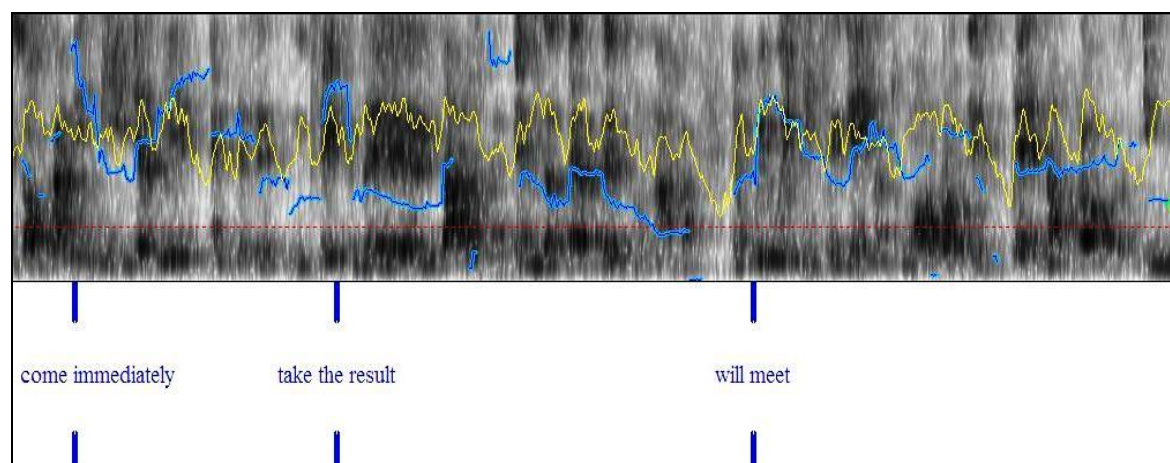


Figure 1

The utterance waveform, the f_0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (22).

The acoustic analysis shows that prosodic cues can be used to measure and detect intentionality in speech. Consequently, degrees of involvement are correlated with the

employment of prosody: the more speech is prosody-marked, the more speakers are involved, emotionally and cognitively, in the interaction. Moreover, intonation and pitch contour variations reveal a strong disposition towards the interlocutor, as it actually happens for the LA since she is able to express and convey involvement, concern or openness with regard to the expected effect on the AS and his consequent reply.

Nonetheless, L1 phonological patterns transferred to the use of the ELF variations by speakers belonging to different speech-communities may be misinterpreted. For example, from a socio-pragmatic perspective, silence and backchannels may have pragmatic and communicative effects carrying meaning about attitudes and feelings. Therefore misunderstandings may arise whenever silence is not properly interpreted by listeners belonging to speech communities that do not share the same communicative role and meaning of pauses, as it happens, for instance, in (8) and (19) where AS's silence and non-lexical fillers are misinterpreted by the LA.

In this case study, it is also necessary to underline that the lawyer's ELF variation (marked – as seen – by a number of Italian linguistic 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. Moreover, the pragmatic use and employment of intonation patterns and behaviours emphasize salient parts of the message in order to convey mutual perlocutionary effects and illocutionary meanings on the receiver, as e.g. in (9), (20) and (22).

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 by the LA (as also underlined in Figure 1 on words such as *come*, *take*, *meet again*, and in (7), (11) and (20)).

On the other hand, the AS's attitude reveals all his distress, moving from very short and unvoiced utterances (like e.g. in (2), (8), (19), and (23)) to furious and violent expressions produced by means of high volume and frequent tonal pitch movements in order to produce effective perlocutionary impression on LA.

4.2. Conversational analysis

The move/act analysis reveals and confirms the unequal biases emerged from the acoustic analysis. Hence, the phonopragmatic approach reveals the multimodal construction of meaning and pragmatic intensions realized through a mutual exchange of acts (i.e. the legal advisor's illocutionary force actualized by means of declaratives and directives; conveying the migrant's perlocutionary effects of expressives and affectives of discomfort and communication failure).

The exchange starts with a series of eliciting moves in (1), (3) and (5) where the LA tries to collect useful information about the AS's conditions in his current reception centre. Nonetheless, the asylum-seeker's dispreferred responses in (2), (4) and (6) signal a conceptual gap or a possible misunderstanding and, as a consequence, the LA in (7) regains her turn by means of an informing move which sounds like a summoning directive, further underlined in (9). Here the AS's challenging move in (10) reveals a controversial position that very probably wants to signal the asylum-seeker's emotional and psychological distress in living and integrating within the Italian reception system. On the other hand, the LA's overlapping speech in (10) and her supporting move in (11) show her commitment and firm intention of helping the young man, who still focuses on his personal discomfort in (13) and finally in a violent reply in (17) where the LA's

overlapping speech is challenged by AS's uncontrolled reaction and exposure. The LA, actually, regains her leading role in (18) after a phone call: her original directive tone is once again supported by her illocutionary acts aiming at achieving a possible solution, according to Italian legal and bureaucratic procedures, to the AS's medical emergency. Moves in (20) and (22) are new supporting directives (produced by means of phonopragmatic strategies, as shown in Figure 1) which, yet, are not completely acknowledged by the AS, as confirmed by his dispreferred responses in (19), (21) and (23) backchannels.

4.3. Register analysis

By cross-checking phono-prosodic cues with lexical choices, it is evident that the two participants employ different frequency values to stress certain linguistic items (as revealed in the transcription of the exchange).

Indeed, the legal advisor's moves and acts reveal an extensive speech density and control together with some popularization processes (e.g. *have some news, the result of your test, in her office, come immediately, take the result and her telephone number*), while the asylum-seeker tends to make use of non-lexical utterances and more function words rather than content words (e.g. *mmmm, yeah, ok*).

The application of prosodic and acoustic devices in the complete exchange, such as maximum pitch and increasing perceived intensity on lexical elements, reveals the speakers' mutual willingness to communicate their illocutionary intentions of persuading and warning on the one hand, and of signalling misunderstanding and negative attitude on the other, along with the adoption of syntactic and stylistic strategies, such as deontic modality, the use of aspect variations, code mixing and switching (e.g. in (3), (14) and (16)), and phatic contact (as regards the legal advisor); ELF syntactic and structural gaps, fillers and disfluencies (as regards the migrant), as well as paralinguistic elements involving kinesics, proxemics and voice quality (i.e. the legal advisor's overlapping speech and her seated position, bodily close to her interlocutor; and the migrant's aggressive tone, hung head and seated position turned on his side and backwards).

Actually, the phonopragmatic investigation undertaken so far is further supported by the lexical, syntactical and stylistic choices arising from the register analysis. LA's register is characterized by utterances full of complex syntactical and stylistic clauses (as e.g. in (9), (11) and (20)) directly transferred from her L1 textual structures onto ELF. The use of modal verbs with deontic connotation (e.g. *can, need to, will, has to*) confirms the performing of LA's illocutionary goals in building her textual organization: she perfectly knows Italian legal and administrative procedure in dealing asylum requests and special events related to medical emergency and integration; but, on the other hand, she interprets AS's reactions and responses in Western perspective causing further tension and anxiety in a conversational interaction which is still enough compromised (see e.g. repetitions of *ok?, I know, so, we can*).

On the other hand, AS's sentences are fragmented and syntactical interrupted by conative contacts (*mmm, no, you know, do you understand?*), thus hindering the complete meaning reconstruction by the LA who perceives his tension and nervousness and tries to find a prompt solution (as confirmed by her overlapping speech).

5. Case study 2: asylum-seeking socio-cultural ‘schemata’ in ELF mediation processes

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 emerge from the participants’ conversational exchanges.

The intercultural encounter is, actually, an example of informative mediation process, because the mediator supplies information to the asylum seeker, introducing the subject of reconstructing the migration experience and then developing it. 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, but yet equally interesting and relevant.

More precisely, what follows is a very significant passage from a typical mediation process where the IM assists the LA in preparing AS’s reconstruction and entextualization of his personal experience for the Commission who is in charge to judge his asylum request. Western socio-cultural ‘schemata’ and stereotypes easily emerge throughout the exchange:

- (1) LA: Have you an answer about your asylum request? Have you some document? Have you here (..)?
- (2) AS: No (..) No (..)
- (3) LA: But have you made an appeal against it?
- (4) AS: No no (.) last time I came to you **we** tried to call my lawyer in B*** but no response
- (5) LA: But (.) doesn’t answer (..)
[phone call]
- (6) IM: **So** (.) this reason why is important to write your **personally** story (.) **so** (.) **we need to** give them other information about your story (.) about (..) some news (.) about the family (.) about the religion situation in your country (..) **I don’t know** (.) if you are Christian and there are some problems [AS: with Muslims] with Muslims (.) so you **can** say that in your country (.) in your zone the situation is dangerous (..)
- (7) AS: Yes (..)
- (8) IM: So (.) now (.) **we try** to write your story again to ask asylum (.) **ok?** But **we need** more (..) about your story (.) try to remember (..)
- (9) AS: I don’t (..)
- (10) IM: If you have some other documents (.) some photos (.) someth[t]ing to demonstrate that it’s true
- (11) AS: I don’t **understand**
- (12) IM: More details about (..)
- (13) AS: More details (..) it’s a long time (.) four years ago
- (14) IM: Some news about your story (.) about your (..)
- (15) AS: About my country (..) yes (.) **there is problem**
- (16) IM: In your family too?
- (17) AS: Yeah (.) but I don’t (.) I don’t have any new for now (.) because **you know** th[d]ere is problem
- (18) IM: **It’s important! Try** to (..)
- (19) AS: **I can’t go there now!**
- (20) IM: No no no! No go th[d]ere (..) to **repare** {find} someth[t]ing (..) some (..) someth[t]ing from newspapers (..)
- (21) AS: From newspapers? Yeah (.) **there is a lot** (.) **you know** in my country there are problem with Christians and Muslims (..)

- (22) *IM*: Yes (.) **I know th[d]is** (..) **oh** (..) one is your country (.) civil war in your country (.) anoth[d]er th[t]ing [AS: Ya] **very important is** your own story (.) **ok?**
- (23) *AS*: My own story (..)
- (24) *IM*: Yes (.) in th[d]is situation your own story (.) **ok?** (..) try to th[t]ink (..) **Ok? Are you agree?**
- (25) *AS*: (..) **Ehm** (.) No (..) **I want to ask** a question (..) so I **have to** say a new story?
- (26) *LA*: (..) No (.) a new story (.) You **must** start again from th[d]is story (.) [AS: Yeah] *no?* But **you** (.) **we have to** say ‘Now th[d]e situation is more dangerous for me (.) **because** from th[d]e day (.) si[ai]nce th[d]e day th[d]at I arrived in Italy till now:: th[d]ere are some new problems like religion problem between [AS: Christians and Muslims] Christian and Muslim and **because** in my zone th[d]e situation is **complicate** (.) **because** my family call me and **advise** me to not come **because** (..)
- (27) *IM*: You **must** describe th[d]e new problem
- (28) *AS*: **Ok**
- (29) *LA*: **Ok**

5.1. Acoustic Analysis

The phonopragmatic analysis of this extract reveals again the use of phonoprosodic strategies to mutually convey to the receivers the illocutionary intention of informing, involving and convincing. Moreover, 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 the performing of utterances which respect standard forms and structures. Actually, the LA and IM’s main objective is to provide the asylum seeker with a better accessibility to legal and textual issues regarding the long and complex asylum-seeking procedure, which are different, and partially unavailable, from the asylum seeker’s socio-linguistic and cultural background.

As a consequence, once again, intonation is exploited by the speakers with the pragmatic 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 L1 pragmalinguistic influence on ELF, speakers’ involvement is also signalled by a change either in speech rate (in terms of numbers of words per minute) and in pitch range (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 characterized by (i) L1 high tonal and intensity patterns along with high speech rate by the mediator and the legal advisor (e.g. in (1), (6), (8), (20), (22), (26) and (27)); and (ii) low tonal patterns, back-channels, fillers and disfluency by the migrant (e.g. in (2), (7), (23), (28)). Figure 2 shows an interesting tonal pattern commonly used by the LA during the exchange:

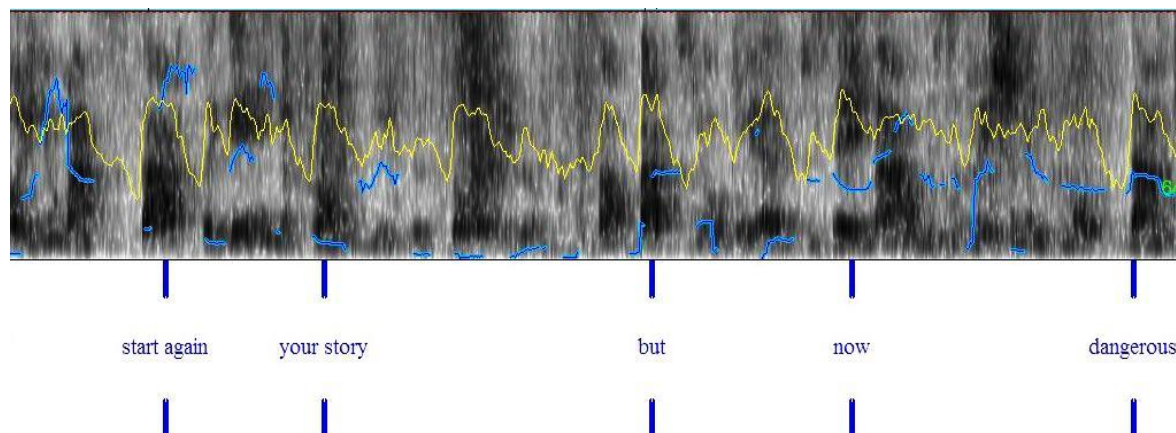


Figure 2

The utterance waveform, the f_0 contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (26).

The phonopragmatic dimension is here more complex than in the previous case-study: LA intervenes only at the beginning of the exchange and in the closing giving a final directive in (26), as shown in Figure 2, which yet is fundamental for the complete mediation process. Here the tonal focus and prominence on certain key-lexical items, such as *start*, *story*, *but*, *now* and *dangerous*, are a crucial instance of L1 culture-based focus marking in sentence structure with a strong phonopragmatic effect.

Instead, the IM uses an authoritative tone as she assumes the leading and ‘gatekeeping’ role of the exchange: her informative and directive aims are signalled by means of falling-rising contours in long statements like e.g. (6), (8) and (10) and high intensity to sound more persuasive and engaging (e.g. in (14), (18) and (22)).

On the other hand AS’s paralinguistic behaviour appears sometimes ambiguous: he mainly employs a condescending tone, but actually his interlocutor, the IM, is not always able to interpret his attitude towards the issue of the conversation: in (7) the falling tone on *yes* is misunderstood by the mediator who replies in (8) with a conclusive tone, implying that her interlocutor agrees with her suggestion (and the same conversational pattern reappears in (11), (15) and (17)); but, actually, AS reveals his real attitude only in (19) with a radical change in his prosodic behaviour: the rising tone on *can’t* signals a focusing illocutionary aim which finally causes the IM’s repairing move in (20), produced with rising intensity and frequent pitch movements, as it equally happens in (22) and (24) where IM reassumes her authoritative tone, along with long pauses and rising intonation patterns on her conatives *ok?* and **are you agree?*.

5.2. Conversational Analysis

The same dynamic pragmatic framework is further supported by the conversational pattern woven throughout the interaction between IM and AS. Once again, actually, the phonopragmatic analysis reveals the multimodal construction of sense and intentionality realized through a mutual exchange of acts (i.e. IM’s and LA’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 exchange, LA appears only at the beginning in (1) and (4) with a usual series of elicitations in order to recollect information about her user’s legal position, before giving place to the IM who gains the ‘gatekeeping’ position from (6) to (24). As a

consequence, moves in (6), (8), (10), (20), (22) and (24) are all eliciting and focusing means to build AS's personal story for his court appeal against the rejection of the asylum application. Nonetheless, the AS's overlapping speech and his dispreferred responses in (9), (11), (17), (21) and (23) reveal the risk of intercultural misunderstanding of IM's directives, marked by a Western perspective in considering socio-cultural experience such as migration, religion, family relationships and sense of belonging to one's own country, which evidently are culture-biased, as the AS's challenging moves in (7), (11), (15), (17) and above all (19) underline. IM's repairing move in (20) yet is not effective as shown by the AS's further informing backchannels in (21) and (23). The IM, indeed, perceives the possible communicative breakdown as confirmed by her phatic contacts in (24) (i.e. *ok? *are you agree?*), evidently sustained by the AS's preferred response in (25), requiring the LA re-opening in (26) (which still resumes the Western stereotypes and socio-cultural schemata about migration experience and personal values), supported by IM in (27) and eventually finalized by the adjacency pairs in (28) and (29).

5.3. Register Analysis

Again phono-prosodic cues actualize 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. *personaly story, repare something, are you agree?*, reduction of the interdental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/) aimed at improving her illocutionary goals, i.e. collect as much information as possible about AS's personal experience to entextualize his narrative for the court appeal (as revealed by both IM's and LA's declarative suggestions and popularization strategies e.g. *your own story, the situation is more dangerous for me, some new problems like religion problem, in my zone the situation is complicate, my family call me to advise me, describe the new problem*).

On the other hand, AS's backchannels show a dispreferred position about the IM's perspective underlined by negative verbal clauses (e.g. *I don't understand, it's a long time, but I don't, I don't have any new for now, I can't go there now*), and conative and metalinguistic contacts (e.g. *you know, yeah, ehm, I want to ask a question*) aimed at interrupting her interlocutor and challenging her directives.

Besides, the application of prosodic and acoustic devices, especially by LA and IM, is not limited only to lexical elements, but it is extended also to syntactic and stylistic strategies (such as deontic modality (i.e. *need, can, have to, must*); the use of ELF tags and imperatives (*ok?, no?, you must, try to, try to remember, try to think*); the adoption of hedging cues and ELF syntactic patterns: *I don't know if, ok?, are you agree?, you...we have to say, I want to ask, so I have to say, you must start again, no?*), key-textual and rhetorical structures (e.g. *this reason why, it's important, because from the day, because in my zone, because my family, because..., you must describe the new problem*), as well as 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); thus revealing the Western speakers' willingness to fulfil their illocutionary goals of persuading and imposing their perspective on the one side, and of signalling reliance and endorsement and at the same time miscommunication and bewilderment on the AS's hand.

6. Case study 3: trauma and trade-victim representations in ELF narratives

The third case-study is the example of a mediation process entailing divergences in trauma narratives and representations through ELF variations regarding the three participants in the interaction, i.e. two Italian intercultural mediators and a Nigerian trade-victim.

Unlike the two previous cases, here the phonopragmatic analysis reveals a higher degree of emotional involvement and unspoken mutual impressions on the speakers' side. The following extract is a part of a longer interaction but it is essential to detect the 'gatekeeping' construction and respective L1 'schema'-biased perspective in the phonopragmatic use of ELF by the speakers involved:

- (1) *IM₁*: *Senti* (.) you say prostitution?
- (2) *AS*: Yes (.) I (..) don't (.) don't **want** (..)
- (3) *IM₁*: *Ecco* (.) I **must** understand th[d]is th[t]ing. **If you want to make asylum request** (..)
- (4) *AS*: Yes (..)
- (5) *IM₁*: **Understand?** **Sorry** (.) **eh** (.) if I make this question
- (6) *AS*: *Tu capisci inglese?*
- (7) *IM₂*: Yes (.) so if you say I **can** write (.) name and surname
- (8) *AS*: **Ok** (.) my name is ****
- (9) *IM₂*: **I was born** (..) the date (..)
- (10) *AS*: I was born in ****
- (11) *IM₂*: The city?
- (12) *AS*: No (..) is village (.) ****
- (13) *IM₂*: Ok
- (14) *AS*: (..) I left my village because of **circumcision** (..) **you know** (.) a female when is twelve (.) ten **must** (..) circumcision (.) **understand?** (..) and there a female (.) one (..) my friend don't want to do and after she died (.) **understand?** [*she cries*]
- (15) *IM₂*: Ok (..) ok (.) **don't worry** (..)
- (16) *AS*: **So I meet** a friend **to** L**** (.) she told me that she **can** help me
- (17) *IM₂*: It was two thousand (..) and?
- (18) *AS*: Eh (.) I go two thousand and (..) nine
- (19) *IM₂*: 2009 (.) **so** (.) circumcision (..) **eh** (.) it's a problem (..)
- (20) *AS*: Yes (.) because my friend died and she didn't'(..) I was afraid
- (21) *IM₂*: Ok (.) and then in 2009 **eh** (..) you were 20 (..) **so** (.) **they** still continue to do circumcision at that age
- (22) *AS*: Yes (..) some they did it in 17 (..) **depends** (.) **mmm** (..)
- (23) *IM₂*: **Ok** (..) **so** (.) in **** what happened?
- (24) *AS*: **What happened in L****** (.) I found my friend was doing prostitution in the streets (..) **so** I met a woman in a shop where I used to buy food to eat
- (25) *IM₂*: A woman?
- (26) *AS*: Yes (.) a woman where I used to buy food to eat [*IM₂*: **Ah** ok] **so** she (..) when I was buying food she explained that she give me a job to do (.) so I said ok (..) so she prepared everyth[t]ing and brought me to France
- (27) *IM₂*: **So** (.) to go abroad
- (28) *AS*: Yes (..)
- (29) *IM₂*: With her?
- (30) *AS*: Yes (.) with her
- (31) *IM₂*: But you didn't know what kind of job she (..)
- (32) *AS*: No (.) I don't know (..)
- (33) *IM₂*: And you asked (..)?
- (34) *AS*: I asked and she told me that I used to do hair and she told me that she had friends in this place (..) like as baby-sitter (..) **do you understand?** So what she **can** do for me (..) so when I go there (.) I found that they used to do **this thing** also (.) **do you understand?** [*IM₂*: **Mmm** (.) **mmm**] so I told her that I **can't** (.) She told me

- that I **should** do it (.) I **will** pay too money (.) ten thousands (..) **euro** [IM₂: Mmm]
so I told that I **cannot** do it (.) **so** I met a boy in the train station
- (35) IM₂: Ok ok (..) and the train station (.) where?
- (36) AS: In France (..)
- (37) IM₂: **Eh** the city?
- (38) AS: **Oh** I forgot the name (..) **ehm** (..) [IM₂: in the South (.) the North (..)] I did
guess (.) south (..) **oh I don't remember I don't remember** (..) [IM₂: **Ok**]
- (39) IM₂: **So** (.) she told you that the job was (..) prostitution
- (40) AS: Yes yes (.) **so** when I explained to the boy (.) the boy gave me money and told
me to go by the trains by nights
- (41) IM₂: And the boy was a Nigerian boy?
- (42) AS: Ghana
- (43) IM₂: **So** the money to go (..) to escape
- (44) AS: Yes
- (45) IM₂: Ok (..) to escape where?
- (46) AS: **Oh** (..) he told me to go to this place that when I go there I **can** speak to
somebody that **help** me (.) some organization [IM₂: **Mmm mmm**] so that the
woman **may** not see again (.) does not call me (.) because does not know when I
came from (.) **do you understand?**
- (47) IM₂: **Ah** (..) so you came in Italy (.) and in It(..) where?
- (48) AS: In Milan

6.1. Acoustic analysis

The phonopragmatic analysis of this extract from the complete exchange shows once again the use of phonoprosodic strategies in an intercultural mediation process aimed at retelling and textualizing the supposed experience of trafficking and sexual exploitation necessary for the legal procedures required by international protection programs.

The acoustic dimension of this passage is crucial as all the speakers involved both use (i) pitch movements and tonal pattern variations associated with speech rate and lexical density (in terms of number of lexical units per words in total) and of (ii) low pitch rate and intensity along with timing variations, disfluencies and pause duration.

Here again intonation reveals all its power of enabling and providing the process of intercultural mediation, as well as of hindering and complicating it: the mediators exploit their prosodic and linguistic devices with the illocutionary aim of exploring and detecting the migrant's previous experience and the passages of her journey to Italy and the consequent, very probable, sex-trafficking, paying little attention to their interlocutor's socio-cultural and ethical 'schemata' about her unpleasant personal experience.

By cross-checking the acoustic parameters with lexical, syntactical and stylistic choices it is evident that, as usual, ELF speakers in interaction employ differently suprasegmental strategies involving not only linguistic choices but also extralinguistic and paralinguistic means, as they emphasize the pragmatic meaning of their own words through frequency variations, pause/syllable durations and intonational phrasing, speech rate and also facial expressions, voice quality, gestures, body and eye movements.

The long exchange is particularly interesting from the phonopragmatic perspective, since the conversation seems unproductive and ineffective: as the phonopragmatic analysis will reveal, the mediators believe that the young AS intentionally lies about her past and recent experiences and events, while the Nigerian girl appears to be willing of gaining the mediators' attention and assistance. This evidently mismatched intentional construction of the exchange may be interpreted as an underlying socio-cultural and power asymmetry in mediating different L1 accessibility and availability of values and perspectives about prostitution, exploitation and social reintegration.

Figure 3 is a remarkable example of the previously outlined conversational structure:

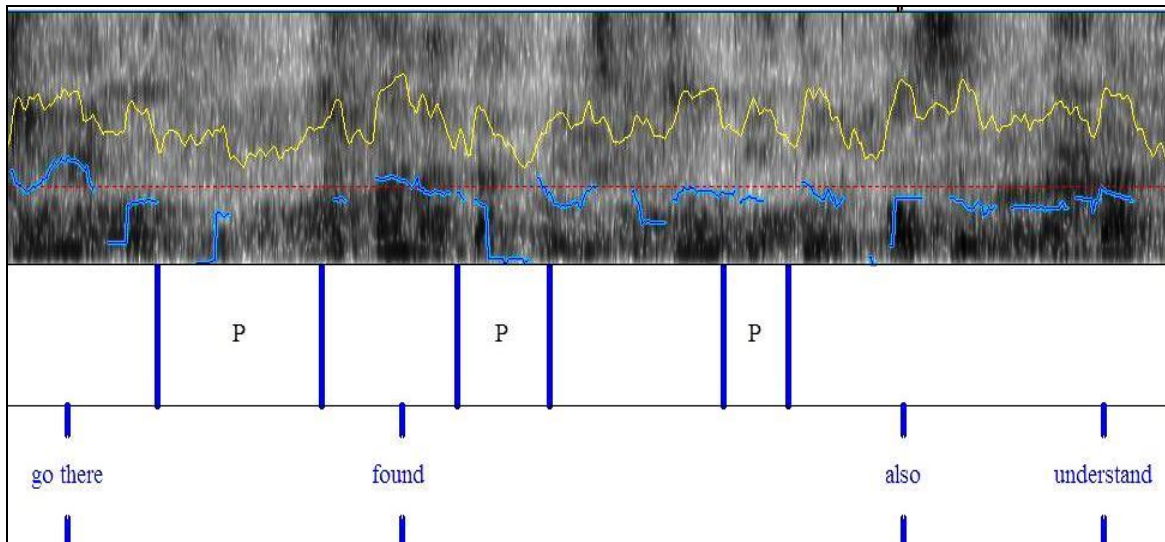


Figure 3
The utterance waveform, the *f0* contour, the intensity and the spectrogram of turn (34).

Throughout the interaction AS employs similar prosodic cues to convey her messages which are above all replies to IM₂'s questions and elicitations. In Figure 3, besides focus marking on lexical items, pause timing is very relevant and may cause misunderstanding (silence in Western communities is often negatively connoted). Her tone is concerned and often uncertain: interestingly she speaks an ELF variation and not Nigerian Pidgin English or an ESL variety, as her fellow citizens usually do. This peculiarity influences the perception of her utterances by the mediators who very probably question her honesty as shown by IM₁ straightforward tone in (3) and (5) and the IM₂'s questioning and inquisitive attitude throughout the all exchange (and the use of L1 non-lexical fillers, such as *ah* and *eh*, revealing disbelief and scepticism), derived from the common stereotype of sex-trafficking victims as lying to hide their exploiters.

Actually, AS's phonological and prosodic behaviour is often characterized by long pauses (e.g. in (2), (14), (22), (28), (32), and (34)) and disfluencies (e.g. *oh*, *ehm*, *mmm*, *eh*), thus supporting the IMs' suspicions about her narrative reliability. Moreover, the frequent use of conative contacts (e.g. *do you understand?*) produced with rising tone and a considerable amount of nervousness and tension in her voice quality (as well as her tears at the beginning) signals the illocutionary aim of causing her interlocutors' effective backchannels.

On the other hand, IM₂'s utterances, above all eliciting moves, are performed with rising-falling tone as typical of *wh*-questions and summoning sentences, signalling definiteness and completeness, since they are aimed at collecting as much information as possible about AS's past events (as e.g. in (7), (17), (23), (31), (33), (35), (37), and (41)), being IMs aware and concerned about the rare and precious possibility of meeting a sex-trafficking victim who asks for assistance.

6.2. Conversation Analysis

The exchange is atypical since the mediation process here occurs without the presence of an Italian professional, namely the LA, and with two language mediators. Actually, both linguistic experts have received precise instruction by the legal advisor before starting the counselling with the young woman. Nonetheless, their perspective is 'schema'-biased and cannot match perfectly with a legal professional's one, as confirmed by the declarative in (3) where IM₁ (who is particularly involved) explicitly reveals her illocutionary aim and supports it in (5). On the other hand, the AS's dispreferred request to IM₂ in (6) (using Italian lingua-franca) causes a change in turn-taking by which IM₁ passes the floor to her colleague who gains the 'gatekeeping' position till the end of the exchange.

IM₂'s main objective is to determine if the young AS is victim of trade and exploitation of prostitution in order to give legal elements to her lawyer for a successful outcome of her asylum-request. Yet, she also knows that talking explicitly and suddenly about prostitution may be hazardous and embarrassing for the AS, and, as a consequence, she opts for collecting useful narrative elements which could lead to possible exploitation experience in Africa and Europe. Therefore, the mediator's moves are often precise elicitation related to time and place reconstruction of events (e.g. in (9), (11), (17), (21), (23), and (26)) according to a Western narrative plan which is not shared by the non-Western migrant as shown in her replies in e.g. (16) and (24) and her apparently incoherent digressions about FGM in (14) and (20) (elicited by the IM₂'s reopening and supporting turn in (19)) and her confused reference to a woman in (24) and (26) as crucial for her migration experience, which yet requires the IM₂'s challenging moves in (23) and (25).

In (27) IM₂'s deductive acknowledging move signals the actualized perlocutionary effect of the AS's previous answering: all IM₂ moves from (29) to (47) are actually aimed at reconstructing the AS's experience in France where she admits having intercepted the prostitution racket in (40).

On the other hand, AS's narrative informing moves, e.g. in (34), (38), and (46), are very confused and not satisfying in a Western perspective since she is not able to give precise information about time and place, as well as event connections and sequence, in order to enable her interlocutors to evaluate valid reasons for undertaking a legal action aimed at the international protection programme according to the Western attitude towards trade, exploitation and prostitution, granted and defined by the Italian law.

In addition, paralinguistic features of the intercultural exchange (such as mediators' seated position and interpersonal proximity, migrant's seated position, interpersonal distance, tears, and changeable kinesics) show not only the phonopragmatic construction of the message based on the speakers' illocutionary force influenced by emotional involvement and a socio-ethical conditioning towards the issue of prostitution and sex-trafficking, but also the employment of phonoprosodic options (as seen in 6.1) transferred from the speakers' L1 spoken discourse pragmatics to the ELF variations used and influencing the migrant's perlocutionary effects of signalling need for help and assistance.

6.3. Register analysis

The syntax and textual arrangement of the exchange is very simple and plain: IM₁ and IM₂ use direct interrogative clauses where ELF accommodation strategies (involving Italian lingua-franca as well) are often applied (e.g. *senti, you say prostitution?, ecco, I must*

understand this thing, sorry (.) eh (.) if I make this question, so if you say I can write, and you asked?).

Moreover, IM₁ and IM₂'s wh- and yes/no questions (e.g. in (1), (11), (17), (23), (25) are very straightforward and explicitly illocutionary.

On the other hand, AS's textual attitude is influenced by the eliciting role of the IM's questioning acts: she answers using very simple clauses with the exception of (34) and (46) where she tries to recollect past events (signalled by the use of past simple) yet without giving time information and a complete time sequences by means of chronological sequences or cause-effect and problem-solution patterns, as expected by the mediators. In (34) and (46), yet, the use of cohesive conjunctions, like *and*, *so* and *because*, reveals a sort of elementary logical construction of sequential past events (e.g. *I asked and she told me, so when I go there (.), so I told her that, so I met a boy in the train station, because does not know when I came from*) which however do not satisfy IM₂'s concern and maybe are perceived as false or at least inaccurate (see replies in (35) and (47)). Moreover this doubting and questioning attitude is recognized by AS as well, who employs conative contacts to test her interlocutors' backchannel (e.g. the frequent repetition of *do you understand?*)

Maximum pitch and increasingly perceived intensity on lexical items (such as the use of paraphrasing and simplification as well as pronominal and verbal simplification strategies, e.g. *what kind of job, you asked?, when I go there, this thing*); syntactic, stylistic and textual strategies (such as deontic modality; use of aspect variations; given/new distinctions, as well as sentence length; phatic and conative contacts; code-mixing, (e.g. *I used to do hair, and she told me that, do you understand?, so what she can do, so when I go there, they used to do, so I told her, I should do it, I will pay too money, I cannot do it, so I met a boy*), but also their interface with prosodic and acoustic devices (as shown in Figure 3) reveal the migrant's confused and fairy-like narrative representation of her traumatic experience of trade and exploitation which mediators are not always able to follow or take seriously into account.

7. Discussion

From the phonopragmatic analysis applied to the three case studies examined so far it is possible to identify some significant aspects of the different linguistic and paralinguistic strategies adopted by the participants involved in mediation processes in immigration settings.

In sum, the participants' most frequent phonological and acoustic features are:

- Prominence in terms of pitch patterns variations and focus marking (also perceived in terms of intensity rate);
- Disfluency in terms of pauses, fillers and hesitations;
- Length in terms of speech rate and lexical density.

The three asylum-seekers, their legal advisors and the mediators involved in case-study 2 and 3 apply different prosodic tools according to culture-bound pragmalinguistic strategies and consequently conveying different effects on the receivers. Moreover, the prosodic emphasis on the use of tense and aspect, modality, simplification of terminology, legal-bureaucratic lexis and hedging reveals illocutionary cues in cross-cultural mediation encounters on asylum-seeking and traumatic experiences realized through ELF variations, actualized by means of: (i) lexical features (as seen for LAs and IMs, in terms of

paraphrasing, simplification of terminology, accommodation strategies); (ii) syntactical features (such as the use epistemic and deontic modality and use of different verbal aspects); (iii) stylistic features (such as hedging and phatic contact used to maintain and value the receiver's attention, and verify the contact with the addressee; and rhetorical figures).

Mediation processes in immigration domains require from the mediator's side a significant communicative effort which 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 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 personal linguacultural transfers from L1, as well as pragmatic conveyance of intentionality or culture-bound experience or 'schemata'.

In the three case studies under analysis, speakers tend to modulate more or less 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 considerably differ from each other.

Moreover data provided in this paper for the phonopragmatic analysis have 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. As a consequence, if the use of ELF is aimed at enabling and simplifying the semantic accessibility of legal-bureaucratic procedures and concepts by migrants from different lingua-cultural backgrounds, it is also true that it may even cause miscommunication and misinterpretation of the message. Moreover, 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.

Therefore, the natural follow-up of this research should be a deeper investigation of the effects produced by the illocutionary acts emerging from mediation exchanges and partly analyzed in this study, in order to explore the perlocutionary effects and potential misunderstanding triggers by all the participants involved in these kinds of cross-cultural interactions. Indeed, mediators' training should take into account that intentionality is always interpreted according to 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 phonoprosodic strategies revealing speakers' illocutionary acts, but also to make future mediators (responsible for difficult and embarrassing intercultural transactions) aware of the mechanisms underlying mutual positioning and perception, as well as possible vulnerabilities for misinterpretation, in order to avoid and prevent them.

8. Conclusions

This paper has discussed the ways in which the use of prosody can be analyzed in a pragmatic perspective to define not only how in mediation processes different emotions or attitudes, opinions and recommendations, information and instructions, interpretations and viewpoints may be conveyed in spontaneous oral exchanges, but also to what extent it may affect mediation processes involving specialized notions and challenging linguacultural meanings which often characterize intercultural communication and gatekeeping situations.

The analysis of the three case studies has shown different pragmalinguistic strategies applied to the construction of messages through ELF, rather than using standard varieties of English, in intercultural encounters involving migrants, mediators and legal advisors. Here the mediation process concerning asylum procedures has been investigated through (i) a pragmalinguistic approach, aimed at identifying specific lexical, syntactic and stylistic features, associated to (ii) a phonopragmatic analysis, intended to inquire into the relation between the pragmatic goals of the utterance and the use of prosodic and paralinguistic tools to convey the speaker's illocutionary intentions in conversation.

Indeed, the three case studies have revealed how phonology influences the cross-cultural construction of meaning, according to socio-cultural semantic implications, as well as its perception and comprehension. Seen from this perspective, prosodic relevance and paralinguistic features, transferred from the speakers' L1s to the ELF variations they use, have to be taken into account in the pragmatic implementation of intercultural communication in immigration settings, and for a successful cross-cultural mediation process through ELF.

To sum up, prosodic and paralinguistic strategies applied by ELF speakers from different L1 backgrounds in immigration encounters reveal: (i) L1 prosodic and acoustic correlates and phonological transfers into their ELF variations in performing speech acts, in terms of conversational moves; (ii) phonopragmatic strategies in the understanding and negotiation of speakers' attitudes, experiences, and socio-cultural 'schemata'; (iii) miscommunication and mediation failure resulting from Western-oriented power asymmetries in 'gatekeeping' conversations; (iv) different ELF appropriation and adaptation of English features according to native linguacultural 'schemata' and pragmalinguistic processes.

It is hoped that the approach applied in this study may provide useful basic tools for the improvement of the mediators' education and training. More attention and research investigation need to be devoted to this crucial and necessary figure in immigration communicative settings with the aim of developing adequate and varied practice programmes. The results of this study have shown that prosody is one of the most relevant communicative means speakers and listeners exploit both in the production and in the interpretation of speech acts, along with the choice of lexical and syntactical items, and paralinguistic and extralinguistic tools. Hence, further investigation should aim at analyzing 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 migrants and specialized experts. Considered from this perspective, the phonopragmatic approach could be a useful pedagogical strategy applied to the training of intercultural mediators who, in order to play a successful and effective mediation role, as previously outlined, 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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